

from  
**The Rape of the Lock**  
Alexander Pope

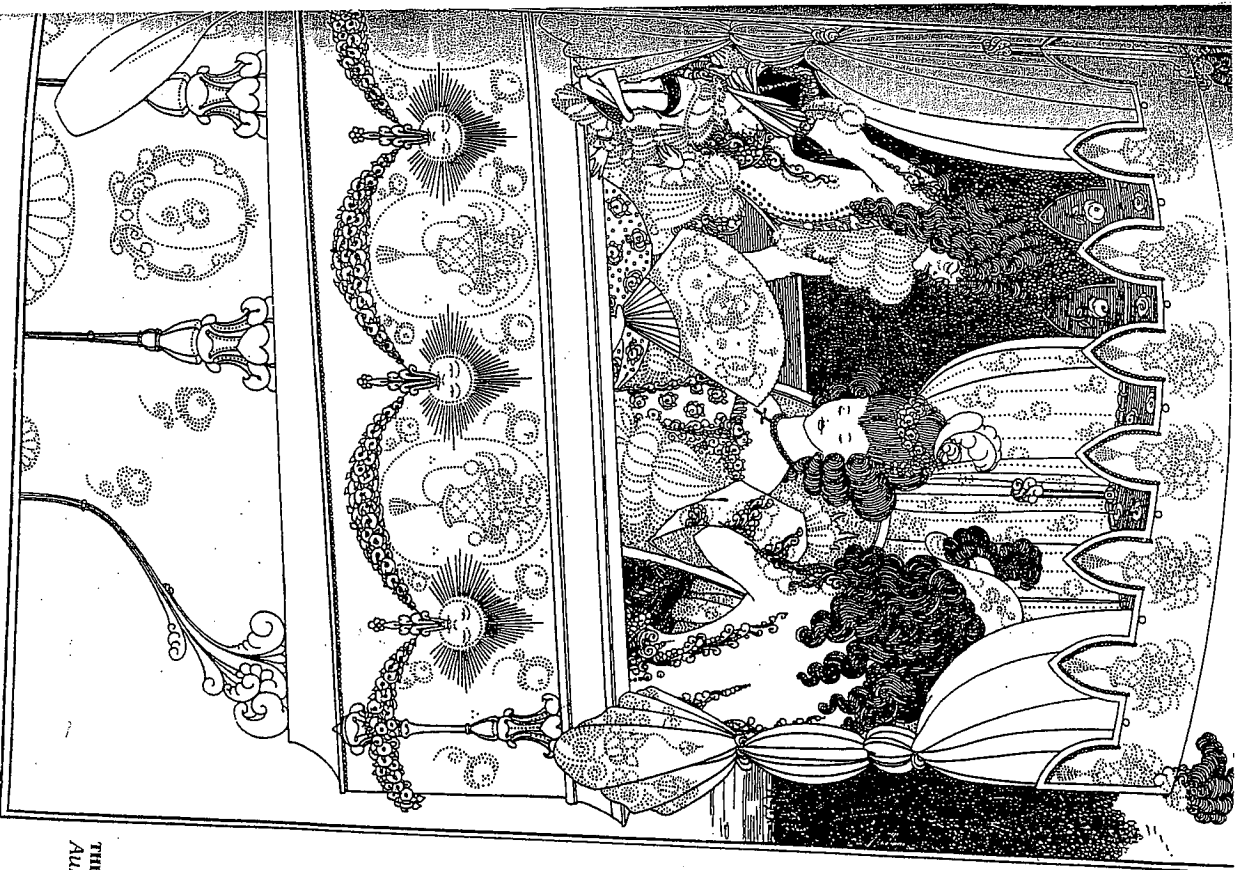
The Rape of the Lock, a mock epic, or a humorous poem written in the style of and recalling situations from the famous epic poems of Homer, Virgil, and Milton, is based on an actual incident. When Lord Petre, a wealthy baron, cut a lock of hair from the head of the beautiful Arabella Fermor, a great quarrel developed between the lady's family and the family of Lord Petre. Following the incident, Pope's friend John Caryll suggested that Pope write a poem mocking the trivial incident to point out the absurdity of the families' reactions. In writing *The Rape of the Lock*, however, Pope went far beyond the ridiculous incident that inspired it. The poem, filled with allusions to the great literary works of the past, is a poignant appraisal of the social manners and human behavior of the time.

