**The Rape of the Lock**   
**by Alexander Pope (1688-1744)**

**A Study Guide**

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| **Introduction: The Mock-Epic**  .  At the beginning of "The Rape of the Lock," Pope identifies the work as a “heroi-comical poem.” Today, the poem–and others like it–is referred to as a *mock-epic* and sometimes as a *mock-heroic*. Such a work parodies the serious, elevated style of the classical epic poem–such as [*The Iliad*](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/TheIliad.html#Iliad) or [*The Odyssey*](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/Guides2/Odyssey.html#Odyssey)*,* by Homer–to poke fun at human follies. Thus, a mock-epic is a type of satire; it treats petty humans or insignificant occurrences as if they were extraordinary or heroic, like the great heroes and events of Homer's two great epics. In writing "The Rape of the Lock," Pope imitated the characteristics of Homer's epics, as well as later epics such as [*The Aeneid*](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/Guides2/Aeneid.html#The Aeneid) (Vergil), [*The Divine Comedy*](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/Guides2/DivineCom.html#Dante Home) (Dante), and [*Paradise Lost*](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/ParadiseLost.html#Milton) (Milton). Many of these characteristics are listed below, under "Epic Conventions." |

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**Setting**  
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The action takes place in London and its environs in the early 1700's on a single day. The story begins at noon (Canto I) at the London residence of Belinda as she carefully prepares herself for a gala social gathering. The scene then shifts (Canto II) to a boat carrying Belinda up the Thames. To onlookers she is as magnificent as Queen Cleopatra was when she traveled in her barge. The rest of the story (Cantos III-V) takes place where Belinda debarks–Hampton Court Palace, a former residence of King Henry VIII on the outskirts of London–except for a brief scene in Canto IV that takes place in the cave of the Queen of Spleen.   
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**Characters**

**Belinda** Beautiful young lady with wondrous hair, two locks of which hang gracefully in curls.   
**The Baron** Young admirer of Belinda who plots to cut off one of her locks.   
**Ariel** Belinda's guardian sylph (supernatural creature).

**Clarissa** Young lady who gives the Baron scissors.   
**Umbriel** Sprite who enters the cave of the Queen of Spleen to seek help for Belinda.   
**Queen of Spleen** Underworld goddess who gives Umbriel gifts for Belinda.   
**Thalestris** Friend of Belinda. Thalestris urges Sir Plume to defend Belinda's honor.   
**Sir Plume** Beau of Thalestris. He scolds the Baron.   
**Sylphs, Fairies, Genies, Demons, Phantoms and Other Supernatural Creatures**

**Source: A Real-Life Incident**  
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Pope based *The Rape of the Lock* on an actual incident in which a British nobleman, Lord Petre, cut off a lock of hair dangling tantalizingly from the head of the beautiful Arabella Fermor. Petre’s daring theft of the lock set off a battle royal between the Petre and Fermor families. John Caryll–a friend of Pope and of the warring families–persuaded the great writer to pen a literary work satirizing the absurdity and silliness of the dispute. The result was one of the greatest satirical poems in all of literature. In writing the poem, Pope also drew upon ancient classical sources–notably Homer’s great epics, [*The Iliad*](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/TheIliad.html#Iliad) and [*The Odyssey*](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/Guides2/Odyssey.html#Odyssey)–as models to imitate in style and tone. He also consulted the texts of medieval and Renaissance epics.

**Plot Summary**   
By Michael J. Cummings...© 2005   
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.......Pope opens with a statement announcing the topic of his poem: A gentleman–a lord, in fact–has committed a terrible outrage against a gentlewoman, causing her to reject him. What was this offense? Why did it incite such anger in the lady?   
.......The woman in question is named Belinda. She is sleeping late one day in her London home when a sylph–a dainty spirit that inhabits the air–warns her that “I saw, alas! some dread Event impend.” The sylph, named Ariel, does not know what this event is or where or how it will manifest itself. But he does tell Belinda to be on guard against the machinations of men.

Belinda rises and prepares herself for a social gathering, sitting before a mirror and prettying herself with “puffs and powders” and scenting herself with “all Arabia.” Afterward, she travels up the Thames River to the site of the social festivities, Hampton Court, the great palace on the north bank of the river that in earlier times was home to King Henry VIII. As she sits in the boat, “Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone, / But ev'ry Eye was fix'd on her alone.” In other words, she was beautiful beyond measure. She smiled at everyone equally, and her eyes–bright suns–radiated goodwill. Especially endearing to anyone who looked upon her were her wondrous tresses:

This Nymph, to the Destruction of Mankind,   
Nourish'd two Locks which graceful hung behind   
In equal Curls, and well conspir'd to deck   
With shining Ringlets the smooth Iv'ry Neck.

.......Among Belinda’s admirers is a young baron at Hampton Court awaiting her arrival. He has resolved to snip off a lock of her hair as the trophy of trophies. Before dawn, before even the sun god Phoebus Apollo arose, the Baron had been planning the theft of a lock of Belinda's hair. To win the favor of the gods, he had lighted an altar fire and, lying face down before it, prayed for success.   
.......After Belinda arrives at Hampton Court with her company of friends, the partygoers play Ombre, a popular card game in which only 40 of the 52 cards are dealt--the eights, nines, and tens are held back. It appears that the Baron will win the game after his knave of diamonds captures her queen of hearts. However, Belinda yet has hope, even after the Baron plays an ace of hearts:

...........................................The King unseen   
Lurk'd in her Hand, and mourn'd his captive Queen.   
He springs to Vengeance with an eager Pace,   
And falls like Thunder on the prostrate Ace   
The Nymph exulting fills with Shouts the Sky;   
The Walls, the Woods, and long Canals reply.

.......Belinda wins! Coffee is served, the vapors of which go to the Baron’s brain and embolden him to carry out his assault on Belinda’s hair. Clarissa, a lady who fancies the Baron, withdraws scissors from a case and arms him with the weapon. When he closes in behind Belinda, she bends over her coffee, exposing a magnificent lock. But a thousand sprites come to her aid, using their wings to blow hair over the lock. They also tug at one of her diamond earrings to alert her to the danger. Three times they warn her and three times she looks around. But all is for naught. The Baron opens wide his weapon, closes it around the lock, and cuts. The rape of her lock enrages Belinda:

Then flash'd the living Lightnings from her Eyes,   
And Screams of Horror rend th' affrighted Skies.   
Not louder Shrieks to pitying Heav'n are cast,   
When Husbands, or when Lapdogs breathe their last,   
Or when rich China Vessels, fal'n from high,   
In glitt'ring Dust and painted Fragments lie!

.......A gnome named Umbriel descends to the Underworld on Belinda’s behalf and obtains a bag of sighs and a vial of tears from the Queen of Spleen. With these magical gifts, he means to comfort poor Belinda. First, he empties the bag on her. A gentleman named Sir Plume--prompted by his belle, Thalestris, a friend of Belinda--then roundly scolds the Baron for his grave offense. But the Baron is unrepentant. Umbriel then empties the vial on Belinda. Grief overcomes her as her eyes half-drown in tears and her head droops upon her bosom. She says:

For ever curs'd be this detested Day,   
Which snatch'd my best, my fav'rite Curl away!   
Happy! ah ten times happy had I been,   
If Hampton-Court these Eyes had never seen!

.......Clarissa tries to mollify Belinda in a long speech, but fails. A bit of a melee ensues when Belinda attempts to retrieve her lost lock. “Fans clap, Silks russle, and tough Whalebones crack.” Belinda proves a fierce combatant. She attacks the Baron “with more than usual Lightning in her Eyes” and throws a handful of snuff from Sir Plume's box up his nose. But, alas, when the battle ends, the lock is nowhere to be found.   
.......However, the poem ends on a happy note for Belinda, Pope says, because the trimmed lock of her golden hair has risen to the heavens, there to become a shining star.

