Alexander Pope was born in London in 1688. As a Roman Catholic living during a time of Protestant consolidation in England, he was largely excluded from the university system and from political life, and suffered certain social and economic disadvantages because of his religion as well. He was self-taught to a great extent, and was an assiduous scholar from a very early age. He learned several languages on his own, and his early verses were often imitations of poets he admired. His obvious talent found encouragement from his father, a linen-draper, as well as from literary-minded friends. At the age of twelve, Pope contracted a form of tuberculosis that settled in his spine, leaving him stunted and misshapen and causing him great pain for much of his life. He never married, though he formed a number of lifelong friendships in London’s literary circles, most notably with Jonathan Swift.

Pope wrote during what is often called the Augustan Age of English literature (indeed, it is Pope’s career that defines the age). During this time, the nation had recovered from the English Civil Wars and the Glorious Revolution, and the regained sense of political stability led to a resurgence of support for the arts. For this reason, many compared the period to the reign of Augustus in Rome, under whom both Virgil and Horace had found support for their work. The prevailing taste of the day was neoclassical, and 18th-century English writers tended to value poetry that was learned and allusive, setting less value on originality than the Romantics would in the next century. This literature also tended to be morally and often politically engaged, privileging satire as its dominant mode.

*The Rape of the Lock* is one of the most famous English-language examples of the mock-epic. Published in its first version in 1712, when Pope was only 23 years old, the poem served to forge his reputation as a poet and remains his most frequently studied work. The inspiration for the poem was an actual incident among Pope’s acquaintances in which Robert, Lord Petre, cut off a lock of Arabella Fermor’s hair, and the young people’s families fell into strife as a result. John Caryll, another member of this same circle of prominent Roman Catholics, asked Pope to write a light poem that would put the episode into a humorous perspective and reconcile the two families. The poem was originally published in a shorter version, which Pope later revised. In this later version he added the “machinery,” the retinue of supernaturals who influence the action as well as the moral of the tale.

After the publication of *The Rape of the Lock,* Pope spent many years translating the works of Homer. During the ten years he devoted to this arduous project, he produced very few new poems of his own but refined his taste in literature (and his moral, social, and political opinions) to an incredible degree. When he later recommenced to write original poetry, Pope struck a more serious tone than the one he gave to *The Rape of the Lock.* These later poems are more severe in their moral judgments and more acid in their satire: Pope’s *Essay on Man* is a philosophical poem on metaphysics, ethics, and human nature, while in the *Dunciad* Pope writes a scathing exposé of the bad writers and pseudo-intellectuals of his day.

**Characters**

**Belinda** -  Belinda is based on the historical Arabella Fermor, a member of Pope’s circle of prominent Roman Catholics. Robert, Lord Petre (the Baron in the poem) had precipitated a rift between their two families by snipping off a lock of her hair.

**The Baron**  -  This is the pseudonym for the historical Robert, Lord Petre, the young gentleman in Pope’s social circle who offended Arabella Fermor and her family by cutting off a lock of her hair. In the poem’s version of events, Arabella is known as Belinda.

**Caryl** -  The historical basis for the Caryl character is John Caryll, a friend of Pope and of the two families that had become estranged over the incident the poem relates. It was Caryll who suggested that Pope encourage a reconciliation by writing a humorous poem.

**Goddess** -  The muse who, according to classical convention, inspires poets to write their verses

**Shock** -  Belinda’s lapdog

**Ariel** -  Belinda’s guardian sylph, who oversees an army of invisible protective deities

**Umbriel** -  The chief gnome, who travels to the Cave of Spleen and returns with bundles of sighs and tears to aggravate Belinda’s vexation

**Brillante** -  The sylph who is assigned to guard Belinda’s earrings

**Momentilla** -  The sylph who is assigned to guard Belinda’s watch

**Crispissa** -  The sylph who is assigned to guard Belinda’s “fav’rite Lock”

**Clarissa** -  A woman in attendance at the Hampton Court party. She lends the Baron the pair of scissors with which he cuts Belinda’s hair, and later delivers a moralizing lecture.