The first of the poem's five cantos opens with a formal statement of theme and an invocation to the Muse for poetic inspiration. Then Belinda, the poem's heroine, receives a warning from the sylph Ariel that a dreadful event will take place in her immediate future. In Canto II, during a boat ride on the Thames, an adventurous baron admires Belinda's hair and is determined to cut two bright locks from her head and keep them as a prize. Aware of the baron's desires, Ariel urges the spirits to protect Belinda.

### Canto III

Close by those meads, forever crowned with flowers,  
Where Thames with pride surveys his rising towers,  
There stands a structure of majestic frame,<sup>1</sup>  
Which from the neighboring Hampton takes its name  
Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom  
Of foreign tyrants, and of nymphs at home;  
Here thou, great Anna!<sup>2</sup> whom three realms obey,

1. structure . . . frame: Hampton Court, a royal palace near London.  
2. Anna: Queen Anne, who ruled England, Ireland, and Scotland from 1702 through 1714.



THE BARGE, 1895-96  
Audrey Beardsley

Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.  
Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,  
10 In various talk th' instructive hours they passed,  
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;  
One speaks the glory of the British Queen,  
And one describes a charming Indian screen,  
15 A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;  
At every word a reputation dies.

Snuff, or the fan,<sup>3</sup> supply each pause of chat,  
 With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.  
 20 Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,  
 The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;  
 The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,  
 And wretches hang that jurymen may dine;  
 The merchant from th' Exchange<sup>4</sup> returns in peace,  
 And the long labors of the toilet<sup>5</sup> cease.  
 25 Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites,  
 Burns to encounter two adventurous knights,  
 At omber<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>  
 30 Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aerial guard  
 Descend, and sit on each important card:  
 First Ariel perched upon a Matadore,<sup>8</sup>  
 Then each, according to the rank they bore;  
 35 For sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,  
 Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.  
 Behold, four kings in majesty revered,  
 With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;  
 And four fair queens whose hands sustain a flower,  
 40 Th' expressive emblem of their softer power.  
 Four knaves in garbs succinct,<sup>9</sup> a trusty band,  
 Caps on their heads, and halberts<sup>10</sup> in their hand;  
 And particolored troops, a shining train,  
 Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.  
 45 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.  
 Spadillo!<sup>11</sup> first, unconquerable Lord!  
 Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.  
 50 As many more Manillio!<sup>12</sup> forced to yield,  
 And marched a victor from the verdant field.<sup>13</sup>

3. **snuff** . . . **fan**: At the time, gentlemen commonly took snuff, and ladies usually carried a fan.

4. **Exchange**: The London financial center where merchants, bankers, and brokers conducted business.

5. **toilet**: Dressing tables.

6. **omber**: A popular card game.

7. **sacred nine**: A reference to the nine Muses of Greek mythology.

8. **Matadore**: A powerful card that could take a trick.

9. **succinct** (sək sɪŋk't'): Belted.

10. **halberts**: Long-handled weapons.

11. **Spadillo**: The ace of spades.

12. **Manillio**: The two of spades.

13. **verdant field**: The card table, covered with a green cloth.

Him Basto<sup>14</sup> followed, but his fate more hard  
 Gained but one trump and one plebeian card.  
 55 With his broad saber next, a chief in years,  
 The hoary majesty of spades appears,  
 Puts forth one manly leg, to sight revealed,  
 The rest, his many-colored robe concealed.  
 The rebel knave, who dares his prince engage,  
 60 Proves the just victim of his royal rage.  
 Even mighty Pam,<sup>15</sup> that kings and queens o'erthrew  
 And mowed down armies in the fights of 100,  
 Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,  
 Falls undistinguished by the victor spade!  
 65 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 died,  
 70 Spite of his haughty mien, and barbarous pride.  
 What boots<sup>16</sup> 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?  
 75 The baron now his diamonds pours apace;  
 Th' embroidered king who shows but half his face,  
 And his refulgent queen, with powers combined  
 Of broken troops an easy conquest find.  
 80 Clubs, diamonds, hearts, in wild disorder seen,  
 With throngs promiscuous strew the level green.  
 Thus when dispersed a routed army runs,  
 Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,  
 With like confusion different nations fly,  
 85 Of various habit, and of various dye,  
 The pierced battalions disunited fall,  
 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;  
 She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,  
 90 Just in the jaws of ruin, and codille.<sup>17</sup>  
 And now (as oft in some distempered state)  
 On one nice trick depends the general fate.

