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Thy utmost can but offer to her sight
Her handmaidens task, which most her will endears;¹
And pray unto thy pains life from that light
Which lively light some, court and kingdom cheers,²
What³ wish she may (far past her living peers
And rival still to Judah's faithful king)⁴
In more than he and more triumphant years,⁵
Sing what God doth, and do what men may sing.

1599

¹ i.e., Herbert's muse's greatest effort.
² i.e., that lively light (Elizabeth) which is cheered by court and kingdom. The meaning of “some” here is not clear; it may be a misprint.
³ Who (i.e., court and kingdom).
⁴ David; “Judah” is another name for Israel.
⁵ i.e., in a longer and more triumphant reign.

AMELIA LANIER
1570?–1640?

Known in her own day as a woman “of distinguished ... learning,” Amelia Lanier spent much of her career at court during the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I. Though her origins are obscure—even her parentage is uncertain—it is known that she was married to a royal musician, Alfonso Lanier, and that she bore him a son, Henry, who entered the king’s service as a flutist. After her husband’s death in 1613, she appears to have been involved with his relatives in various legal squabbles over his estate. Otherwise her history is shadowy, although the historian A. L. Rowe has recently argued that she may well have been the “Dark Lady” of Shakespeare’s sonnets, the independent and imperious mistress to whom the great playwright claimed he was hopelessly enthralled.

Whatever the truth about this poet’s life, her verse is striking and accomplished, so much so that Rowe uses its radicalism as a basis for his assertion about her role in Shakespeare’s poetry. In particular, her retelling of the biblical story of the “fall” functions as a kind of pioneering vindication of the rights of “Our Mother Eve,” who, declares Lanier, gave Adam “What she held most dear”—the apple of knowledge—because she was “simply good.” In fact, insists Lanier, Eve’s primordial female act of “betrayal” was performed in unconscious innocence, while men are more culpable because they consciously betrayed Jesus Christ to his crucifixion: “If one weak woman simply did offend,/This sin of yours hath no excuse, nor end.” Significantly, in sketching out such a feminist version of two of Western culture’s major legends, Lanier outlined a pattern of revisionary mythmaking that was to be followed by many female descendants who may never even have read her work.
From Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum

[Eve’s Apology in Defense of Women]

Now Pontius Pilate is to judge the cause¹
Of faultless Jesus, who before him stands,
Who neither hath offended prince, nor laws,
Although he now be brought in woeful bands.

``O noble governor, make thou yet a pause;
Do not in innocent blood imbrue² thy hands;
But hear the words of thy most worthy wife,³
Who sends to thee, to beg her Saviour’s life.
``Let barbarous cruelty far depart from thee,
And in true justice take affliction’s part;
Open thine eyes, that thou the truth mayest see.
Do not the thing that goes against thy heart,
Condemn not him that must thy Saviour be;
But view his holy life, his good desert.

Let not us women glory in men’s fall,⁴
Who had power given to overrule us all.
``Till now your indiscretion sets us free,
And makes our former fault⁵ much less appear;
Our mother Eve, who tasted of the tree,
Giving to Adam what she held most dear,
Was simply good, and had no power to see;⁶
The after-coming harm did not appear:
The subtle serpent that our sex betrayed
Before our fall so sure a plot had laid
``That undiscerning ignorance perceived
No guile or craft that was by him intended;
For had she known of what we were bereaved,⁷
To his request she had not condescended.
But she, poor soul, by cunning was deceived;
No hurt therein her harmless heart intended:
For she alleged⁸ God’s word, which he denies,
That they should die, but even as gods be wise.
1. Case; Pontius Pilate was the Roman official who authorized Christ’s execution.
2. Slain.
3. According to Matthew, Pilate’s wife wrote a letter to her husband telling him of a dream she had, which warned against harming Jesus.
4. The fall of both Adam and Christ (perhaps also Pilate).
5. Eve’s tempting of Adam in Eden.
6. According to the Book of Genesis, Eve, the first woman, offered the husband Adam at the behoof of the serpent to eat of an apple from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. As punishment God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and brought death into the world.
7. Deprived, specifically of immortal life.
8. Cited, repeated. The referent of “he” is unclear; it may be either the serpent or Adam. In any case, Eve seems aware that the consequences of her act are mortal, but prefers god-like wisdom to immortal ignorance.
1. Here, made or fashioned.
2. Strict.
3. I.e., the breath of immortal life.
4. Prevent.
5. Experience.
6. In Genesis, Eve was formed from Adam’s rib.
"But surely Adam cannot be excused; Her fault though great, yet he was most to blame. What weakness offered, strength might have refused; Being lord of all, the greater was his shame; Although the serpent's craft had her abused, God's holy word ought all his actions frame; For he was lord and king of all the earth, Before poor Eve had either life or breath, 35