**Thalestris** -  Belinda’s friend, named for the Queen of the Amazons and representing the historical Gertrude Morley, a friend of Pope’s and the wife of Sir George Browne (rendered as her “beau,” Sir Plume, in the poem). She eggs Belinda on in her anger and demands that the lock be returned.

**Sir Plume** -  Thalestris’s “beau,” who makes an ineffectual challenge to the Baron. He represents the historical Sir George Browne, a member of Pope’s social circle.

**Summary**

Belinda arises to prepare for the day’s social activities after sleeping late. Her guardian sylph, Ariel, warned her in a dream that some disaster will befall her, and promises to protect her to the best of his abilities. Belinda takes little notice of this oracle, however. After an elaborate ritual of dressing and primping, she travels on the Thames River to Hampton Court Palace, an ancient royal residence outside of London, where a group of wealthy young socialites are gathering for a party. Among them is the Baron, who has already made up his mind to steal a lock of Belinda’s hair. He has risen early to perform and elaborate set of prayers and sacrifices to promote success in this enterprise. When the partygoers arrive at the palace, they enjoy a tense game of cards, which Pope describes in mock-heroic terms as a battle. This is followed by a round of coffee. Then the Baron takes up a pair of scissors and manages, on the third try, to cut off the coveted lock of Belinda’s hair. Belinda is furious. Umbriel, a mischievous gnome, journeys down to the Cave of Spleen to procure a sack of sighs and a flask of tears which he then bestows on the heroine to fan the flames of her ire. Clarissa, who had aided the Baron in his crime, now urges Belinda to give up her anger in favor of good humor and good sense, moral qualities which will outlast her vanities. But Clarissa’s moralizing falls on deaf ears, and Belinda initiates a scuffle between the ladies and the gentlemen, in which she attempts to recover the severed curl. The lock is lost in the confusion of this mock battle, however; the poet consoles the bereft Belinda with the suggestion that it has been taken up into the heavens and immortalized as a constellation.

**Analysis: Themes and Form**

*The Rape of the Lock* is a humorous indictment of the vanities and idleness of 18th-century high society. Basing his poem on a real incident among families of his acquaintance, Pope intended his verses to cool hot tempers and to encourage his friends to laugh at their own folly.

The poem is perhaps the most outstanding example in the English language of the genre of mock-epic. The epic had long been considered one of the most serious of literary forms; it had been applied, in the classical period, to the lofty subject matter of love and war, and, more recently, by Milton, to the intricacies of the Christian faith. The strategy of Pope’s mock-epic is not to mock the form itself, but to mock his society in its very failure to rise to epic standards, exposing its pettiness by casting it against the grandeur of the traditional epic subjects and the bravery and fortitude of epic heroes: Pope’s mock-heroic treatment in *The Rape of the Lock* underscores the ridiculousness of a society in which values have lost all proportion, and the trivial is handled with the gravity and solemnity that ought to be accorded to truly important issues. The society on display in this poem is one that fails to distinguish between things that matter and things that do not. The poem mocks the men it portrays by showing them as unworthy of a form that suited a more heroic culture. Thus the mock-epic resembles the epic in that its central concerns are serious and often moral, but the fact that the approach must now be satirical rather than earnest is symptomatic of how far the culture has fallen.

Pope’s use of the mock-epic genre is intricate and exhaustive. *The Rape of the Lock* is a poem in which every element of the contemporary scene conjures up some image from epic tradition or the classical world view, and the pieces are wrought together with a cleverness and expertise that makes the poem surprising and delightful. Pope’s transformations are numerous, striking, and loaded with moral implications. The great battles of epic become bouts of gambling and flirtatious tiffs. The great, if capricious, Greek and Roman gods are converted into a relatively undifferentiated army of basically ineffectual sprites. Cosmetics, clothing, and jewelry substitute for armor and weapons, and the rituals of religious sacrifice are transplanted to the dressing room and the altar of love.

