

# Mary Leapor, “Nature undone by Art”

## Description

MARY LEAPOR

“NATURE undone by ART”

WHEN first *Alexis* bless'd our wondering Eyes,  
Like some young Deity of the pregnant Skies;  
His blooming Form by Nature richly dress'd;  
Nor purple Crime had stain'd his ivory Breast:  
His pleasing Voice diffus'd a general Joy,    5  
And listening Virgins bless'd the charming Boy.  
His just Reflections, while they taught, allur'd;  
His Smiles were harmless, and his Language pure:  
He learn'd with Pleasure, and he taught with Ease:  
Whatever *Alexis* did, was sure to please.    10  
*Gorgonian* Malice found a soothing Charm;  
No envious Tongue could wish *Alexis* Harm:  
For thrifty Nature, like a partial Mother,  
To form one lovely Image, strips another;  
And makes the beautiful Darling of her Breast    15  
Perfection only, while she starves the rest.  
On this gay Youth she lavish'd all her Pride,  
Till he, ingrateful, wander'd from her Side:  
Then polish'd Art, with her affected Train  
Of glittering Shadows, won the cheated Swain;    20  
Dissimulation roll'd her leering Eyes,  
With courteous Knavery, and well-bred Lyes;  
Affectation, Pride; a motly Throng;  
And smiling Flattery, with her silver Tongue:  
These taught those once engaging Eyes to roll,    25  
And cast Pollution on his tainted Soul.  
In his dark Breast tumultuous Passions rise,  
Where guilty Flame and smother'd Hatred lies.  
Now the chang'd Idiot can his Rhetoric spend  
To praise a Coxcomb, or deceive his Friend.    30  
His Heart, whence Truths eternal us'd to spring,  
Where Honour reign'd as undisputed King,  
Is now a Dungeon for the Dregs of Sin.  
Deceit, Ingratitude, and Avarice, now

Have stainâ€™d the Whiteness of his alterâ€™d Brow: 35  
Not worth our Pity, and below Disdain;  
We look with Loathing, and we hear with Pain.

**NOTES:**

**4 purple** “Of the colour of blood; bloody” (*OED*).

**11 Gorgonian Malice** “Of or pertaining to the malevolence of the three mythical female personages, with snakes for hair, whose look turned the beholder into stone” (*OED*).

**21 Dissimulation** “Concealment of what really is, under a feigned semblance of something different; feigning, hypocrisy” (*OED*).

**24 silver Tongue** “A tendency to be eloquent and persuasive in speaking” (*OED*).

**30 Coxcomb** “A vain, conceited, or pretentious man; a man of ostentatiously affected mannerisms or appearance; a fop” (*OED*).

**33 Dregs** “Residue” (*OED*).

**Source:** *Poems Upon Several Occasions* (London, 1751), pp. 98-100. [Hathi Trust]

*Edited by Beck Serna*