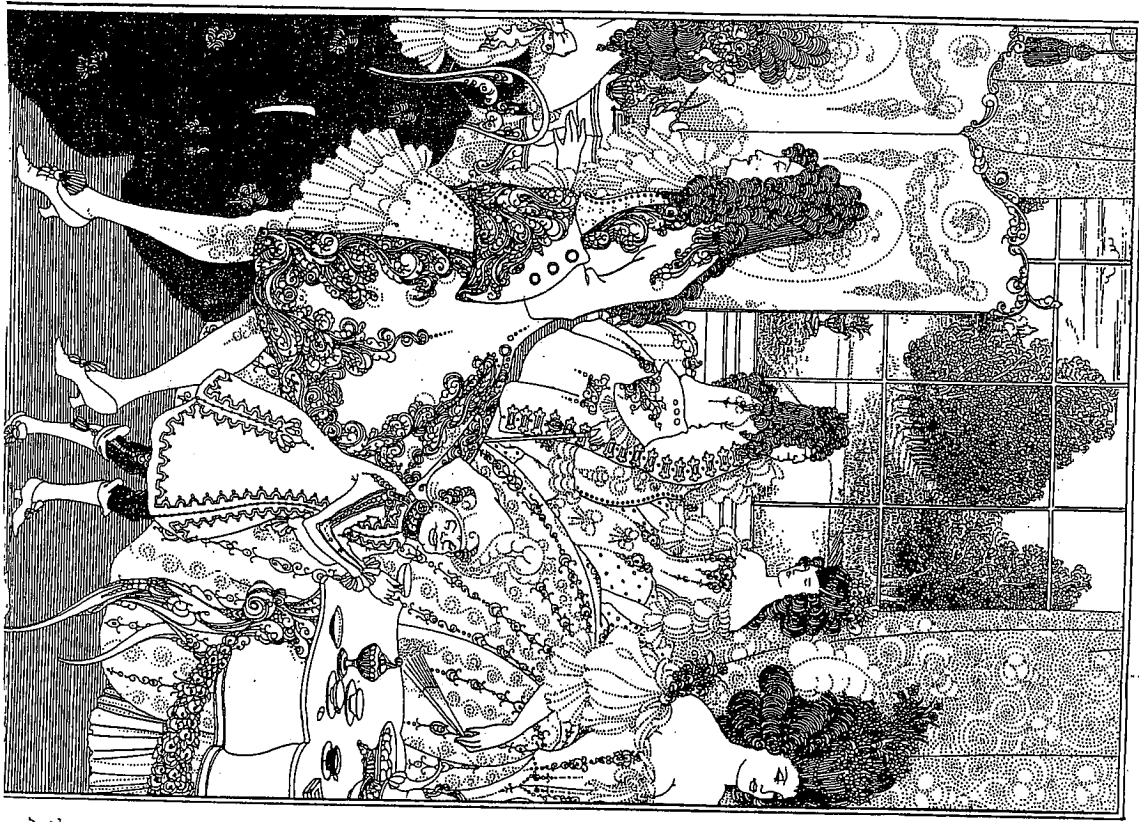
14. **Basto**: The ace of clubs.

15. **Pam**: The knave of clubs, the highest card in the game called "100."

16. **what boots**: Of what benefit is.

17. **codille**: A term meaning the defeat of a hand of cards.

95 An ace of hearts steps forth; the king unseen  
 Lurked in her hand, and mourned his captive queen.  
 He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,  
 And falls like thunder on the prostrate ace,<sup>19</sup>  
 The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky;  
 100 The walls, the woods, and long canals reply.  
 Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate,  
 Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.  
 Sudden, these honors shall be snatched away,  
 And cursed forever this victorious day.