The verse form of *The Rape of the Lock* is the heroic couplet; Pope still reigns as the uncontested master of the form. The heroic couplet consists of rhymed pairs of iambic pentameter lines (lines of ten syllables each, alternating stressed and unstressed syllables). Pope’s couplets do not fall into strict iambs, however, flowering instead with a rich rhythmic variation that keeps the highly regular meter from becoming heavy or tedious. Pope distributes his sentences, with their resolutely parallel grammar, across the lines and half-lines of the poem in a way that enhances the judicious quality of his ideas. Moreover, the inherent balance of the couplet form is strikingly well suited to a subject matter that draws on comparisons and contrasts: the form invites configurations in which two ideas or circumstances are balanced, measured, or compared against one another. It is thus perfect for the evaluative, moralizing premise of the poem, particularly in the hands of this brilliant poet.

**The Rape of the Lock**

**by Alexander Pope  
(1688-1744)**

Part 1

WHAT dire Offence from am'rous Causes springs,  
What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things,  
I sing -- This Verse to *C---*, Muse! is due;  
This, ev'n *Belinda* may vouchfafe to view:  
Slight is the Subject, but not so the Praise,  
If She inspire, and He approve my Lays.  
Say what strange Motive, Goddess! cou'd compel  
A well-bred *Lord* t'assault a gentle *Belle?*  
Oh say what stranger Cause, yet unexplor'd,  
Cou'd make a gentle *Belle* reject a *Lord*?  
And dwells such Rage in softest Bosoms then?  
And lodge such daring Souls in Little Men?

*Sol* thro' white Curtains shot a tim'rous Ray,  
And op'd those Eyes that must eclipse the Day;  
Now Lapdogs give themselves the rowzing Shake,  
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.  
'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,  
And thus in Whispers said, or seem'd to say.

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,  
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 Flowers,  
Hear and believe! thy own Importance know,  
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.  
Know then, unnumbered 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*.  
Think what an Equipage thou hast in Air,  
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 Mold;  
Thence, by a soft Transition, we repair  
From earthly Vehicles to these of Air.  
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,  
And Love of *Ombre*, after Death survive.  
For when the Fair in all their Pride expire,  
To their first Elements the Souls retire:  
The Sprights of fiery Termagants in Flame  
Mount up, and take a *Salamander*'s Name.  
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,  
And sport and flutter in the Fields of Air.

Know farther 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.  
What guards the Purity of melting Maids,  
In Courtly Balls, and Midnight Masquerades,  
Safe from the treach'rous Friend, and daring Spark,  
The Glance by Day, the Whisper in the Dark;  
When kind Occasion prompts their warm Desires,  
When Musick 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.

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,  
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 Infants Cheeks a bidden Blush to know,  
And little Hearts to flutter at a *Beau*.

Oft when the World imagine Women stray,  
The *Sylphs* thro' mystick Mazes guide thier Way,  
Thro' all the giddy Circle they pursue,  
And old Impertinence expel by new.  
What tender Maid but must a Victim fall  
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;  
Where Wigs with Wigs, with Sword-knots Sword-knots strive,  
Beaus banish Beaus, 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,  
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,  
E're to the Main this Morning Sun descend.  
But Heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where:  
Warn'd by thy *Sylph*, oh Pious Maid beware!  
This to disclose is all thy Guardian can.  
Beware of all, but most beware of Man!

He said; when *Shock*, who thought she slept too long,  
Leapt 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.

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,  
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;  
From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,  
And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil.  
This Casket *India*'s glowing Gems unlocks,  
And all *Arabia* breathes from yonder Box.

The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,  
Transform'd 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,  
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;  
These set the Head, and those divide the Hair,  
Some fold the Sleeve, while others plait the Gown;  
And *Betty*'s prais'd for Labours not her own.

Part 2

NOT with more Glories, in th' Etherial Plain,  
The Sun first rises o'er the purpled Main,  
Than issuing forth, the Rival of his Beams  
Lanch'd on the Bosom of the Silver *Thames*.  
Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone,  
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:  
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,  
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.

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 her smooth Iv'ry Neck.  
Love in these Labyrinths his Slaves detains,  
And mighty Hearts are held in slender Chains.  
With hairy Sprindges we the Birds betray,  
Slight Lines of Hair surprize the Finny Prey,

Fair Tresses Man's Imperial Race insnare,  
And Beauty draws us with a single Hair.

