

## VICTORIAN POETRY

### “The Rape of the Lock”

By Alexander Pope

Neo - Classical poem

- ❖ In this lecture, we are going to complete the poem “*The Rape of the Lock*”. This poem can be considered to be a sarcastic and ironical epic.

#### Why do we consider it as an epic?

- The poem can be considered as an epic because Alexander Pope applied the whole elements of the epic concerning the artificiality of language, the number of characters and actions, and the characters belong to the upper class except one which is the serious subject

#### Summary

**It helps you to analyze the poem**

## 5

- ❖ Belinda, rivaling the sun in her radiance, sets out by boat on the river Thames for Hampton Court Palace. She is accompanied by a part of glitzy ladies ("Nymphs") and gentlemen, but is far and away the most striking member of the group.
- ❖ Pope's description of her charms includes "the sparkling Cross she wore" on her "white breast," her "quick" eyes and "lively looks," and the easy grace with which she bestows her smiles and attentions evenly among all the adoring guests. Her crowning glories, though, are the two ringlets that dangle on her "iv'ry neck". These curls are described as love's labyrinths, specifically designed to ensnare any poor heart who might get entangled in them.
- ❖ One of the young gentlemen on the boat, the Baron, particularly admires Belinda's locks, and has determined to steal them for himself. We read that he rose early that morning to build an altar to love and pray for success in this project. He sacrificed several tokens of his former affections, including garters, gloves, and billet-doux (love-letters). He

5

then prostrated himself before a pyre built with "all the trophies of his former loves," fanning its flames with his "am'rous sighs". The gods listened to his prayer but decided to grant only half of it.

<b>these</b>	<b>Refers to locks</b>	<b>detains</b>	Prison
<b>Slaves</b>	victims	<b>slender</b>	strong
<b>Chains</b>	constraint /		

- Now we will continue paraphrasing the poem

**12<sup>th</sup> | stanza**

*Love in these Labyrinths his Slaves detains,*

*And mighty Hearts are held in slender Chains.*

### Paraphrasing:

- ❖ These beautiful curls are used as a trick to attract the victim and keep him as a slave. As the great men become weak in

5

front of her beauty and their great hearts become prisoners.  
These hearts are held by splendor chains.

<b>Sprindges</b>	Ropes	<b>Slight</b>	Slim/ thin / lean
<b>we</b>	Refers to men	<b>Lines</b>	Refers to the locks
<b>betray</b>	Deceived / cheated	<b>Finny</b>	weak
<b>prey</b>	victim		

**13<sup>th</sup> | stanza**

*With hairy Sprindges we the Birds betray,  
Slight Lines of Hair surprize the Finny Prey,*

**Paraphrasing:**

- ❖ The poet in these two lines wants to say that they were cheated and beguiled by these slim curls of hair. This woman become as a hunter and as a fisher who used her beauty and her attractive and charming curls to hunt men. Thus, the

5

woman was a hunter and a fisher and the men were the victims like fish.

## 14<sup>th</sup> | stanza

<b>Fair</b>	beautiful	<b>Imperial</b>	royal / kingly
<b>Tresses</b>	Braids		

*Fair Tresses Man's Imperial Race insnare,*

*And Beauty draws us with a single Hair.*

## Paraphrasing:

- ❖ The poet says that this beautiful and attractive woman lured and entangled men, she made them as victims and prisoners. Men became weak and frail in front of her beauty curls. Men can be imprisoned by a single hair.

## 15<sup>th</sup> | stanza

*Th' Adventrous Baron the bright Locks admir'd,*



## 5

<b>admir'd</b>	like	<b>Prize</b>	Refers to the locks
<b>wish'd</b>	hoped	<b>aspir'd</b>	desired

*He saw, he wish'd, and to the Prize aspir'd:*

### Paraphrasing:

- ❖ Baron who is the man of fashion and who is from the upper class, like other men, likes and admires her bright locks directly. He sees them and begins to think how to get them.