"Who being framed by God's eternal hand The perfectest man that ever breathed on earth, And from God's mouth received that strait command, The breach whereof he knew was present death; Yea, having power to rule both sea and land, Yet with one apple won to lose that breath 3 Yet Which God had breathed in his beauteous face, Bringing us all in danger and disgrace;

"And then to lay the fault on patience's back, That we (poor women) must endure it all; We know right well he did discretion lack, Being not persuaded thereunto at all. If Eve did err, it was for knowledge sake; The fruit being fair persuaded him to fall, No subtle serpent's falsehood did betray him; If he would eat it, who had power to stay him? 55

"Not Eve, whose fault was only too much love, Which made her give this present to her dear, That what she tasted he likewise might prove, Whereby his knowledge might become more clear; He never sought her weakness to reprove With those sharp words which he of God did hear; Yet men will boast of knowledge, which he took From Eve's fair hand, as from a learned book.

"If any evil did in her remain, Being made of him, he was the ground of all. If one of many worlds' could lay a stain Upon our sex, and work so great a fall To wretched man by Satan's subtle train, What will so foul a fault amongst you all? 65

[9, Enclose, determine.
1. Here, made or fashioned.
2. Strict.
3. I.e., the breath of immortal life.
4. Prevent.
5. Experience.
6. In Genesis, Eve was formed from Adam's rib.
7. One woman out of many. "Worlds" probably is meant to suggest great quantities.
8. Satan's serpentine arguments to Eve. Later tradition identified Satan with the serpent. Genesis makes no such connection.
9. Implicity, how great a stigma will your crime cast upon your sex?]
Her weakness did the serpent's words obey,
But you in malice God's dear son betray.

"Who, if unjustly you condemn to die,
Her sin was small to what you do commit.
All mortal sins 1 that do for vengeance cry
Are not to be compared unto it;
If many worlds would altogether try
By all their sins the wrath of God to get,
This sin of yours surmounts them all as far
As doth the sun another little star. 2

"Then let us have our liberty again,
And challenge 3 to yourselves no sovereignty.
You came not in the world without our pain,
Make that a barrier against your cruelty;
Your fault being greater, why should you disdain
Our being your equals, free from tyranny?
If one weak woman simply did offend,
This sin of yours hath no excuse nor end,

"To which, poor souls, we never gave consent.
Witness, thy wife, O Pilate, speaks for all,
Who did but dream, and yet a message sent
That thou shouldst have nothing to do at all
With that just man; 4 which, if thy heart relent,
Why wilt thou be a reprobate with Saul? 5
To seek the death of him that is so good,
For thy soul's health to shed his dearest blood?"

1. Sins punishable by eternal damnation.
2. The sun actually was larger than the stars.
3. Challenge.
4. Check; prevent.
5. Purpose.
6. Christ.
7. King of Israel who went mad periodically; "reprobate" morally unprincipled person.

In her fantasy, Orlando (1928) presents English literary history started life as an Elizabethan, late seventeenth century. Her portrayal of the patron started to give way to the market place. Not insignificant is when the production of the religious religious calling: some, indeed.

What in A Room of One's own importance than the Crusades, middle-class woman began that is usually associated with religious, intellectual, and social dissections as law, medicine, science. The Atlantic, the religious disputes and the religious disputes of the eighteenth century as a central cultural issue—Puritan settlers, pilgrims, and American citizens determined religious, intellectual, and social dissections as law, medicine, science. Further subjecting them to more profound women's roles in religious, intellectual, and social dissections. Providing precedents for questions been fine women as the second sex, women's contribution to poetry, economics shifted from agriculture to the spread of education and the economy.