Th' Adventrous *Baron* the bright Locks admir'd,  
He saw, he wish'd, and to the Prize aspir'd:  
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.

For this, e're *Phoebus* rose, he had implor'd  
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.  
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,  
The rest, the Winds dispers'd in empty Air.

But now secure the painted Vessel glides,  
The Sun-beams trembling on the floating Tydes,  
While melting Musick steals upon the Sky,  
And soften'd Sounds along the Waters die.  
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 sate heavy on his Breast.  
He summons strait his Denizens of Air;  
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.  
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,  
Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies,  
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;  
His Purple Pinions opening to the Sun,  
He rais'd his Azure Wand, and thus begun.

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,  
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 wandring Orbs on high,  
Or roll the Planets thro' the boundless Sky.  
Some less refin'd, beneath the Moon's pale Light  
Hover, and catch the shooting stars by 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,  
Or o'er the Glebe distill 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*.

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,  
To steal from Rainbows ere 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 *Furbelo*.

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,  
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.  
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;  
*Ariel* himself shall be the Guard of *Shock*.

To Fifty chosen *Sylphs*, of special Note,  
We trust th' important Charge, the *Petticoat*.  
Oft have we known that sev'nfold Fence to fail;  
Tho' stiff with Hoops, and arm'd with Ribs of Whale.  
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,  
Be stopt in *Vials*, or transfixt 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 clog'd he beats his silken Wings in vain;  
Or Alom-*Stypticks* with contracting Power  
Shrink his thin Essence like a rivell'd Flower.  
Or as *Ixion* fix'd, the Wretch shall feel  
The giddy Motion of the whirling Mill,  
In Fumes of burning Chocolate shall glow,  
And tremble at the Sea that froaths 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;  
With beating Hearts the dire Event they wait,  
Anxious, and trembling for the Birth of Fate.

Part 3

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 Majestick Frame,  
Which from the neighb'ring *Hampton* takes its Name.  
Here *Britain*'s Statesmen oft the Fall foredoom  
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;  
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;  
At ev'ry Word a Reputation dies.  
*Snuff*, or the *Fan*, supply each Pause of Chat,  
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.

Mean while declining from the Noon of Day,  
The Sun obliquely shoots his burning Ray;  
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 *Toilette* cease ----  
*Belinda* now, whom Thirst of Fame invites,  
Burns to encounter two adventrous Knights,  
At *Ombre* singly to decide their Doom;  
And swells her Breast with Conquests yet to come.  
Strait the three Bands prepare in Arms to join,  
Each Band the number of the Sacred Nine.  
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,  
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;  
Four *Knaves* in Garbs succinct, a trusty Band,  
Caps on their heads, and Halberds in their hand;  
And Particolour'd Troops, a shining Train,  
Draw forth to Combat on the Velvet Plain.  
The skilful Nymph reviews her Force with Care;  
*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*.  
*Spadillio* first, unconquerable Lord!  
Led off two captive Trumps, and swept the Board.  
As many more *Manillio* 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,  
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.  
Ev'n mighty *Pam* that Kings and Queens o'erthrow,  
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;  
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:  
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?

The *Baron* now his *Diamonds* pours apace;  
Th' embroider'd *King* who shows but half his Face,  
And his refulgent *Queen*, with Pow'rs combin'd,  
Of broken Troops an easie Conquest find.  
*Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts*, in wild Disorder seen,  
With Throngs promiscuous strow the level Green.  
Thus when dispers'd a routed Army runs,  
Of *Asia*'s Troops, and *Africk*'s Sable Sons,  
With like Confusion different Nations fly,  
In various habits and of various Dye,  
The pierc'd Battalions dis-united fall,  
In Heaps on Heaps; one Fate o'erwhelms them all.

The *Knave* of *Diamonds* now 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;  
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  
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.  
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,  
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,  
And *China*'s Earth receives the smoking Tyde.  
At once they gratify their Scent and Taste,  
While frequent Cups prolong the rich Repast.  
Strait hover round the Fair her Airy Band;  
Some, as she sip'd, the fuming Liquor fann'd,  
Some o'er her Lap their careful Plumes display'd,  
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.  
Ah cease rash Youth! desist e'er 'tis 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!