**Theme**

The central theme of *The Rape of the Lock* is the fuss that high society makes over trifling matters, such as breaches of decorum. In the poem, a feud of epic proportions erupts after the Baron steals a lock of Belinda’s hair. In the real-life incident on which Pope based his poem, the Petre and the Fermor families had a falling-out after Lord Petre snipped off one of Arabella Fermor’s locks. Other themes that Pope develops in the poem include human vanity and the importance of being able to laugh at life’s little reversals. The latter motif is a kind of “moral to the story.” Clarissa touches upon both of these themes when addressing tearful Belinda, shorn of her lock:

But since, alas! frail Beauty must decay,   
Curl'd or uncurl'd, since Locks will turn to grey;   
Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,   
And she who scorns a Man, must die a Maid,   
What then remains but well our Pow'r to use,   
And keep good Humour still whate'er we lose?

**Climax**   
**.**   
The climax of *The Rape of the Lock* occurs when the Baron snips away one of Belinda's locks.

**Publication Information**

Pope published three versions of *The Rape of the Lock*. The first was a two-canto version published in 1712. The second, published in 1714, was a five-canto version that added references to sylphs and other supernatural creatures. The final version, published in 1717 in a volume of Pope's poetry, added Clarissa's speech in Canto V.

**Verse Format**   
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Pope wrote *The Rape of the Lock* in heroic couplets. A heroic couplet is a unit of two rhyming lines in [iambic pentameter](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/xfacts.html#Blank Verse). A line of verse in iambic pentameter consists of 10 syllables. The first syllable is unaccented, the second accented, the third unaccented, the fourth accented, and so on. The entire poem consists of one heroic couplet followed by another, as demonstrated by the first four lines of the poem:

What dire offence from am'rous causes **springs**,   
What mighty contests rise from trivial **things**,.................. [First Couplet: *springs* and *things* rhyme]   
I sing–This verse to CARYL, Muse! is **due**:   
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to **view**..........................[Second Couplet: *due* and *view* rhyme]

Each of the lines has 10 syllables in a succession of accented and unaccented pairs (iambic pentameter), as follows:

What **dire** of**fence** from **am**'rous **caus**es **springs**,   
What **migh**ty **con**tests **rise** from **tr**ivial **things**,   
I **sing**–This **verse** to **CAR**YL, **Muse**! is **due**:   
This, **ev'n** Bel**in**da **may** vouch**safe** to **view**

You may have noticed that Pope turned *amorous* into two syllables by eliminating the *o* and attempted to turn *even* into a single syllable by eliminating the second *e*. Poetic license permits poets to make such adjustments to achieve their ends.

**The Rape of the Lock**   
By Alexander Pope   
Complete Text With Detailed Explanatory Notes   
Boldfaced Black or Colored Words Are Explained in the Notes

