

# The Wish, By a Young Lady

By Laetitia Pilkington

I ask not wit, nor beauty do I crave,  
Nor wealth, nor pompous titles wish to have;  
But since, 'tis doomed through all degrees of life,  
Whether a daughter, sister, or a wife;  
That females should the stronger males obey,  
And yield implicit to their lordly sway;  
Since this, I say, is ev'ry woman's fate,  
Give me a mind to suit my slavish state.

Source: *English Women's Poetry, Elizabethan to Victorian* (edited by R.E. Pritchard) (Fyfield Books, 1990)



Laetitia van Lewen was born in Ireland. Her father was a respected surgeon, her mother was of aristocratic descent, and the family lived comfortably in Dublin. Alone and destitute after her divorce from Matthew Pilkington, she began to make her living from writing, penning poems, petitions, plays, billets-doux, and sermons, often for male writers who passed them off as their own. Pilkington's *Memoirs* provide an invaluable glimpse into 18th-century literary society and the ironies, struggles, and disappointments of female writers attempting to make their way through it.

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