THE KAPE OF THE LOCK, 1895-96  
 Aubrey Beardsley

105 Fo! lo! the board with cups and spoons is crowned,  
 The berries crackle, and the mill turns round;<sup>18</sup>  
 On shining altars of Japan<sup>19</sup> they raise  
 The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze;  
 From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,  
 110 While China's earth<sup>20</sup> receives the smoking tide.  
 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 sipped, the fuming liquor fanned,  
 115 Some o'er her lap their careful plumes displayed,  
 Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.  
 Coffee (which makes the politician wise,  
 And see through all things with his half-shut eyes)  
 Sent up in vapors to the baron's brain  
 120 New stratagems, the radiant lock to gain.  
 Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere 'tis too late,  
 Fear the just gods, and think of Scylla's fate!<sup>21</sup>  
 Changed to a bird, and sent to flit in air,  
 She dearly pays for Nisus' injured hair!  
 125 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-edged weapon from her shining case:  
 So ladies in romance assist their knight,  
 130 Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.  
 He takes the gift with reverence, and extends  
 The little engine<sup>22</sup> on his fingers' ends;  
 This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,  
 As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.  
 135 Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair,  
 A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair;  
 And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear;  
 Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.  
 140 Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought  
 The close recesses of the virgin's thought;  
 As on the nosegay in her breast reclined,  
 He watched th' ideas rising in her mind,  
 Sudden he viewed, in spite of all her art,  
 An earthly lover lurking at her heart.<sup>23</sup>

18. the berries . . . round: The coffee beans are ground in a hand mill at the table.  
 19. altars of Japan: Small imported lacquer tables.  
 20. China's earth: Earthenware cups imported from China.  
 21. Scylla's (sill' az) fate: Scylla, the daughter of King Nisus, was turned into a sea bird because she cut off the lock of her father's hair on which his safety depended and sent it to his enemy.  
 22. engine: instrument.  
 23. earthly lover . . . heart: If in her heart Belinda wants the baron to succeed, they cannot protect her.

145 Amazed, confused, he found his power expired,  
Resigned to fate, and with a sigh retired.

The peer now spreads the glittering forfex<sup>24</sup> wide,  
T' enclose the lock; now joins it, to divide.  
Even then, before the fatal engine closed,

150 A wretched sylph too fondly interposed;  
Fate urged the shears, and cut the sylph in twain,  
(But airy substance soon unites again).  
The meeting points the sacred hair dis sever  
From the fair head, forever, and forever!

155 Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,  
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.  
Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,  
When husbands, or when lap dogs breathe their last;

Or when rich China vessels fallen from high,  
In glittering dust, and painted fragments lie!

160 "Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,"  
The victor cried, "the glorious prize is mine!"  
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,  
Or in a coach and six the British Fair,

165 As long as *Atalanta*'s<sup>25</sup> 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 assignments give,  
So long my honor, name, and praise shall live!

170 What time would spare, from steel receives its date,<sup>26</sup>  
And monuments, like men, submit to fate!  
Steel could the labor of the gods destroy,  
And strike to dust th' imperial towers of Troy;

175 Steel could the works of mortal pride confound,  
And hew triumphal arches to the ground.  
What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel,  
The conquering force of unresisted steel?

### from Canto V

In Canto IV, after Umbriel, "a dusky, melancholy spirit  
empties a bag filled with "the force of female lungs, sighs,  
sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues" onto Belinda's  
head, the lady erupts over the loss of her lock. Then she  
"bids her beau," Sir Plume, to "demand the precious hairs,  
but Plume is unable to persuade the baron to return the hair

In the beginning of Canto V, *Clarissa*, a level-headed  
nymph, tries to bring an end to the commotion, but rather  
than being greeted with applause, her speech is followed by  
a battle cry.

5 "To arms, to arms!" the fierce *virago*'<sup>27</sup> cries,  
And swift as lightning to the combat flies.  
All side in parties, and begin th' attack;

10 Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack;  
Heroes' and heroines' shouts confusedly rise,  
And bass and treble voices strike the skies.

15 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 heavenly breasts with human passions rage;

20 'Gainst Pallas, Mars, Latona, *Hermes*'<sup>28</sup> arms;  
And all *Olympus*'<sup>29</sup> rings with loud alarms:  
Jove's<sup>30</sup> thunder roars, heaven trembles all around,  
Blue *Neptune*'<sup>31</sup> storms, the bellowing deeps resound;

25 Earth shakes her nodding towers, the ground gives way,  
And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day!  
Triumphant *Umbriel* on a sounce's height<sup>32</sup>  
Clapped his glad wings, and sat to view the fight;

30 Propped on their bodkin spears,<sup>33</sup> the sprites survey  
The growing combat, or assist the fray.  
While through the press enraged *Thalestris*'<sup>34</sup> flies,  
And scatters death around from both her eyes,

35 A beau and witing<sup>35</sup> perished in the throng,  
One died in metaphor, and one in song.  
"O cruel nymph! a living death I bear,"  
Cried *Dapperwit*, and sunk beside his chair.