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| **Canto I** |

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| ***Stanza 1***  **What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,**  **What mighty contests rise from trivial things,**  **I sing**--This verse to **CARYL, Muse**! is due:  This, ev'n **Belinda** may vouchsafe to view:  Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,  If She inspire, and He approve my lays.  Say what strange motive, **Goddess**! could compel  A well-bred Lord t' assault a gentle Belle?  O say what stranger cause, yet unexplor'd,  Could make a gentle Belle reject a Lord?......... 10  In tasks so bold, can little men engage,  And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty Rage?  **Sol** thro' white **curtains** shot a **tim'rous** ray,  And **oped** those eyes that **must eclipse the day**:  Now **lap-dogs** give themselves the rousing shake,......... 15  And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:  Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knock'd the ground,  And the **press'd watch** return'd a silver sound.  Belinda still her downy pillow prest,  Her guardian **Sylph** prolong'd the balmy rest:........... 20  'Twas He had summon'd to her silent bed  The morning-dream that hover'd o'er her head;  A Youth more glitt'ring than a **Birth-night** Beau,  (That ev'n in slumber caus'd her cheek to glow)  Seem'd to her ear his winning lips to lay,.......... 25  And thus in whispers said, or seem'd to say.  Notes, Stanza 1  **What . . . sing:** I am writing (I sing) about a terrible offense resulting from an amorous cause.  **CARYL, Muse**: A friend of Pope, John Caryl, whom Pope addresses as the muse. An acquaintance of Caryl, Lord Petre, cut off a lock of hair of a young lady, Arabella Fermor. A quarrel erupted between the families. Caryl suggested that Pope write a poem to point up the silliness of the quarrel. Pope addresses Caryl as if he were a muse.For further information on "invoking the muse.  **Belinda**: Arabella Fermor. Belinda is a poetic name associated with gentleness.For further information about Arabella Fermor.  **Goddess**: Another reference to Caryl as the muse.  **Sol**: the sun  **curtains**: the curtains on Belinda's bed  **Tim'rous**: timorous, meaning *shy, timid*  **Oped**: opened  **Must eclipse the day**: Belinda's eyes are so bright that they rival the brightness of the sun.  **Lap-dogs**: dogs small enough to be held in the lap  **Press'd watch**: a kind of clock. Pressing a button on it caused a bell to sound the current hour or quarter hour.  **Sylph**: fairy, sprite  **Birth-night:** evening celebration of a royal person's birthday  ***Stanza 2***  **Fairest of mortals, thou** **distinguish'd care**  **Of thousand bright Inhabitants of Air**!  If e'er one vision touch'd thy infant thought,  Of all the Nurse and all the Priest have taught;........ . 30  Of airy Elves by moonlight shadows seen,  The **silver token**, and the **circled green**,  Or virgins visited by Angel-pow'rs,  With golden crowns and wreaths of heav'nly flow'rs;  Hear and believe! thy own importance know,.......... 35  Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.  **Some secret truths, from learned pride conceal'd,**  **To Maids alone and Children are reveal'd:**  **What tho' no credit doubting Wits may give?**  The Fair and Innocent shall still believe.................... 40  Know, then, unnumber'd Spirits round thee fly,  The light Militia of the lower sky:  These, tho' unseen, are ever on the wing,  Hang o'er the **Box**, and hover round the **Ring**.  Notes, Stanza 2  **Fairest . . . Air**: The youth in her dream (Line 23) addresses Belinda as the fairest mortal, saying she is watched over by a thousand sprites inhabiting the air.  **Silver token**: coin left by a fairy as a gift for a favored mortal  **Some . . . give**: Certain secrets are revealed only to maidens like Belinda and to children, but not to highly educated people. Skeptics may doubt the truth of these secrets but Belinda and innocent children believe them.  **Box, Ring**: The spirits of the air hover around Belinda while she is in her theatre box or traveling in her carriage on a circular road (ring) in Hyde Park, a large park in the Westminster borough of London.  ***Stanza 3***  **Think what an equipage thou hast in Air,**....... 45  **And view with scorn two Pages and a Chair.**  **As now your own, our beings were of old,**  **And once inclos'd in Woman's beauteous mould;**  **Thence, by a soft transition, we repair**  **From earthly Vehicles to these of air.**................................50  **Think not, when Woman's transient breath is fled**  **That all her vanities at once are dead;**  Succeeding vanities she still regards,  And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.  Her joy in **gilded Chariots**, when alive,..................................55  And love of **Ombre**, after death survive.  For when the Fair in all their pride expire,  To their first Elements their Souls retire:  The **Sprites of fiery Termagants** in Flame  Mount up, and take a **Salamander's** name............................60  **Soft yielding** minds to Water glide away,  And sip, with Nymphs, their elemental Tea.  The graver Prude sinks downward to a Gnome,  In search of mischief still on Earth to roam.  The light Coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,............................ 65  And sport and flutter in the fields of Air.  Notes, Stanza 3  **Think . . .Chair**: You now have an army of sprites to look after you, not just two pages  **As . . . air**: The sprites were once women with beauteous forms. After death, they became spirits of the air.  **Think . . . dead**: After a woman dies, she retains an interest in amusements.  **Gilded Chariots**: splendid carriages to ride in  **Ombre**: a popular card game for three players in which only 40 of the 52 cards are dealt--the eights, nines, and tens are held back.  **Sprites . . . Termagants**: The spirits of quarrelsome, overbearing women.  **Salamander**: in myth, a lizard-like reptile that lived in fire; a spirit in the alchemy of Paracelsus (1493-1541), a Swiss physician  **Soft yielding**: Beginning here and continuing down to Line 66, the meaning is as follows: Other sprites live in water, keeping company with nymphs (minor goddess inhabiting the sea). Some sprites in the earth as gnomes (dwarflike creatures), and some of them live in the air.  ***Stanza 4***  "Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste  Rejects mankind, is by some Sylph embrac'd:  For Spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease  Assume what sexes and what shapes they please. 70  **What guards the purity of melting Maids,**  **In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades,**  **Safe from the treach'rous friend, the daring spark,**  **The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,**  **When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,**..............75  **When music softens, and when dancing fires?**  **'Tis but their Sylph**, the wise Celestials know,  Tho' Honour is the word with Men below.  **Some nymphs** there are, too conscious of their face,  For life predestin'd to the Gnomes' embrace............................80  These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,  When offers are disdain'd, and love deny'd:  Then gay Ideas crowd the vacant brain,  While Peers, and Dukes, and all their sweeping train,  And **Garters, Stars, and Coronets** appear,...........................85  And in soft sounds, **Your Grace** salutes their ear.  'Tis these that early taint the female soul,  Instruct the eyes of young **Coquettes** to roll,  **Teach Infant-cheeks abidden blush** to know,  And little hearts to flutter at a Beau........................................90  Notes, Stanza 4  **What . . . Sylph**: Sylphs (sprites) guard the purity of maidens from men who would take advantage of them.  **Daring spark**: a bold gentleman; an aggressive beau  **Some nymphs**: From this phrase down to Line 90, the poem says that some sprites urge young ladies to be proud. In their vanity, these women refuse the offers of gentlemen.  **Garters, Stars, and Coronets**: the badges and other insignia of persons of high rank.  **Your Grace**: a member of the nobility. Although the phrase is in second-person point of view, it is to be read in third-person point of view as if it says, "His Grace."  **Coquettes**: flirtatious women  **Teach . . . blush**: Teach young ladies to wear rouge  ***Stanza 5***  Oft, when the world imagine women stray,  The Sylphs thro' mystic mazes guide their way,  Thro' all the giddy circle they pursue,  And old impertinence expel by new.  What tender maid but must a victim fall..................................95  To one man's treat, but for another's ball?  When **Florio** speaks what virgin could withstand,  If gentle **Damon** did not squeeze her hand?  With varying vanities, from ev'ry part,  They shift the moving Toyshop of their heart;.........................100  **Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,**  **Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.**  **This erring mortals Levity may call**;  **Oh blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.**  **Of these** am I, who thy protection claim,..............................105  A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.  Late, as I **rang'd** the crystal wilds of air,  In the clear Mirror of thy ruling Star  I saw, alas! some dread event impend,  Ere to the main this morning sun descend,...........................110  But heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where:  Warn'd by the Sylph, oh pious maid, beware!  This to disclose is all thy guardian can:  Beware of all, but most beware of Man!"  Notes, Stanza 5  **Florio, Damon**: Names commonly used in poetry in Pope's time the way we use Tom, Dick, and Harry--or John Doe--today. They do not refer to a specific person but to men in general.  **Where . . . drive**: The young gentlemen are vying for the attention of the young ladies. |
| **sword-knots**: A sword knot was a loop of fabric or leather attached to the handle of a sword. A swordsman placed the loop around his wrist as a support for maintaining his grip. Some sword knots were intended only as ornaments.  **Beaux**: plural of beau  **This . . . all**: Humans are wrong to think that young women are responsible for their frivolous and flirtatious behavior (levity). The truth is that sprites cause this behavior.  **Of these**: Beginning with this phrase and continuing down to Line 114, Belinda's guardian sprite introduces himself as Ariel, then discloses that a dreadful event is about to happen. He does not know what will occur, or how or where, but warns Belinda to beware.  **rang'd**: ranged  ***Stanza 6***  He said; when **Shock**, who thought she slept too long,...........115  Leap'd up, and wak'd his mistress with his tongue.  'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,  Thy eyes first open'd on a **Billet-doux**;  Wounds, Charms, and Ardors were no sooner read,  But all the Vision vanish'd from thy head................................120  And now, unveil'd, the **Toilet** stands display'd,  Each silver Vase in mystic order laid.  First, rob'd in white, the Nymph intent adores,  With head uncover'd, the Cosmetic pow'rs.  A heav'nly image in the glass appears,..................................125  To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;  **Th' inferior Priestess**, at her altar's side,  Trembling begins the sacred rites of Pride.  Unnumber'd treasures ope at once, and here  The various off'rings of the world appear;................................130  From each she nicely culls with curious toil,  And **decks the Goddesswith the glitt'ring spoil**.  This **casket** India's glowing gems unlocks,  And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.  The **Tortoise** here and **Elephant** unite,.................................135  Transformed to combs, the speckled, and the white.  Here files of pins extend their shining rows,  Puffs, Powders, Patches, **Bibles**, Billet-doux.  **Now awful Beauty puts on all its arms**;  The fair each moment rises in her charms,............................140  Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace,  And calls forth all the wonders of her face;  Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,  And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.  The busy Sylphs surround their darling care,.........................145  These set the head, and those divide the hair,  Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown:  And Betty's prais'd for labours not her own.  Notes, Stanza 6  **Shock**: Belinda's dog.  **Billet-doux**: love letter. From the French *billet* (*note*, *letter*) and *doux* (*sweet*). The French pronunciation is be yay DOO; the English pronunciation is BIL ay DOO.  **Toilet**: dressing table or dressing room.  **Th' inferior Priestess**: Servant, maid.  **Decks . . . spoil**: adorns Belinda with jewels and other ornaments.  **Casket**: box, case.  **Tortoise:** The shell of a tortoise was used in making combs.  **Elephant**: Reference to ivory.  **Bibles**: Small Bibles were fashionable accessories on ladies' dressing tables.  **Now . . . arms**: In this case, of course, it is a woman putting on her clothes in preparation for vying in the battle of the sexes. |

