

## AI Overview

The artwork you are referring to is titled [\*The Rejected Poet\*](#) (also known as *Pope Makes Love To Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*), painted in **1852** by the British artist **William Powell Frith**.

The painting captures a famous, cringe-inducing moment from 18th-century literary history. The celebrated poet **Alexander Pope**, who stood just 4 feet 6 inches tall due to severe spinal tuberculosis, fell deeply in love with the aristocratic writer and traveler **Lady Mary Wortley Montagu**. When Pope unexpectedly and passionately confessed his romantic feelings to her, Lady Mary found the declaration so absurd that she completely lost her composure and **burst into uncontrollable laughter**.

This brutal rejection permanently shattered Pope's ego. He became her lifelong enemy and spent years using his poetry to viciously attack her beauty and virtue.

### Why the Painting Caused an Uproar

When Frith debuted the painting at the **Royal Academy exhibition in 1852**, it became highly controversial:

- **An Insult to a Legend:** Because Alexander Pope was universally regarded as one of England's greatest literary figures, critics and the public felt that exposing his most vulnerable, humiliating failure on a massive canvas was a slap in the face to his legacy.
- **The Artist's Regret:** The public backlash was so intense that Frith himself later admitted he felt guilty. He wrote that while he felt deep admiration and respect for Pope, he simply **could not resist the sheer dramatic effect** of contrasting Pope's consuming rage with Lady Mary's cruel laughter.

The masterpiece now resides in the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in New Zealand. [