### 16<sup>th</sup> | stanza

*Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,  
By Force to ravish, or by Fraud betray;*

<b>Resolv'd</b>	decided / determined	<b>ravish</b>	To get something by force
<b>meditates</b>	thinks	<b>Fraud/ betray</b>	Cheating / deceiving

## 5

### Paraphrasing:

- ❖ Baron decided and made decision to get this prize. He started thinking of how to achieve his goal. He has two ways to do this, either to attract this woman and violently cut these two locks, so he wants to vanish and use violence to get his aim and this is his first way or he wants to cut them without her notice or her realization.

### 17<sup>th</sup> | stanza

*For when Success a Lover's Toil attends,*

*Few ask, if Fraud or Force attain'd his Ends.*

### Paraphrasing:

- ❖ The poet wants to say that when someone succeeded in achieving his aim, people will not ask him about his ways in succeeding. So, he decided to get the locks by using violence

5

and betraying because no one inquires about the way in which he achieved his aim.

## 18<sup>th</sup> | stanza

*For this, e're Phoebus rose, he had implor'd*

*Propitious Heav'n, and ev'ry Pow'r ador'd,*

### Paraphrasing:

- ❖ The poet wants to say that in order to achieve his aim which is getting the two attractive locks of hair of the beautiful woman, he is ready to do anything and everything in the morning and before the appearance of the sun, he begins to pray and worship God and to entreat, implore and invoke all the powers whether they are divine or not just to help him to

<b>For this</b>	Refers to the achieving of the aim	<b>implor'd</b>	Pray / worship
<b>e're</b>	before	<b>ador'd</b>	Respected
<b>Phoebus</b>	God of sun		

achieve his goal.



**19<sup>th</sup> | stanza**

*But chiefly Love — to Love an Altar built,  
Of twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt.*

**Paraphrasing:**

- ❖ Baron built a worship place for the power of love. He brings twelve long love French poems and put them in this altar in a well-organized way just to show his love and admiration for this woman.

**20<sup>th</sup> | stanza**

*There lay three Garters, half a Pair of Gloves:*

<b>chiefly</b>	Mainly	<b>gilt</b>	golden
<b>Altar</b>	A place for worship	<b>French Romances</b>	Loves poems
<b>vast</b>	large	<b>neatly</b>	Carefully

5

*And all the Trophies of his former Loves.*

**Paraphrasing:**

- ❖ He also puts three boxes in which he keeps his valuable things and all the gifts which he has got from his lovers. He makes great sacrifice for trivial and silly aim.

**21<sup>st</sup> | stanza**

<b>tender</b>	Weak / frail	<b>breathes</b>	Beu
---------------	--------------	-----------------	-----

<b>half a Pair of Gloves</b>	mid-covered	<b>Trophies</b>	Valuable things
------------------------------	-------------	-----------------	-----------------

*With tender Billet-doux he lights the Pyre,*

5

<b>Billet-doux</b>	Letters of love	<b>am'rous Sighs</b>	Sight of love
<b>lights</b>	Set on fire / kindle		

*And breathes three am'rous Sighs to raise the Fire.*

### Paraphrasing:

- ❖ He uses the love letters to kindle the fire. The fire is not rising immediately, so he starts blowing his breath on it to fire properly.

استخدم رسائل الحب ليضرم النار. لم تشتعل النار فوراً لذا بدأ بالنفخ عليها لتشتعل على نحو لائق.

### 22<sup>nd</sup> | stanza

*Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent Eyes*

*Soon to obtain, and long possess the Prize:*

5

**Paraphrasing:**

- ❖ The man is suffering and he feels pain, his eyes are full of tears. He makes all these prays and petition to God just to help him in achieving his goal. He makes all these applications to have the curls of hair and to keep with him for a long time as a prize.