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| **Canto II** |

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| ***Stanza 1***  **Not with more glories, in th' ethereal plain,**  The Sun first rises o'er the purpled main,  Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams  Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.  Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone...............5  But ev'ry eye was fix'd on her alone.  On her white breast a sparkling Cross she wore,  **Which Jews might kiss**, and Infidels adore.  Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,  Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those:............................10  Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;  Oft she rejects, but never once offends.  Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,  And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.  Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,.......................15  Might hide her faults, if Belles had faults to hide:  If to her share some female errors fall,  Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.  Notes, Stanza 1  **Not . . . plain**: Belinda is traveling in a boat on the Thames River with youths and guardian sprites. They all look so glorious that they rival the sunshine.  **Which . . . kiss**: An offensive line that is out of place in an otherwise delightful poem  ***Stanza 2***  This Nymph, to the destruction of mankind,  Nourish'd two Locks, which graceful hung behind.....................20  In equal curls, and well conspir'd to deck  With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.  **Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,**  And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.  **With hairy springes we the birds betray,**............................25  **Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,**  **Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,**  And beauty draws us with a single hair.  Th' advent'rous Baron the bright locks admir'd;  He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspir'd..............................30  Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,  By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;  For when success a Lover's toil attends,  Few ask, if fraud or force attain'd his ends.  Notes, Stanza 2  **Love . . . detains**: Young men fall in love with her glorious curls (labyrinths) of hair, becoming slaves to her beauty.  **With . . . ensnare**: Just as we catch game birds in snares and fish ("finny prey") in nets, Belinda catches men with her hair.  **springes**: traps, snares  **finny**: having fins  ***Stanza 3***  For this, ere **Phoebus** rose, **he** had implor'd...........................35  Propitious heav'n, and ev'ry pow'r ador'd,  But chiefly Love--**to Love an Altar built,**  Of twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt.  There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves;  And all the trophies of his former loves;...................................40  With tender Billet-doux he lights the pyre,  And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.  Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes  Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:  The pow'rs gave ear, and granted half his pray'r,.......................45  The rest, the winds dispers'd in empty air.  Notes, Stanza 3  **Phoebus**: Apollo, the sun god. *Phoebus* means *bright one*. In Greek mythology, Phoebus Apollo became the sun, driving his golden chariot across the sky. Thus, *Phoebus* became a synonym for *sun*.  **He**: the baron (mentioned in Line 29).  **To . . . built**: From here down to Line 46, the poem says the baron places mementoes of young ladies of his acquaintance on an altar. Then he burns them in a "funeral" fire (pyre) fueled with love letters; he is offering a sacrifice that the gods may grant his wish to obtain locks of Belinda's hair.  ***Stanza 4***  But now secure the painted vessel glides,  The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides:  While melting music steals upon the sky,  And soften'd sounds along the waters die;...............................50  Smooth flow the waves, the **Zephyrs** gently play,  Belinda smil'd, and all the world was gay.  All but the **Sylph**--with careful thoughts opprest,  Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast.  **He summons strait his Denizens of air;**................../............55  **The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:**  Soft o'er the **shrouds** aerial whispers breathe,  That seem'd but Zephyrs to the train beneath.  Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,  Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;..........................60  Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,  Their fluid bodies half dissolv'd in light,  Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,  Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,  Dipt in the richest tincture of the skies,...................................65  Where **light disports in ever-mingling dyes,**  **While ev'ry beam new transient colours flings**,  Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.  Amid the circle, on the gilded mast,  Superior by the head, was Ariel plac'd;....................................70  His purple **pinions** op'ning to the sun,  He rais'd his azure wand, and thus begun.  Notes, Stanza 4  **Zephyrs**: west winds or soft breezes.  **Sylph:** Ariel  **He . . . repair**: Ariel summons his helpers, and they gather around Belinda.  **Shrouds**: ropes or wires attached to a mast and secured on the sides of a ship. They keep the mast steady.  **Light . . . flings**: The light displays a variety of colors.  **disports**: plays; amuses itself  **pinions**: wings  ***Stanza 5***  Ye Sylphs and **Sylphids**, to your chief give ear!  Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Daemons, hear!  **Ye know** the spheres and various tasks assign'd.....................75  By laws eternal to th' aerial kind.  Some in the fields of purest Aether play,  And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.  Some guide the course of wand'ring orbs on high,  Or roll the planets thro' the boundless sky...............................80  Some less refin'd, beneath the moon's pale light  Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,  Or suck the mists in grosser air below,  Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,  Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,............................85  Or o'er the **glebe** distil the kindly rain.  Others on earth o'er human race preside,  Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide:  Of these the chief the care of Nations own,  And guard with Arms divine the British Throne.........................90  Notes, Stanza 5  **Sylphids**: Female sylphs, female sprites  **Ye know**: From this phrase down to Line 90, Ariel describes the tasks assigned to the various kinds of sprites.  **glebe**: earth  ***Stanza 6***  **Our humbler province** is to tend the Fair,  Not a less pleasing, tho' less glorious care;  To save the powder from too rude a gale,  Nor let th' imprison'd-essences exhale;  To draw fresh colours from the vernal flow'rs;...........................95  To steal from rainbows e'er they drop in show'rs  A brighter **wash**; to curl their waving hairs,  Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;  Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow,  To change a **Flounce**, or add a **Furbelow**............................100  This day, black Omens threat the brightest Fair,  That e'er deserv'd a watchful spirit's care;  Some dire disaster, or by force, or slight;  But what, or where, the fates have wrapt in night.  Whether the nymph shall break **Diana's law**,........................105  Or some frail China jar receive a flaw;  Or stain her honour or her new brocade;  Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade;  Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball;  Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that Shock must fall................110  Haste, then, ye spirits! to your charge repair:  The flutt'ring fan be **Zephyretta**'s care;  The drops to thee, **Brillante**, we consign;  And, **Momentilla**, let the watch be thine;  Do thou, **Crispissa**, tend her fav'rite Lock;..............................115  Ariel himself shall be the guard of **Shock**.  Notes, Stanza 6  **Our humbler province**: From this phrase down to Line 100, Ariel tells his sprites that one of their jobs is to tend to the needs of fair ladies--to keep their powders and perfumes in place, to curl their hair, to put color in their cheeks, etc.  **wash**: skin lotion |
| **Flounce**: frill or ruffle  **Furbelow**: also a ruffle or any other ornament  **Diana's law**: the law of Diana (Greek name, *Artemis*), Apollo's twin sister and the virgin goddess of chastity. This law required young women to maintain their chastity.  **Zephyretta**: Sprite in charge of regulating the wind generated by a fan.  **Drops**: earrings.  **Brillante**: Sprite in charge of earrings  **Momentilla**: Sprite in charge of watching the time  **Crispissa**: Sprite in charge of guarding Belinda's favorite lock of hair.  **Shock**: Belinda's dog.  ***Stanza 7***  To fifty chosen Sylphs, of special note,  We trust th' important charge, the Petticoat:  Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,  Tho' stiff with hoops, and arm'd with ribs of whale;..................120  Form a strong line about the silver bound,  And guard the wide circumference around.  Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,  His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,  Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,.................125  Be stopp'd in vials, or transfix'd with pins;  Or plung'd in lakes of bitter washes lie,  Or wedg'd whole ages in a bodkin's eye:  Gums and **Pomatums** shall his flight restrain,  While clogg'd he beats his silken wings in vain;.....................130  Or Alum **styptics** with contracting pow'r  Shrink his thin essence like a rivel'd flow'r:  Or, as **Ixion** fix'd, the wretch shall feel  The giddy motion of the whirling **Mill**,  In fumes of burning Chocolate shall glow,..............................135  And tremble at the sea that froths below!  He spoke; the spirits from the sails descend;  Some, orb in orb, around the nymph extend;  Some **thrid** the **mazy** ringlets of her hair;  Some hang upon the pendants of her ear:.............................140  With beating hearts the dire event they wait,  Anxious, and trembling for the birth of Fate.  Notes, Stanza 7  **Pomatums**: ointments  **styptics**: preparations that stop bleeding  **rivel'ed**: shriveled, shrunken  **Ixion**: In Greek mythology, King of Lapithae, who dared to fall in love with Hera, queen of the gods and wife of Zeus. To punish him, Zeus had him tied in Hades to a wheel that revolved nonstop.  **Mill**: chocolate mill.  **thrid**: threaded  **mazy**: like a maze |