But when to Mischief Mortals bend their Will,  
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.  
He takes the Gift with rev'rence, and extends  
The little Engine on his Finger's 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 Sprights repair,  
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;  
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,  
Resign'd to Fate, and with a Sigh retir'd.

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;  
Fate urg'd the Sheers, and cut the *Sylph* in twain,  
(But Airy Substance soon unites again)  
The meeting Points that sacred Hair dissever  
From the fair Head, for ever and for ever!  
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 Lap-dogs breath their last,  
Or when rich *China* Vessels, fal'n from high,  
In glittring Dust and painted Fragments lie!

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,  
Or the small Pillow grace a Lady's Bed,  
While *Visits* shall be paid on solemn Days,  
When numerous Wax-lights in bright Order blaze,  
While Nymphs take Treats, or Assignations give,  
So long my Honour, Name, and Praise shall live!

What Time wou'd spare, from Steel receives its date,  
And Monuments, like Men, submit to Fate!  
Steel cou'd the Labour of the Gods destroy,  
And strike to Dust th' Imperial Tow'rs of *Troy*.  
Steel cou'd the Works of mortal Pride confound,  
And hew Triumphal Arches to the Ground.  
What Wonder then, fair Nymph! thy Hairs shou'd feel  
The conqu'ring Force of unresisted Steel?

Part 4

BUT anxious Cares the pensive Nymph opprest,  
And secret Passions labour'd in her Breast.  
Not youthful Kings in Battel seiz'd alive,  
Not scornful Virgins who their Charms survive,  
Not ardent Lovers robb'd of all their Bliss,  
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.

For, that sad moment, when the *Sylphs* withdrew,  
And *Ariel* weeping from *Belinda* flew,  
*Umbriel*, a dusky melancholy Spright,  
As ever sully'd the fair face of Light,  
Down to the Central Earth, his proper Scene,  
Repairs to search the gloomy Cave of *Spleen*.

Swift on his sooty Pinions flitts 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.  
Here, in a Grotto, sheltred 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,  
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.

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,  
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.

A constant *Vapour* o'er the Palace flies;  
Strange Phantoms rising as the Mists arise;  
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,  
And Crystal Domes, and Angels in Machines.

Unnumber'd Throngs on ev'ry side are seen  
Of Bodies chang'd to various Forms by *Spleen*.  
Here living *Teapots* stand, one Arm held out,  
One bent; the Handle this, and that the Spout:  
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 Bottels, call aloud for Corks.

Safe past the *Gnome* thro' this fantastick Band,  
A Branch of healing *Spleenwort* in his hand.  
Then thus addrest the Pow'r--Hail wayward Queen!  
Who rule the Sex to Fifty from Fifteen,  
Parent of Vapors and of Female Wit,  
Who give th' *Hysteric* or *Poetic* Fit,  
On various Tempers act by various ways,  
Make some take Physick, others scribble Plays;  
Who cause the Proud their Visits to delay,  
And send the Godly in a Pett, to pray.  
A Nymph there is, that all thy Pow'r disdains,  
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 Matron's Cheeks inflame,  
Or change Complexions at a losing Game;  
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 costive Lap-Dog gave Disease,  
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.

The Goddess with a discontented Air  
Seems to reject him, tho' she grants his Pray'r.  
A wondrous 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,  
Soft Sorrows, melting Griefs, and flowing Tears.  
The *Gnome* rejoicing bears her Gift 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.  
Full o'er their Heads the swelling Bag he rent,  
And all the Furies issued 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,  
(While *Hampton*'s Ecchos, 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?  
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 unrival'd Shrine  
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!  
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,  
On that Rapacious Hand for ever blaze?  
Sooner shall Grass in *Hide* Park *Circus* grow,  
And Wits take Lodgings in the Sound of *Bow*;  
Sooner let Earth, Air, Sea, to *Chaos* fall,  
Men, Monkies, Lap-dogs, Parrots, perish all!

