

# Mary Leapor, "An Essay on Woman"

## Description

MARY LEAPOR

• An Essay on Woman •

Woman's a pleasing, but a short-lived Flow,  
Too soft for Business, and too weak for Power:  
A Wife in Bondage, or neglected Maid;  
Despised, if ugly; if she's fair betray'd.  
Tis Wealth alone inspires every Grace, 5

And calls the Raptures to her plenteous Face.  
What Numbers for those charming Features pine,  
If blooming Acres round her Temples twine?  
Her Lip the Strawberry; and her Eyes more bright  
Than sparkling *Venus* in a frosty Night. 10

Pale Lilies fade; and when the Fair appears,  
Snow turns a Negro, and dissolves in Tears.  
And where the Charmer treads her magic Toe,  
On *English* Ground *Arabian* Odours grow;  
Till mighty *Hymen* lists his sceptred Rod, 15

And sinks her Glories with a fatal Nod;  
Dissolves her Triumphs; sweeps her Charms away,  
And turns the Goddess to her native Clay.

But, *Artemisia*, let your Servant sing  
What small Advantage Wealth and Beauties bring. 20

Who would be wise, that knew *Pamphilia's* Fate?  
Or who be fair, and join'd to *Sylvia's* Mate?  
*Sylvia*, whose Cheeks are fresh as early Day;  
As Evening mild, and sweet as spicy *May*:  
And yet That Face her partial Husband tires, 25

And those bright Eyes, that all the World admires.  
*Pamphilia's* Wit who does not strive to shun,  
Like Death's Infection, or a Dog-Day's Sun?  
The Damsels view her with malignant Eyes:  
The Men are vex'd to find a Nymph so wise: 30



**18** *Clay* That is, her original human form.

**19** *Artemisia* A pseudonym for Leaporâ€™s friend and patron, Bridget Freemantle.

**28** *Dog-Day*â€™s â€œThe hottest part of the summerâ€•(OED).

**32** *Woe* â€œA state or condition of misery, suffering, or emotional distress; misfortune, troubleâ€•(OED).

**35** *Censures* â€œExpression of disapproval or condemnationâ€•(OED).

**36** *grate* â€œTo affect painfully,â€•irritateâ€•(OED).

**38** *Simplicus* Conventional name for a rustic or simple man.

**43** *Sty* â€œA human habitationâ€•no better than a pigstyâ€•(OED).

**50** *Mira* Leaporâ€™s poetic name for herself; *Walls* Defenses (OED).

**53** *Avarice* â€œInordinate desire of acquiring and hoarding wealthâ€•(OED).

**54** *wanton* â€œLustful; not chaste, sexually promiscuousâ€•(OED).

**59** *Follies* Foolish actions, ideas, practices (OED).

**SOURCE:** *Poems Upon Several Occasions* (London, 1751), pp. 64-67. [Internet Archive]

*Edited by Alexis Kleinberg*