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| **Canto III** |

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| ***Stanza 1***  Close by those **meads**, for ever crown'd with flow'rs,  Where Thames with pride surveys his rising tow'rs,  There stands a **structure** of majestic frame,  Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its name.  Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom............................5  Of foreign Tyrants and of Nymphs at home;  Here thou, great **Anna**! **whom three** realms obey.  Dost sometimes counsel take--and sometimes Tea.  Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,  To taste awhile the pleasures of a Court;.................................10  In various talk th' instructive hours they past,  Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;  One speaks the glory of the British Queen,  And one describes a charming Indian screen;  A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;............................15  **At ev'ry word a reputation dies**.  Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,  With singing, laughing, ogling, and \_all that.  Notes, Stanza 1  **meads**: meadows  **structure**: the royal palace at Hampton Court  **Anna . . . three**: Anne (1665-1714), queen of England, Scotland, and Wales from 1702 to 1714.  **At . . . dies**: There was much gossip at the court.  ***Stanza 2***  Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,  The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;................................20  The hungry Judges soon the sentence sign,  And wretches hang that jury-men may dine;  The merchant from th' Exchange returns in peace,  And the long labours of the Toilet cease.  Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites,................................25  Burns to encounter **two advent'rous Knights**,  **At Ombre** singly to decide their doom;  And swells her breast with conquests yet to come.  **Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,**  **Each band the number of the sacred nine**. . 30  Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aerial guard  Descend, and sit on each important card:  First Ariel perch'd upon a **Matadore**,  Then each, according to the rank they bore;  For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,...........................35  Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.  Behold, four Kings in majesty rever'd,  With **hoary whiskers** and a forky beard;  And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a flow'r,  Th' expressive emblem of their softer pow'r;.............................40  Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,  Caps on their heads, and **halberts** in their hand;  And particolour'd troops, a shining train,  Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.  Notes, Stanza 2  **Two . . .Ombre**: Ombre requires three players. Here, Belinda will vie with two gentlemen.  **Straight . . . join**: the battle.  **Each . . . nine**: In Greek mythology, the nine muses of Mount Olympus. The cards,dealt in groups, correspond in number to the nine muses in Greek mythology.  **Matadore (also Matador)**: card of the highest value in ombre  **hoary whiskers**: gray mustaches  **halberts** (also *halberds* or *halbards*): A halbert was a weapon with a shaft five to six feet long topped by a pike, or spearhead, and below the pike an axe blade. A warrior could thrust with a halbert, as with a spear, or hack, as with a battle-axe.  ***Stanza 3***  The skillful Nymph reviews her force with care:........................45  Let Spades be trumps! she said, and trumps they were.  Now move to war her sable Matadores,  In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.  **Spadillo** first, unconquerable Lord!  Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board......................50  As many more **Manillo** forc'd to yield,  And march'd a victor from the verdant field.  Him **Basto** follow'd, but his fate more hard  Gain'd but one trump and one **Plebeian** card.  With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,............................55  The hoary Majesty of Spades appears,  Puts forth one manly leg, to sight reveal'd,  The rest, his many-colour'd robe conceal'd.  The rebel **Knave**, who dares his prince engage,  Proves the just victim of his royal rage....................................60  Ev'n mighty Pam, that Kings and Queens o'erthrew  And mow'd down armies in the fights of **Lu**,  Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,  Falls undistinguish'd by the victor spade!  Thus far both armies to Belinda yield;.....................................65  Now to the Baron fate inclines the field.  His warlike Amazon her host invades,  Th' imperial consort of the crown of Spades.  The Club's black Tyrant first her victim dy'd,  Spite of his haughty **mien**, and barb'rous pride:.......................70  **What boots** **the regal circle** on his head,  His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread;  That long behind he trails his pompous robe,  And, of all monarchs, only grasps the **globe**?  Notes, Stanza 3  **Spadillo**: ace of spades  **Manillo**: two of spades, a card of high value  **Basto**: ace of clubs, card with third-highest value  **Plebeian**: card of little value  **Knave**: jack  **Pam**: jack of clubs  **Lu**: Loo, a card game in which the jack of clubs had the highest value  **mien**: manner  **What boots the regal circle**: what good is the regal circle  **globe**: golden ball which, along with a scepter, was an emblem of royal power  ***Stanza 4***  The Baron now his Diamonds pours apace; 75  Th' embroider'd King who shows but half his face,  And his refulgent Queen, with pow'rs combin'd  Of broken troops an easy conquest find.  Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild disorder seen,  With throngs promiscuous **strow** the level green. 80  Thus when dispers'd a routed army runs,  Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,  With like confusion different nations fly,  Of various habit, and of various dye,  The pierc'd battalions dis-united fall, 85  In heaps on heaps; one fate o'erwhelms them all.  The Knave of Diamonds tries his wily arts,  And wins (oh shameful chance!) the Queen of Hearts.  At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,  A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look; 90  She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,  Just in the jaws of ruin, and **Codille**.  And now (as oft in some distemper'd State)  On one nice Trick depends the gen'ral fate.  An Ace of Hearts steps forth: The King unseen 95  Lurk'd in her hand, and mourn'd his captive Queen:  He springs to Vengeance with an eager pace,  And falls like thunder on the prostrate Ace.  The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky;  The walls, the woods, and **long canals** reply. 100  Notes, Stanza 4  **strow**: archaic form of *strew*  **Codille**: A development in which the challenger failed to win the necessary cards. On the next play, Belinda wins the game.  **long canals**: The canals on the grounds of Hampton Court  ***Stanza 5***  Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate,  Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.  Sudden, these honours shall be snatch'd away,  And curs'd for ever this victorious day.  For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crown'd, 105  The **berries crackle**, and the mill turns round;  On shining **Altars of Japan** they raise  The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze:  From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,  While **China's earth receives the smoking tide**: 110  At once they gratify their scent and taste,  And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.  Straight hover round the Fair her airy band;  Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd,  Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd, 115  Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.  Coffee, (which makes the politician wise,  And see thro' all things with his half-shut eyes)  Sent up in vapours to the Baron's brain  New Stratagems, the radiant Lock to gain. 120  Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere't is too late,  Fear the just Gods, and think of **Scylla's Fate!**  **Chang'd to a bird, and sent to flit in air,**  **She dearly pays for Nisus' injur'd hair!**  Notes, Stanza 5  **Berries crackle**: The coffee beans crackle when roasted on the mill.  **Altars of Japan**: tables coated with varnish made from a substance of a Japanese tree of the cashew family.  **China's . . . tide**: The china coffee cups receive the steaming coffee.  **Scylla's . . . hair**: In Greek mythology, Scylla betrayed her father, Nisus, King of Megara, by cutting off a lock of his hair--a purple lock with magical powers that safeguarded him and his kingdom. Scylla did so because she was in love with her father's enemy, King Minos of Crete, who was attacking Megara. Nisus died and was changed into a sea eagle. Scylla later drowned and was changed into a sea bird that was chased by the eagle.  ***Stanza 6***  But when to mischief mortals bend their will, 125  How soon they find fit instruments of ill!  Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace  A two-edg'd **weapon** from her shining case:  So Ladies in Romance assist their Knight,  Present the spear, and arm him for the fight. 130  He takes the gift with rev'rence, and extends  The little engine on his fingers' ends;  This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,  As o'er the **fragrant steams** she bends her head.  Swift to the Lock a thousand Sprites repair, 135  A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair;  And thrice they twitch'd the diamond in her ear;  Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the foe drew near.  Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought  The close recesses of the Virgin's thought; 140  As on the **nosegay** in her breast reclin'd,  He watch'd th' Ideas rising in her mind,  Sudden he view'd, in spite of all her art,  An earthly Lover lurking at her heart.  Amaz'd, confus'd, he found his pow'r expir'd, 145  Resign'd to fate, and with a sigh retir'd.  Notes, Stanza 6  **fragrant steams:** steam from the hot coffee  **weapon**: scissors  **nosegay**: small bouquet of flowers  ***Stanza 7***  **The** **Peer** now spreads the glitt'ring **Forfex** wide,  T' inclose the Lock; now joins it, to divide.  Ev'n then, before the fatal engine clos'd,  A wretched Sylph too fondly interpos'd; 150  Fate urg'd the shears, and cut the Sylph in twain,  (But airy substance soon unites again)  The meeting points the sacred hair dissever  From the fair head, for ever, and for ever!  Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes, 155  And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.  Not louder shrieks to pitying heav'n are cast,  When husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last;  Or when rich China vessels fall'n from high,  In glitt'ring dust and painted fragments lie! 160  Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine  (The victor cry'd) the glorious Prize is mine!  While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,  Or in a coach and six the British Fair,  As long as **Atalantis** shall be read, 165  Or the small pillow grace a Lady's bed,  While visits shall be paid on solemn days,  When num'rous wax-lights in bright order blaze,  While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,  So long my honour, name, and praise shall live! 170  What Time would spare, from **Steel receives** its date,  And monuments, like men, submit to fate!  Steel could the labour of the Gods destroy,  And **strike to dust th' imperial tow'rs of Troy**;  Steel could the works of mortal pride confound, 175  And hew **triumphal arches** to the ground.  What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel,  The conqu'ring force of unresisted steel?  Notes, Stanza 7  **The Peer:** thebaron  **Forfex**: Latin for *scissors*  **Atalantis**: Reference to *The New Atlantis*, a popular gossip novel by Mary de la Riviere Manley (1663-1724). It alluded to real-life scandals.  **Steel receives**: From this phrase down to Line 178, the poem tells of the power of steel to endure, to destroy the work of gods and men, and, of course, to trim a lock of hair.  **Strike . . . Troy**: In the Trojan War, the Greeks--using swords and spears of steel--slaughtered the Trojans and destroyed their city after gaining entry to the city inside a wooden horse.  **Triumphal arches**: arches built to honor and memorialize great men and heroes. |

