

Mary Leapor, "The Power of Beauty"

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MARY LEAPOR

"The Power of Beauty"

O Goddess of eternal Smiles,
Bright *Cythera* the fair,
Who taught *Sabina's* pleasing Wiles,
By which she won *Bellair*.

Bellair, the witty and the vain, 5
Who laugh'd at Beauty's Pow'r;
But now the conquer'd humble Swain
Adores a painted Flow'r.

With *Delia's* Art my Song inspire,
Whose Lips of rosy Hue 10
Can ne'er the partial Audience tire,
Tho' wiser *Claudia's* do.

Tho' *Claudia's* Wit and Sense refin'd,
Flows easy from her Tongue;
Her Soul but coarsely is enshrin'd, 15
So *Claudia's* in the wrong.

Hark, *Delia* speaks—that blooming Fair,
See Crowds are gathering round
With open Mouths: and wildly stare
To catch the empty Sound. 20

See *Lelia* with a Judgement clear,
With manly Wisdom blest;
Wit, Learning, Prudence, all appear
In that unruffled Breast.

But yet no Beau for *Lelia* dies, 25
No Sonnets pave her way;
Say, Muse, from whence these Evils rise,
Why *Lelia's* Teeth decay.

Then, why do rev'rend Sages rail
At Woman's wanton Pride? 30
If Wisdom, Wit, and Prudence fail,
Let meaner Arts be try'd.

Those Arts to please are only meant;
But with an angry Frown,
The Queen of Wisdom lately sent 35
This Proclamation down:

Minerva, with the azure Eyes,
And thus the Statute runs,
If you wou'd have your Daughters wise,
Take care to mend your Sons. 40

NOTES:

2 *Cythera* Venus, the goddess of love (*OED*).

3 *Sabina's* This and subsequent names at lines 9, 12, and 21 were common women's names in pastoral poetry.

7 *Swain* A shepherd in pastoral poetry.

29 *Sages* Men of "profound wisdom" (*OED*).

30 *wanton* "Reckless" (*OED*).

35 *Queen of Wisdom* *Minerva*, the goddess of wisdom (*OED*).

Source: *Poems upon Several Occasions* (London, 1748), pp. 229-231. [Google Books]

Edited by Liliana Marusic