

Mary Leapor, "The Genius in Disguise"

Description

MARY LEAPOR "The Genius in Disguise"

As I *Fidelia* and my Sire,
Sat musing o'er a smoky Fire,
We heard a Knocking at the Door,
Rise, something is the Matter sure.
The little Turret seem'd to quake, 5
The Shelves, the Chairs and Tables shake;
Fidelia cries, O, what's the Matter?
And *Mira*'s Teeth began to chatter:
The frighted Door (as what could choose)
Flew open (pray believe the Muse) 10
A hollow Voice for Entrance calls,
And soon "Although the dirty Walls
Were stain'd with Ignorance and Sin
Yet *Mira*'s *Genius* ventur'd in,
Not in a Cherub's Form enshrin'd, 15
Nor in the shape of human kind:
But Locks and Hinges round him glow,
In Figure like a neat Buroe;
Like Brambles in a thorny Gap
Stood *Mira*'s Hair beneath her Cap: 20
Her frighted Senses gone astray,
She bent her Knees in act to pray;
But the presuming Priest drew near
As void of Piety as Fear,
And by its Side undaunted stood, 25
And wou'd persuade us it was Wood:
With Rev'rence then we did presume
To place him in the little Room;
The Priest excluded with the rest,
The Stranger *Mira* thus address'd, 30
(Tho' shaking with Surprise and Fear)
"O say what Power sent thee here,
Not Fortune, for I ne'er cou'd see
As yet her Favours bent on me:
Nor Chance although we often find 35
She governs most of human kind;
Or can, against the Maid's Desire,
Throw Madam's Caudle in the Fire;

Can light a Candle, or can miss,
She never brought a thing like this. 40

This said, pale *Mira* gazing stood,
And thus reply'd the seeming Wood;
Canst thou behold me and not find
The Picture of the Giver's Mind?
Behold the Lock and shining Key, 45
That ne'er its Mistress shall betray,
Not blemish'd with a Spot of Rust,
And always faithful to its Trust.

The rest may be to you consign'd,
For in this narrow Space you'll find 50
No Emblem large enough to fit
Her Bounty, Judgment, and her Wit.

But, *Mira*, since I have begun,
The Thread of my Discourse shall run,
Explaining how I am to you 55
A Monitor and Table too.
My hollow Spaces you may fill
With all your Verses good and ill;
One small one for your Wit may do,
But then your Faults will take up two. 60
And from the rest I pray exclude
One sacred Place for Gratitude:
And what our Patron yours and mine
Shall to my trusty Care consign,
For those lov'd Strangers I'll secure 65
The Closest with its tiny Door.

And now I've prattl'd long, my Dear,
Yet you are list'ning still to hear,
Expecting that I shou'd supply 70
At once Advice and Prophecy;
But that's not right for me nor you
To dive so deeply â?? tho', â??tis true,
Without Divining I can see
You'll ne'er deserve the Gift of me:
More wou'd you know â?? why, may be then 75
Within these Mornings nine or ten,
Propitious Jet may trudge before,
And lead his Mistress to your Door;
And when the Sun (whose distant Wheels
But faintly warm the icy Fields) 80
Shall gild your Cot with brighter Ray,
I hope to see her ev'ry Day.

But turn away thy stedfast Eyes,
That stare so ghastly with Surprise:
Go seek your Pillow and be still, 85
And dream of me or what you will.

This said (which *Mira* hop'd was true)
The Lid shut up, and cries Adieu. •
Then gave a Crack, and spoke no more,
And all was silent as before. 90

NOTES:

5 *Turret* A room or chamber (*OED*).

8 *Mira* Mary Leapor's poetic name for herself.

15 *Cherub's Form* A winged being or symbolic representations often mentioned throughout the Bible (*OED*).

18 *Buroe* A chest of drawers (*OED*).

26 *Wood* • A Hebrew word which designates a certain type of idol throughout the context of the Bible • (*OED*).

38 *Caudle* A warm drink of thin gruel usually mixed with wine, often given to sick people, usually women (*OED*).

51 *Emblem* Heroic device or symbolic object (*OED*).

62 *sacred Place for Gratitude* Biblical allusion centered on finding light amidst the darkness (*Oxford Scholarship Online*).

77 *Jet* Name for a dog (*OED*).

81 *Cot* A small house (*OED*).

88 *Adieu* To take one's leave (*OED*).

Source: *Poems Upon Several Occasions* (1748), 131-135. [Google Books]

Edited by Magdalena Becerra