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| **Canto IV** |

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| ***Stanza 1***  But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppress'd,  And secret passions labour'd in her breast.  **Not** youthful kings in battle seiz'd alive,  **Not** scornful virgins who their charms survive,  **Not** ardent lovers robb'd of all their bliss, 5  **Not** ancient ladies when refus'd a kiss,  **Not** tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,  **Not Cynthia** when her manteau's pinn'd awry,  E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair,  As thou, sad Virgin! for thy ravish'd Hair. 10  For, that sad moment, when the Sylphs withdrew  And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,  Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,  As ever sully'd the fair face of light,  Down to the central earth, his proper scene, 15  Repair'd to search the gloomy **Cave of Spleen**.  Notes, Stanza 1  **Cynthia**: another name for the goddess Diana (Greek name, Artemis), Apollo's twin sister and the virgin goddess of chastity.  Cynthia is derived from the Greek word *Kynthia*, meaning *from or associated with Kynthos*, a mountain on the Greek island of Delos where Artemis and Apollo were born.  **Cave of Spleen**: Dwelling of the Queen of Spleen--that is, the queen of melancholy and low spirits.  ***Stanza 2***  Swift on his sooty pinions flits the Gnome,  And in a vapour reach'd the dismal dome.  No cheerful breeze this sullen region knows,  The dreaded East is all the wind that blows. 20  Here in a **grotto**, shelter'd close from air,  And screen'd in shades from day's detested glare,  She sighs for ever on her pensive bed,  Pain at her side, and Megrim at her head.  Two handmaids wait the throne: alike in place, 25  But diff'ring far in figure and in face.  Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient maid,  Her wrinkled form in black and white array'd;  With store of pray'rs, for mornings, nights, and noons,  Her hand is fill'd; her bosom with lampoons. 30  There Affectation, with a sickly mien,  Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,  Practis'd to lisp, and hang the head aside.  Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,  On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe, 35  Wrapt in a gown, for sickness, and for show.  The fair ones feel such maladies as these,  When each new night-dress gives a new disease.  Notes, Stanza 2  **grotto**: cave  **Megrim**: melancholy, depression, low spirits; headache  ***Stanza 3***  A constant Vapour o'er the palace flies;  Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise; 40  Dreadful, as hermit's dreams in haunted shades,  Or bright, as visions of expiring maids.  Now glaring fiends, and snakes on **rolling spires**,  Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple fires:  Now lakes of liquid gold, **Elysian** scenes, 45  And crystal domes, and angels in machines.  Unnumber'd throngs on every side are seen,  Of **bodies chang'd** to various forms by Spleen.  Here living Tea-pots stand, one arm held out,  One bent; the handle this, and that the spout: 50  A **Pipkin** there, like **Homer's Tripod** walks;  Here sighs a Jar, and there a Goose-pie talks;  **Men prove with child**, as pow'rful fancy works,  And maids turn'd bottles, call aloud for corks.  Notes, Stanza 3  **Rolling spires**: spirals  **Elysian**: heavenly  **bodies . . . chang'd**: From this phrase down to Line 54, the poem describes people changed into objects by the Queen of Spleen. Victims of certain psychopathic disorders sometimes report that they have been changed into an object.  **Pipkin**: small pot or jar made of baked clay; small earthenware container  **Homer's tripod**: In Homer's *Iliad*, a tripod capable of moving itself.  **Men . . . child**: pregnant men  ***Stanza 4***  **Safe** **past** the Gnome thro' this fantastic band, 55  A branch of healing **Spleenwort** in his hand.  Then thus address'd the pow'r: "Hail, wayward Queen!  Who rule the sex to fifty from fifteen:  Parent of vapours and of female wit,  **Who give th' hysteric, or poetic fit,** 60  **On various tempers act by various ways,**  **Make some take physic, others scribble plays**;  Who cause the proud their visits to delay,  And send the godly in a **pet** to pray.  A nymph there is, that all thy pow'r disdains, 65  And thousands more in equal mirth maintains.  But oh! if e'er thy Gnome could spoil a grace,  Or raise a pimple on a beauteous face,  Like **Citron-waters** matrons cheeks inflame,  Or change complexions at a losing game; 70  **If e'er with airy horns I planted heads**,  Or rumpled petticoats, or tumbled beds,  Or caus'd suspicion when no soul was rude,  Or discompos'd the head-dress of a Prude,  Or e'er to **costivelap-dog gave disease**, 75  Which not the tears of brightest eyes could ease:  Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,  That single act gives half the world the spleen."  Notes, Stanza 4  **Safe past**: safely passed  **Spleenwort**: type of fern with healing powers. The reference to it is an allusion to Vergil's *Aeneid*, in which the hero, Aeneas, passes safely into the underworld because he is carrying a magical golden bough.  **Who . . . way**: The Queen of Spleen can influence the behavior of young ladies in various ways.  **Make . . . plays**: Some young ladies under the influence of a fit caused by the Queen of Spleen may take medicine. Others may scribble (plays, notes, love letters, drawings).  **Pet**: in a bad mood  **Citron-waters**: an alcoholic beverage distilled from the rinds of the lemon and citron (a yellow, thick-skinned fruit that resembles the lemon but is larger and less acidic)  **If . . . heads**: If I have ever planted horns in the heads of men. This clause is an allusion to an old tale saying that men would grow horns if their wives were unfaithful.  **costive . . . disease**: gave a scolding to a slow-moving or constipated pet dog  ***Stanza 5***  The Goddess with a discontented air  Seems to reject him, tho' she grants his pray'r. 80  **A wond'rous Bag with both her hands she binds,**  **Like that where once Ulysses held the winds;**  There she collects the force of female lungs,  Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues.  A Vial next she fills with fainting fears, 85  Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears.  The Gnome rejoicing bears her gifts away,  Spreads his black wings, and slowly mounts to day.  