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,  
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! 'tis past a Jest---nay prithee, Pox!  
"Give her the Hair---he spoke, and rapp'd his Box.

It grieves me much (reply'd the Peer again)  
Who speaks so well shou'd 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,  
Clipt 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.

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,  
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!  
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,  
Where none learn *Ombre*, none e'er taste *Bohea*!  
There kept my Charms conceal'd from mortal Eye,  
Like Roses that in Desarts bloom and die.  
What mov'd my Mind with youthful Lords to rome?  
O had I stay'd, and said my Pray'rs at home!  
'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* sate mute, and *Shock* was most Unkind!  
A *Sylph* too warn'd me of the Threats of Fate,  
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 snowie Neck.  
The Sister-Lock now sits uncouth, alone,  
And in its Fellow's Fate foresees its own;  
Uncurl'd it hangs, the fatal Sheers demands;  
And tempts once more thy sacrilegious Hands.  
Oh hadst thou, Cruel! been content to seize  
Hairs less in sight, or any Hairs but these!

Part 5

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 to fixt the *Trojan* cou'd remain,  
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?  
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 Beaus,  
Why bows the Side-box from its inmost Rows?  
How vain are all these Glories, all our Pains,  
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;  
Who would not scorn what Huswife'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,  
Curl'd or uncurl'd, since Locks will turn to grey,  
Since paint'd, or not paint'd, 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?  
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.  
So spake the Dame, but no Applause ensu'd;  
*Belinda* frown'd, *Thalestris* call'd her Prude.  
To Arms, to Arms! the fierce Virago cries,  
And swift as Lightning to the Combate flies.  
All side in Parties, and begin th' Attack;  
Fans clap, Silks russle, and tough Whalebones crack;  
Heroes and Heroins Shouts confus'dly rise,  
And base, 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,  
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;  
*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  
Clapt his glad Wings, and sate to view the Fight,  
Propt on their Bodkin Spears, the Sprights survey  
The growing Combat, or assist the Fray.  
While thro' the Press enrag'd *Thalestries* flies,  
And scatters Deaths around from both her Eyes,  
A *Beau* and *Witling* perish'd in the Throng,  
One dy'd in *Metaphor*, and one in *Song*.  
*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 *Meander*'s flow'ry Margin lies  
Th' expiring Swan, and as he sings he dies.

When bold Sir *Plume* had drawn *Clarissa* down,  
*Chloe* stept 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.

Now *Jove* suspends his golden Scales in Air,  
Weighs the Mens 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,  
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 indu'd,  
She with one Finger and a Thumb subdu'd,  
Just where the Breath of Life his Nostrils drew,  
A Charge of *Snuff* the wily Virgin threw;  
The *Gnomes* direct, to ev'ry Atome just,  
The pungent Grains of titillating Dust.  
Sudden, with starting Tears each Eye o'erflows,  
And the high Dome re-ecchoes 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  
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 gingled, and the *Whistle* blew;  
Then in a *Bodkin* grac'd her Mother's Hairs,  
Which long she wore, and now *Belinda* wears.)

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!  
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  
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:  
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 Heroe's Wits are kept in pondrous Vases,  
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 Courtiers Promises, and Sick Man's Pray'rs,  
The Smiles of Harlots, and the Tears of Heirs,  
Cages for Gnats, and Chains to Yoak a Flea;  
Dry'd Butterflies, and Tomes of Casuistry.

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,  
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 dishevel'd light.  
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 Musick its propitious Ray.  
This, the blest Lover shall for *Venus* take,  
And send up Vows from *Rosamonda*'s Lake.  
This *Partridge* soon shall view in cloudless Skies,  
When next he looks thro' *Galilaeo*'s Eyes;  
And hence th' Egregious Wizard shall foredoom  
The Fate of *Louis*, and the Fall of *Rome*.

Then cease, bright Nymph! to mourn the 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,  
When, after Millions slain, your self shall die;  
When those fair Suns shall sett, as sett they must,  
And all those Tresses shall be laid in Dust;  
*This Lock*, the Muse shall consecrate to Fame,  
And mid'st the Stars inscribe *Belinda*'s Name!