

# Elizabeth Hands

1746-1815

By Theresa Connolly



"A Laundry Maid Ironing" By Henry Robert Morland (1765-82)

# Early Life

- She was born Elizabeth Herbert to Henry and Ann Herbert
- She was born in Harbury and then moved to Rowington
- No formal education
- Her sister Mary died as an infant (1748-49)
- Worked as a servant of the Huddesford Family of Allesley
- Managed to read widely in the houses that she served

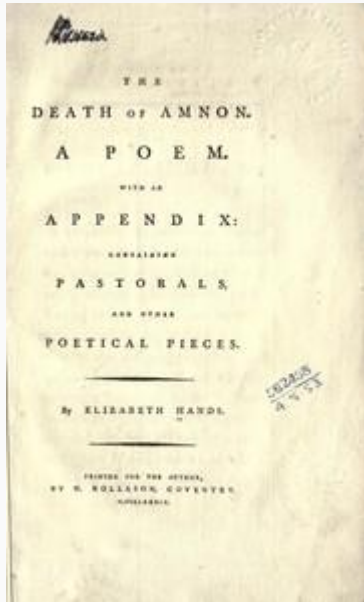


# Marriage and Publishing

- Elizabeth was Married September 6th, 1784 to William Hands, who was a blacksmith
- She was 38 years old when she married and had two daughters
- She was supported in her work by Philip Bracebridge Homer, who was an assistant master at the Rugby school
- He realized her potential and published her first work: *The Death of Amnon: a Poem with an appendix, containing pastorals an other poetical pieces (1789)*



# Her Work



“The Death of Amnon”  
(her first published work)

- Worked under the pseudonym “Daphne”
- Considered a working class poet
- Uses quiet satire and rhyme, writes about love and friendship, and writes in a number of different forms
- Work is sometimes “self reflexive” - she often writes about working class women and pastoral settings that relate to her own life

# A Poem, on the Supposition of an Advertisement Appearing in a Morning Paper, of the Publication of a Volume of Poems, by a Servant-Maid

← (yes she likes long titles)

- The poem describes upper class women at tea talking about a servant maid who has been recently published

“A volume of Poems advertised—’tis said  
They’re produced by the pen of a poor servant-maid.”  
A servant write verses!” says Madam Du Bloom:  
‘Pray what is the subject—a Mop, or a Broom?’”

**Importance:** Self reflexive, shows lower class talent, shows class divide, Playful rhyme (social critique but also entertainment)

# Poem continued...

Characters debate whether servants should write poetry -

- One argues that “genius” should be allowed to prosper even in a low born person
- Another argues that they shouldn’t be idle enough to be able to write

**Importance:** these women are just as idle, talent exists in lower class people, writing requires time and resources

For my part I think,” says old Lady Marr-joy,

**“A servant might find herself other employ:**

Was she mine I’d employ her as long as ’twas light,

And send her to bed without candle at night.”

“Why so?” says Miss Rhymer, displeased: “I protest

**’Tis pity a genius should be so depressed!”**

“What ideas can such low-bred creatures conceive?” Says Mrs. Noworthy, and laughed in her sleeve.

Says old Miss Prudella, “If servants can tell

How to write to their mothers, to say they are well,

And read of a Sunday The Duty of Man,

Which is more I believe than one half of them can;

I think ’tis much properer they should rest there,

**Than be reaching at things so much out of their sphere.”**

# Her Importance

1. Shows the necessary evil of male patronage
2. Talent and genius can come from lower classes
3. She is able to articulate the domestic and pastoral, as well as the “female domestic sphere” better than woman of high class would be able to
4. Shows how difficult it is for women of lower class to achieve a position as a writer (time, money, education)
5. Provides a working class perspective



“The Housemaid” By  
Thomas Gainsborough  
(1782)

# Citation

## Images

<https://ellenandjim.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/henry-robort-morland-laundress.jpg>

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## Resources

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