Sunk in **Thalestris**' arms the nymph he found,  Her eyes dejected and her hair unbound. 90  Full o'er their heads **the swelling bag he rent**,  And all the Furies issu'd at the vent.  Belinda burns with more than mortal ire,  And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire.  "O wretched maid!" she spread her hands, and cry'd, 95  (While Hampton's echoes, "Wretched maid!" reply'd)  "Was it for this you took such constant care  The **bodkin**, comb, and essence to prepare?  For this your locks in **paper durance** bound,  For this with **tort'ring** irons wreath'd around? 100  For this with **fillets** strain'd your tender head,  And bravely bore the double **loads of lead**?  Gods! shall the ravisher display your hair,  While the **Fops** envy, and the Ladies stare!  Honour forbid! at whose unrivall'd shrine 105  Ease, pleasure, virtue, all our sex resign.  Methinks already I your tears survey,  Already hear the horrid things they say,  Already see you a **degraded toast**,  And all your honour in a whisper lost! 110  How shall I, then, your helpless fame defend?  'Twill then be infamy to seem your friend!  **And shall this prize, th' inestimable prize,**  **Expos'd thro' crystal to the gazing eyes,**  **And heighten'd by the diamond's circling rays, 115**  **On that rapacious hand for ever blaze?**  Sooner shall grass in Hyde-park Circus grow,  And wits take lodgings in the **sound of Bow**;  Sooner let earth, air, sea, to Chaos fall,  Men, monkeys, lap-dogs, parrots, perish all!" 120  She said; then raging to Sir Plume repairs,  And bids her Beau demand the precious hairs;  (Sir Plume of amber snuff-box justly vain,  And the nice conduct of a **clouded cane**)  With earnest eyes, and round unthinking face, 125  He first the snuff-box open'd, then the case,  And thus broke out--"My Lord, why, what the devil?  "Z--ds! damn the lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil!  Plague on't!'t is past a jest--nay prithee, pox!  Give her the hair"--he spoke, and rapp'd his box.  Notes, Stanza 5  **A wond'rous . . . winds**: In Homer's *Odyssey*, Ulysses (Greek name, Odysseus) received a bag of winds from Aeolus, the god of the winds. When opened, the bag would release winds favorable to Ulysses on his sea voyage home.  **Thalestris**: See [characters](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/Guides2/Pope.html#Characters), above.  **The swelling . . . rent**: The gnome ripped the bag open.  **Bodkin**: hairpin  **paper durance**: confinement in paper. Belinda had apparently had her locks wrapped in paper while receiving a permanent.  **tort'ring**: torturing  **fillets**: bands of ribbon worn to keep hair in place  **loads of lead**: leaden ends of paper wraps encircling curls. The curls were wrapped in paper before treatment of them with chemicals that created a "permanent wave." The lead on the ends of the paper made it easy to attach one end of the paper to the other.  **Fops**: Vain men who pay undue attention to their clothes and manners.  **Degraded toast**: a woman who has been toasted for her beauty but then degraded or embarrassed by some event  **and shall . . . blaze**: Belinda worries that the baron will display the prize (the lock of hair) in a diamond ring he will wear.  **Hyde-park Circus**: The circular road in Hyde Park where Londoners drove their carriages.  **Sound of Bow**: Bow was a commercial district of London. It was unlikely that a fashionable person would want to live amid the hubbub there.  **Clouded cane**: Sir Plume carries a cane, or walking stick, made of wood with dark (clouded) grain  **Z--ds**: zounds (pronounced ZOONS), a mild oath. *Zounds* is a corruption of *by His wounds*, meaning the wounds of Christ. When spoken quickly, *by His wounds* becomes *zounds*.  ***Stanza 6***  "It grieves me much" (reply'd the Peer again)  "Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain.  But by this Lock, this sacred Lock I swear,  (Which never more shall join its parted hair;  Which never more its honours shall renew, 135  Clipp'd from the lovely head where late it grew)  That while my nostrils draw the vital air,  This hand, which won it, shall for ever wear."  He spoke, and speaking, in proud triumph spread  The long-contended honours of her head. 140  Notes, Stanza 6  In this passage, the baron says that pleas for him to return the lock of hair are in vain, for he means to keep and display it.  ***Stanza 7***  **But Umbriel**, hateful Gnome! forbears not so;  He breaks the Vial whence the sorrows flow.  Then see! the nymph in beauteous grief appears,  Her eyes half-languishing, half-drown'd in tears;  On her heav'd bosom hung her drooping head, 145  Which, with a sigh, she rais'd; and thus she said.  "For ever curs'd be this detested day,  Which snatch'd my best, my fav'rite curl away!  Happy! ah ten times happy had I been,  If Hampton-Court these eyes had never seen! 150  Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,  By love of Courts to num'rous ills betray'd.  Oh had I rather un-admir'd remain'd  In some lone isle, or distant Northern land;  Where the gilt Chariot never marks the way, 155  Where none learn Ombre, none e'er taste **Bohea**!  There kept my charms conceal'd from mortal eye,  Like roses, that in deserts bloom and die.  What mov'd my mind with youthful Lords to roam?  Oh had I stay'd, and said my pray'rs at home! 160  'Twas this, the morning omens seem'd to tell,  Thrice from my trembling hand the **patch-box** fell;  The tott'ring China shook without a wind.  Nay, **Poll** sat mute, and **Shock** was most unkind!  A Sylph too warn'd me of the threats of fate, 165  In mystic visions, now believ'd too late!  See the poor remnants of these slighted hairs!  My hands shall **rend** what ev'n thy rapine spares:  These in two **sable** ringlets taught to break,  Once gave new beauties to the snowy neck; 170  The sister-lock now sits uncouth, alone,  And in its fellow's fate foresees its own;  Uncurl'd it hangs, the fatal shears demands,  And tempts once more thy sacrilegious hands.  Oh hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize 175  Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!"  Notes, Stanza 7  **But Umbriel**: From this phrase down to Line 145, the poem says Umbriel breaks the vial of tears he obtained from the Queen of Spleen, enabling Belinda to vent her sorrow in a storm of tears.  **Bohea**: type of black tea grown in a mountain region of China  **patch-box**: box containing a preparation for making beauty marks  **Poll**: pet parrot  **Shock**: the dog  **rend**: tear out  **sable**: black |

