

Mary Masters, "The Female Triumph"

Description

MARY MASTERS

"The Female Triumph"

SWELL'D with vain Learning, vainer man conceives,
That 'tis with him the bright Minerva lives;
That she descends to dwell with him alone,
And in his Breast erects her Starry throne:
Pleased with his own, to Female Reason blind, 5
Fancies all Wisdom in his Sex confin'd.
Proudly they boast of Philosophick rules,
Of Modes and Maxims taught in various Schools,
And look on Women as a Race of Fools.
But if CALISTA's perfect soul they knew, 10
They'd own their Error, and her Praise pursue.
Centered in her the brightest Graces meet,
Treasures of Knowledge and rich mines of Wit.
Her Thoughts are beautiful, refined and new,
Polish'd her language and her Judgment true; 15
Each Word deliver'd with that soft address,
That as she speaks the melting Sounds we bless.
O! I could praise her without doing wrong,
Could to the subject raise my daring Song;
Were I enrich'd with PRIOR's Golden Vein, 20
Her I would Sing in an exalted Strain;
Her Merit in the noblest Verse proclaim,
And raise my own upon CALISTA's fame:
Her elevated Sense, her Voice, her Mien,
Her innate Goodness, and her Air Serene, 25
Should in my Lays to future Ages shine,
And some new Charm appear in every Line.

Fir'd with the Theme how great would be the Flight?
In what unbounded Numbers should I write!
Each Line, each Word, would more majestic grow, 30
And every Page with finished Beauty glow.

But me alas the *tuneful Nine* disdain,
Scorn my rude Verse, and mock my feeble Strain:
No kind Poetick Powers descend to fill
My humble breast, and guide my trembling Quill: 35
My Thoughts, in rough and artless Terms exprest,

Are incorrect and negligently drest.
Yet sure my just ambition all must own
The well-chose Subject has my Judgment shown
And in the weak Attempt my great Design is known.

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NOTES:

2 *Minerva* Ancient Roman goddess of wisdom and war (www.newworldencyclopedia.org).

10 *Calista* Potential reference to a female contemporary or companion of the author; Latin feminine form of the Greek name Calisto (www.theoi.com).

20 *Prior* Contemporary poet Matthew Prior (1664-1721), known in the period for his facility with meter and rhyme.

24 *Mien* The look, bearing, manner, or conduct of a person, as showing character, mood (OED).

32 *Tuneful Nine* The Greek muses.

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1733), pp. 8-10.

Edited by Taryn Osborne