
The Song of Solomon's Daughter

in the Paradise of Poets exulting
that she exists: the Composer of Yahweh

A prophecy discovered in the crypt of Yale's famous Babylonian Collection after extensive searches inspired by the thesis of Professor Harold Bloom in The Book of J.

*O yet once more the ancient letters dower
a mortal hand. What confident shadow
strides before my sight? I am reborn!
This critic—surely a renegade priest
or lovesick rabbi—has guessed I was a girl,
a clever daughter of Solomon. (I wonder
who really begat me. Things were pretty wild
at court, in those over-enlightened days.
They're wilder now, of course, in literature.)
I am found, found out. But what game is he playing
anyway? He's smarter than Baalam's ass,
my favorite invention, unless it's the bit
(truly Lady's gothic) about that awful
adult circumcision. It's all the fault
of the poetic tales around my father's knee,
and bubemaizes sucked from jeweled tongues
of strangely-named women who ran in and out*

*of his chambers,—he couldn't sleep anyway,—
dripping myrrh and chanting about foxes,
vines, kisses, a garden of nuts, she—gods
and dragons of the flood, their dismembered
heroes, and their own, what was the Greek word?
yes, sparagmos. The ground I stood on,
they said, was alive, and danced and stamped,
confusing the roles of hunter and hunted,
while shouting at each final selah—kick:
The earth is the Lord's, all who live therein!*

*That maddening refrain, like a priest's blessing,
covered every Davidic wildness.
A canny gift sprang from the uncanny sounds
his tortured love provoked. I was the harp
that observed all this, child, legacy,
who played before him on the moody strings
and acclaimed Shaddai. Sheba herself
smiled on me, as though she knew (o image
of perfumed wisdom, sister—maze and guide)
what I was and was not.*

Here the manuscript ends, but scraps survive from another scroll. It is possible that the following fragments which the editor has revised into a semblance of coherence may have been composed by someone other than J. They should be treated as a separate document provisionally called MS JJ.

*My brother, my spouse, I was locked in the deep
a fountain closed up of living speech
only my eyes declared you in silence:
I was even lonelier than Joseph
abandoned in the pit,*

*who had a thousand working for me at once,
Lilith and Leilah, the redeemed night—spirits.
Then came the withered priests of the chamzin,
terrorists of the unutterable.
Then came a raggedness, rabbis and scribes,
depressing the tongue of the text. I curse
the degrees, o David, though not your psalms,
I bless the dragon exuberance, the roar
of her against envious eye and pierced ear.
I bless my beloved, the spicy crow's¹ message
rousing the Torah's ear in the cool evening.
You appeared, remade me in your image,
in the image of love and strife you exalted me:
I had faded away, shadow of delight,
you arrived and opened, lord of my mouth,
the firstborn speech I dedicate to you.
You are before I was, who was not there,
gone always gone—you found me in the laughter
and bloom² of your spirit caetera desunt*

ed. Geoffrey Hartman

¹ Obscure. The Hebrew *kvk*, seems to be a defective reduplicative *kvkv* with an onomatopoeic meaning (caw-caw).

² The Hebrew text has *gevurah*.

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