A mournful glance *Sir Fopling*'<sup>36</sup> upwards cast,  
"Those eyes are made so killing"<sup>37</sup>—was his last.

27. *virago* (va rá' gó): Scolding woman.

28. *Pallas* . . . *Hermes*: Gods who directed the Trojan War. *Pallas* and *Hermes* supported the Greeks, while *Mars* and *Latona* sided with the Trojans.

29. *Olympus*: The mountain which was supposed to be the home of the gods.

30. *Jove's*: Referring to *Jupiter*, the ruler of the Gods in Roman mythology; identified with *Zeus* in Greek mythology.

31. *Neptune*: The Roman god of the sea; identified with *Poseidon* in Greek mythology.

32. *sounce's height*: A candleholder attached to the wall.

33. *bodkin spears*: Large needles.

34. *Thalestris* (lha les' tris): An Amazon (a race of female warriors supposed to have lived in Scythia) who played a role in the medieval tales of Alexander the Great.

35. *witing*: A person who fancies himself or herself a wit.

36. *Dapperwit*, *Sir Fopling*: Names of amusing characters in comedies of the time.

24. *forfex*: Scissors.

25. *Atalanta*: A popular book of scandalous gossip.

26. *receives its date*: Is destroyed.

30 Thus on Maeander's<sup>37</sup> flowery margin lies  
Th' expiring swan, and as he sings, he dies.

When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,  
Chloe<sup>38</sup> stepped in, and killed him with a frown;  
She smiled to see the doughty hero slain,  
But, at her smile, the beau revived again.

35 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,

40 With more than usual lightning in her eyes;  
Nor feared the chief th' unequal fight to try,  
Who sought no more than on his foe to die.  
But this bold lord with manly strength endured,  
She with one finger and a thumb subdued:

45 Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,  
A charge of snuff the wily virgin threw;  
The gnomes direct, to every atom just,  
The pungent grains of trillating dust.

50 Sudden with starting tears each eye o'erflows,  
And the high dome re-echoes to his nose.  
"Now meet thy fate," incensed Belinda cried,  
And drew a deadly bodkin<sup>39</sup> from her side . . .

"Boast not my fall," he cried, "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!

55 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.

60 Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain  
Roared for the handkerchief that caused his pain.  
40 But see how oft ambitious aims are crossed,  
And chiefs contend till all the prize is lost!

65 The lock, obtained with guilt, and kept with pain,  
In every place is sought, but sought in vain.  
With such a prize no mortal must be blessed,  
So Heaven decrees! with Heaven who can contest?

37. Maeander's: Referring to a river in Asia.

38. Chloe (klo'e): The heroine of the ancient Greek pastoral romance, *Daphnis and Chloe*.

39. bodkin: An ornamental pin shaped like a dagger.

40. not . . . pain: In Shakespeare's *Othello*, the hero is convinced that his wife is being unfaithful to him when she cannot find the handkerchief that he had given her. Actually, the handkerchief had been taken by the villain, Iago, who uses it as part of his evil plot.

70 Some thought it mounted to the lunar sphere,  
Since all things lost on earth are treasured there.

75 There heroes' wits are kept in ponderous vases,  
And beaux' in snuffboxes and tweezer cases.  
There broken vows and deathbed aims are found,  
And lovers' hearts with ends of riband bound . . .

80 But trust the Muse—she saw it upward rise,  
Though marked by none but quick, poetic eyes . . .  
A sudden star, it shot through liquid<sup>41</sup> air  
And drew behind a radiant trail of hair . . .<sup>42</sup>

85 Then cease, bright Nymph! to mourn thy ravished 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,<sup>43</sup>  
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.

41. liquid: Clear.

42. trail of hair: The word "comet" comes from a Greek word meaning "long-haired."

43. murders . . . eye: Lovers struck down by her glances.