

Mary Masters, "On Beauty"

Description

MARY MASTERS

“On Beauty”

Sure, Beauty is a Light Divine,
 That does with awful Lustre shine;
 Rises more strong at ev'ry View,
 And does the proudest Hearts subdue.
 Where is the Man, that durst
 defy
 The blooming Cheek and dazzling Eye;
 The lovely Shape, the winning Air,
 And graceful Motions of the Fair?
Stoicks themselves could find no Arms
 'Gainst Beauty's bright tremendous Charms:
 This CATO by Example prov'd,
 A rigid Stoick, yet he lov'd:
 And both his am'rous Sons display'd
 Their rival Flames for one fair Maid.
 Beauty still triumphs o'er the Schools,
 With all their Philosophick Rules;
 She breaks their surest best Defence,
 Reason, the feeble Guard of Sense.

All feel her Force, her Laws obey,
 Compell'd to own her potent Sway.
 But 'tis th' unblemish'd Form I praise,
 Where VIRTUE shines with equal Rays!
 For Beauty, stain'd, has lost her Pow'r,
 And, VIRTUE gone, she charms no more.

NOTES:

2 *Lustre* – The quality or condition of shining by reflected light; sheen, refulgence; gloss (QED).

4 *subdue* – To bring (an enemy, people, territory, etc.) into subjection by conquest or physical force (QED).

5 *durst* Past tense of *cedare*.

9 *Stoicks* *One who practices repression of emotion, indifference to pleasure or pain, and patient endurance* (*OED*).

11 *CATO* Cato the Younger (95-46BCE), Roman statesman and famous follower of stoicism. Cato's intended first marriage to Aemilia Lepida was possibly motivated by love, though she ended up marrying Scipio, to whom she was previously betrothed (*Britannica*).

13-14 Masters is using Joseph Addison's popular play, *Cato, a Tragedy* (1712) as her source here as Addison exercised *considerable literary license* by creating a plot line in which Cato's sons, Portius and Marcus, vied for the love of a woman named Lucia. See Nathan Wolloch, *Cato the Younger in the Enlightenment*, *Modern Philology*, vol. 106, no. 1 (August 2008), p. 67.

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1733), pp. 60-61. [*Google Books*]

Edited by Itzel Rodriguez