<b>prostrate</b>	kneeling ساجداً	<b>breathes</b>	Beu
<b>ardent Eyes</b>	Eyes full of tears	<b>Soon to obtain</b>	Get it directly

**23<sup>rd</sup> | stanza**

*The Pow'rs gave Ear, and granted half his Pray'r,  
The rest, the Winds dispers'd in empty Air.*

**Paraphrasing:**

5

- ❖ The powers listen to his prayers and give him what he wants, but they only gave him half of what he is praying for which is getting them. The second of his desire, which is to have them for a long time has not achieved because the two locks of hair have gone with the wind.

The poet, in the rest of his poem, ends the poem by going back to the background telling us that everything ends peacefully. He makes a kind of balance between action and nature. If there is nothing wrong in action, everything in nature is going in peaceful.

**24<sup>th</sup> | stanza**

*But now secure the painted Vessel glides,  
The Sun-beams trembling on the floating Tydes,*



5

**Paraphrasing:**

- ❖ After achieving his goal which is having the curls of hair, he believes now that everything will be ok. The boat in which those people are sailing continued its journey peacefully. The sunlight is still falling on the gentle waves of the water as the poem begins.

**25<sup>th</sup> | stanza**

*While melting Musick steals upon the Sky,  
And soften'd Sounds along the Waters die.*

**Paraphrasing:**

- ❖ The music enters secretly to the place. Its sounds will not be heard when it reaches the surface of water. It will die and disappear when it touches the water everything is peaceful.

**26<sup>th</sup> | stanza**

5

*Smooth flow the Waves, the Zephyrs gently play*

*Belinda smil'd, and all the World was gay.*

**Paraphrasing:**

- ❖ The waves are soft, they flow gently. Belinda is still smiling and all people who are around her feel happy.

In the rest of his poem, the poet reminds the reader of what happened in the beginning of the poem.

**Another main idea**

Is criticizing the upper class by talking about Baron who cut Blinda's hair.

**Now we will discuss the critical ideas**

**THE TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS**

## **1. The Language:**

You notice how the language is difficult. It is complex and artificial. It is not easy to understand the poem. There is a play in the words' order. There are some words that are unclear till you read the whole passage or till you read the previous lines. Sometimes there are some pronouns that go back to something mentioned before.

## **2. The Universality of the Subject:**

The poet talks in general about the people in the upper class, and he talks about Baron as an example.

# **THE NEW ELEMENTS**

## **1. The Use of Heroic Couplet:**

## 5

The use of the heroic couplet is clear in the poem although sometimes we find slight difference in some words at the end of the line. The poet is not always able to use the same sound.

### **2. Following the Laws of Nature:**

Everything in this poem is logical. The poet starts the background with generalization. He uses the word " **we** ". He is linking the ideas and stanzas in a good way. What he is saying is not enough until he gives example, so he talks about the Baron as an example.

### **3. The Use of Satire:**

The poet criticizes the artificial life of aristocratic people of his society.

## An example for analysis of the poem

- ❖ "The Rape of the Lock" is a neo-classical poem written by Alexander Pope who is a neo-classical poet. The word "Neo-classical" means that the poem combines both traditional and new elements. Accordingly, from the title of the poem, we may notice that the poet criticizes something, so this poem can be considered as a mock, social satire poem. The idea of using satire is very clear from the title. Throughout reading the poem, we notice first that the language is complex and difficult, the poet used artificial and ungrammatical language and expressions. He played with the order of the words in many places in the poem ..... Second, the poet does not show any personal or individual points of view. The poet dealt with the people who belong to the upper class, he talked about Baron who is an important figure. The universality of the subject is very clear especially when the poet used pronouns as "we, you, ....".



## 5

The poet also used words that indicate brightness and attractive, he used this technique to show the readers how the people in the upper class are much from outside. So, he gave the readers moral lessons. In short, we can say that the poet expresses the idea in a rational way depending on the law of nature which means going back to the mind and avoid feelings and emotions. Finally, the whole poem is written in heroic couplets, the poet is able to give a complete idea in every couplet.

**THE END**