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| **Canto V** |

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| ***Stanza 1***  She said: the pitying audience melt in tears.  But Fate and **Jove** had stopp'd the Baron's ears.  In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,  For who can move when fair Belinda fails?  Not half so fix'd **the Trojan** **could remain,** 5  **While Anna begg'd and Dido rag'd in vain**.  Then grave Clarissa graceful wav'd her fan;  Silence ensu'd, and thus the nymph began.  "Say why are Beauties prais'd and honour'd most,  The wise man's passion, and the vain man's toast? 10  Why deck'd with all that land and sea afford,  Why Angels call'd, and Angel-like ador'd?  Why round our coaches crowd the white-glov'd Beaux,  Why bows the **side-box** from its inmost rows;  How vain are all these glories, all our pains, 15  Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains:  That men may say, when we the **front-box** grace:  'Behold the first in virtue as in face!'  Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day,  Charm'd the small-pox, or chas'd old-age away; 20  Who would not scorn what housewife's cares produce,  Or who would learn one earthly thing of use?  To patch, nay ogle, might become a Saint,  Nor could it sure be such a sin to paint.  But since, alas! frail beauty must decay, 25  Curl'd or uncurl'd, since Locks will turn to grey;  Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,  And she who scorns a man, must die a maid;  What then remains but well our pow'r to use,  And keep good-humour still whate'er we lose? 30  And trust me, dear! good-humour can prevail,  When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.  Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll;  Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul."  Notes, Stanza 1  **Jove**: Jupiter, Roman name for Zeus, the king of the gods in Greek mythology.  **The Trojan: . . . vain**: allusion to Aeneas, the hero of Vergil's *Aeneid*. While sojourning in Carthage, Aeneas became the lover of Carthage's queen, Dido. Although Dido and her sister, Anna, pleaded for him to remain in Carthage, Aeneas abruptly left her to continue his sea voyage to Italy. There, according to Roman mythology, he founded a colony that would blossom into Roman civilization.  **Side box, front-box**: In the theatre, young ladies preferred the front boxes, facing the stage. Young men sat in the side boxes  ***Stanza 2***  So spoke the Dame, but no applause ensu'd; 35  Belinda frown'd, Thalestris call'd her Prude.  "To arms, to arms!" the fierce Virago cries,  And swift as lightning to the combat flies.  All side in parties, and begin th' attack;  Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough **whalebones** crack; 40  Heroes' and Heroines' shouts confus'dly rise,  And bass, and treble voices strike the skies.  No common weapons in their hands are found,  Like Gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.  So when bold Homer makes the Gods engage, 45  And heav'nly breasts with human passions rage;  'Gainst **Pallas**, **Mars**; **Latona**, **Hermes** arms;  And all Olympus rings with loud alarms:  Jove's thunder roars, heav'n trembles all around,  Blue **Neptune** storms, the bellowing deeps resound: 50  Earth shakes her nodding tow'rs, the ground gives way.  And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day!  Triumphant Umbriel on a **sconce**'s height  Clapp'd his glad wings, and sate to view the fight:  Propp'd on the **bodkin spears**, the Sprites survey 55  The growing combat, or assist the fray.  While thro' the press enrag'd Thalestris flies,  And scatters death around from both her eyes,  A Beau and Witling perish'd in the throng,  One died in metaphor, and one in song. 60  "O cruel nymph! a living death I bear,"  Cry'd **Dapperwit**, and sunk beside his chair.  A mournful glance **Sir Fopling** upwards cast,  "**Those eyes are made so killing**"--was his last.  Thus on **Maeander**'s flow'ry margin lies 65  Th' expiring Swan, and as he sings he dies.  Notes, Stanza 2  **whalebones**: horny plates in the jaws of baleen whales that catch plankton. Tough and flexible, they were used to stiffen women's corsets.  **Pallas**: Another name for Athena (Roman name, Minerva), goddess of wisdom and war  **Mars**: god of war (Greek name, Ares)  **Latona**: mother of Apollo and Artemis (Diana). Her Greek name was Leto.  **Hermes**: messenger of the Olympian gods (Roman name, Mercury)  **Neptune**: god of the sea (Greek name, Poseidon)  **sconce**: bracket on a wall for holding a candle or a torch; candlestick holder affixed to a wall plaque.  **bodkin spears**: pins  **Witling**: a person who tries to be witty  **Dapperwit**: character in the comedy *Love in a Wood; or St. James Park* (1671), by playwright William Wycherley (1640-1716)  **Sir Fopling**: character in the comedy *The Man of Mode*, *or*, *Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676), by George Etherege (1635-1691)  **Those . . . killing**: words from an opera  **Maeander**: winding river in Western Turkey. The modern name for this river is Menderes.  ***Stanza 3***  When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,  Chloe stepp'd in, and kill'd him with a frown;  She smil'd to see the doughty hero slain,  But, at her smile, the Beau reviv'd again. 70  Now **Jove** suspends his golden scales in air,  Weighs the Men's wits against the Lady's hair;  The doubtful beam long nods from side to side;  At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.  See, fierce Belinda on the Baron flies, 75  With more than usual lightning in her eyes:  Nor fear'd the Chief th' unequal fight to try,  Who sought no more than on his foe to die.  But this bold Lord with manly strength **endu'd**,  She with one finger and a thumb subdu'd: 80  Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,  A charge of **Snuff** the wily virgin threw;  The Gnomes direct, to ev'ry atom just,  The pungent grains of titillating dust.  Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows, 85  And the high dome re-echoes to his nose.  Now meet thy fate, incens'd Belinda cry'd,  And drew a deadly **bodkin** from her side.  (The same, his ancient personage to deck,  Her great great grandsire wore about his neck, 90  In three seal-rings; which after, melted down,  Form'd a vast buckle for his widow's gown:  Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew,  The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew;  Then in a bodkin grac'd her mother's hairs, 95  Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.)  Notes, Stanza 3  **Jove:** King of the gods (Greek name, Zeus)  **endu'd**: *endued*, meaning *endowed*  **Snuff**: tobacco reduced to a powder. It is inhaled through the nose, rubbed on the gums, or chewed.  **Bodkin**: dagger of her great-great grandfather. It was melted down to form a buckle, then a whistle. Part of it eventually became a pin (another meaning of *bodkin*).  ***Stanza 4***  "Boast not my fall" (he cry'd) "insulting foe!  Thou by some other shalt be laid as low,  Nor think, to die dejects my lofty mind:  All that I dread is leaving you behind! 100  Rather than so, ah let me still survive,  And burn in **Cupid**'s flames--but burn alive."  "Restore the Lock!" she cries; and all around  "Restore the Lock!" the vaulted roofs rebound.  Not fierce **Othello in so loud a strain 105**  **Roar'd for the handkerchief** that caus'd his pain.  But see how oft ambitious aims are cross'd,  And chiefs contend 'till all the prize is lost!  The Lock, obtain'd with guilt, and kept with pain,  In ev'ry place is sought, but sought in vain: 110  With such a prize no mortal must be blest,  So heav'n decrees! with heav'n who can contest?  Some thought it mounted to the Lunar sphere,  Since all things lost on earth are treasur'd there.  There Hero's wits are kept in pond'rous vases, 115  And beau's in snuff-boxes and tweezer-cases.  There broken vows and death-bed alms are found,  And lovers' hearts with ends of **riband** bound,  The courtier's promises, and sick man's pray'rs,  The smiles of harlots, and the tears of heirs, 120  Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,  Dry'd butterflies, and **tomes** of **casuistry**.  Notes, Stanza 4  **Cupid**: god of love (Greek name: Eros)  **Othello**: In Shakespeare's play of the same name, Othello wrongly believes his wife has been unfaithful because her handkerchief was found in the possession of another man. He shouts condemnations at her. Click here for the [Othello Study Guide](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/xOthello.html#Othello) if you wish additional information.  **Hero**: priestess of Aphrodite. She commits suicide after her lover, Leander, drowns. This word may also refer to a character in Ludovico Ariosto's epic poem *Orlando Furioso* (1516), in which the title character loses his wits. They are thought to be on the moon.  **riband**: ribbon  **tomes**: books  **casuistry**: (1) system that attempted to answer moral questions by applying the principles of ethics and theology to specific cases; (2) method of attempting to justify a seemingly sinful act as moral through the application of deceptive reasoning.  ***Stanza 5***  But trust the Muse--she saw it upward rise,  Tho' mark'd by none but quick, poetic eyes:  (So **Rome's great founder** to the heav'ns withdrew, 125  To **Proculus** alone confess'd in view)  A sudden Star, it shot thro' liquid air,  And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.  Not **Berenice**'s Locks first rose so bright,  The heav'ns bespangling with dishevell'd light. 130  The Sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,  And pleas'd pursue its progress thro' the skies.  This the **Beau monde** shall from the **Mall** survey,  And hail with music its propitious ray.  This the blest Lover shall for **Venus** take, 135  And send up vows from **Rosamonda's lake**.  This **Partridge** soon shall view in cloudless skies,  When next he looks thro' **Galileo's eyes**;  And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom  The **fate of Louis**, and the fall of Rome. 140  Then cease, bright Nymph! to mourn thy ravish'd hair,  Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!  Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,  Shall draw such envy as the Lock you lost.  For, after all the murders of your eye, 145  When, after millions slain, yourself shall die:  When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,  And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,  This Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to fame,  And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name. 150  Notes, Stanza 5  **Rome's great founder**. Romulus. According to Roman mythology, he and his brother, Remus, founded Rome. Romulus became the city's first king. After he died in a storm, the Romans assumed he was carried into the heavens, and they worshipped him as the god Quirinus.  **Proculus**: Roman senator. After Romulus died, Proculus had a vision in which Romulus said Rome was destined for greatness.  **Berenice**: Reference to Berenice's Hair, a star group that astronomers call *Coma Berenices*. This northern constellation is between the constellations Boötes and Leo and north of the constellation Virgo. Berenice herself was the wife of Egypt's Ptolemy III Euergetes. When he went off on a dangerous mission to Syria, Berenice cut off a lock of her hair as a votive offering in praying for his safe return. Legend says that it was taken into the heavens to form a new constellation.  **Beau monde**: French for fashionable society  **Mall**: avenue in the St. James district of London's Westminster borough. It is near St. James's Palace, the royal residence after fire destroyed Whitehall Palace in 1698. The Mall was a popular walkway for the well-to-do residents of St. James.  **Venus**: goddess of love (in Greek mythology, Aphrodite).  **Romsamonda's lake**: lake in St. James's Park.  **Partridge**: allusion to John Partridge, an astrologer who made unfounded predictions in almanacs  **Galileo's eyes**: lenses of a telescope  **fate of Louis**: fate of the King of France |