

# ***The Rape of the Lock: Desire between Couple(t)s – a Counselling Intervention***

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Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1714)<sup>1</sup> was inspired by a rift between two prominent (yet 'recusant') English Roman Catholic families, after Robert, 7th Lord Petre had raffishly removed part of the coiffure of Arabella Fermor, a young 'beauty'. Pope himself glossed the occasion:

A common acquaintance and well-wisher to both desired me to write a poem to make a jest of it, and laugh them together again. It was in this view that I wrote my *Rape of the Lock*, which was well received and had its effect in the two families.<sup>2</sup>

I want, here, to focus on this originary motive for the poem, and to suggest ways in which it informs the poet's larger purpose – to create a social poem which negotiates tensions within the age-old battle of the sexes. The finished masterpiece, I shall argue, has relevance not only to contemporary debates about the ideology of gender<sup>3</sup> but, in particular, to the rise of our now-ubiquitous 'counselling' culture.<sup>4</sup> For such a discussion it is important that the 'Offence' occurred within a tightly knit, 'marginal' group,<sup>5</sup> and that the poetic strategy develops a phantasmagoric 'interpretation' of the incident, as a proto-Freudian<sup>6</sup> narrative in which attentive intelligence has transformed the strength of Desire<sup>7</sup> into mock-heroic sweet reason.

The occasional nature of the poem's composition is declared in its notable opening:

What dire Offence from am'rous Causes springs,  
What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things,  
I sing – This verse to *Caryll*, 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. (I, 1–6)<sup>8</sup>

The conventional capitalisation of abstract terms such as ‘Offence’, ‘Causes’ or ‘Subject’ serves to underline the balanced rationality (and counselling overview) that Pope will bring to bear on the ‘dire’ inter-relational encounter: its existential particularity is being translated into soothing generalities concerning human behaviour. At the same time, the italicisation of ‘Caryll’ and ‘Belinda’, and the capitalisation of ‘She’ and ‘He’, help to transform the incident into the realm of common behaviour and shared poetics. John Caryll was Pope’s friend, the ‘well-wisher’ who asked him to make a poetic intervention in the family quarrel; ‘Belinda’ is a euphonious variation on Arabella (Fermor). The poet’s voice is announced – ‘I sing’, negotiating a switch in register from the quasi-philosophical rhetoric of ‘Causes’ into the aesthetic domain. And he immediately presents his voicing as a double gift: due to the friend but offered to the poem’s heroine, who is also the inspirer of the verse. The invocation begins to home in more directly on the matter in hand:

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*?  
 In tasks so bold, can Little Men engage,  
 And in soft Bosoms dwells such mighty Rage? (I, 7–12)

The poetic convention of the muse is manipulated to suggest a preliminary deification of Belinda herself. The heroine of the poem becomes also its muse, thus gratifying her offended pride. This serves to indicate that while the poem will consist, in general, of inter-familial counselling, Pope’s intervention is skewed to favour Belinda’s point of view. Pope is here using (in recent parlance) his ‘emotional intelligence’<sup>9</sup> to place the opening under the sign of the ‘feminine’. Such partisan tact helps transform the ensuing action and reaction so that the inter-personal becomes the political. The *motif* of the poem is the socially acknowledged wildness of masculine desire (*his* ‘selfish gene’), and the ‘stranger Cause’ is a variant of the Freudian conundrum ‘What does the woman want?’. There is a satiric edge to the word ‘Lord’ – an intimation that the ‘truth universally acknowledged’ about eligible, well-born and rich young men belongs, in fact, to a patriarchal code – but one introjected by ambitious young women for marriage purposes.

The poet’s ‘bold’ task proceeds to invoke (with a sexual frisson) ‘Little Men’ and ‘soft Bosoms’. The word ‘miniaturisation’ has often

been used to describe Pope's general method.<sup>10</sup> However, granted the proto-psychotherapeutic nature of the poem, one might want to replace it by the technical term 'condensation' and remark that *The Rape* also manifests comedic 'displacement'.<sup>11</sup> Pope is utilising a kind of literary dream-work throughout. Yet he does not forget that genuine offence has been taken. Belinda's 'mighty Rage' is a mock-heroic displacement of the 'wrath of Achilles'<sup>12</sup> but it is real anger for all that. Even if the 'rape' is seen in its etymological sense as mere 'capture', Belinda is still furious when the 'lock' is stolen. The poem will attempt, through countertransference<sup>13</sup> understanding and applied dream-work, to 'interpret' the incident and draw the sting out of the anger.

Before considering the poem's narrative development, it is worthwhile establishing Pope's overall therapeutic and aesthetic strategy. This can be usefully subdivided into two particular qualities – tone and poetic form. The tone is that of a caring counsellor, compounded of erudition, maturity, playfulness and poise. Literary critics have often noted it, without quite placing it as I wish to. Wilson Knight observed: 'Pope does sometimes appear as an amused grown-up writing for children';<sup>14</sup> Reuben A. Brower likened one passage (commencing 'Just then') to parental story-telling;<sup>15</sup> Thomas Campbell commented on its 'correctness', 'shrewdness', 'wit' and 'common sense';<sup>16</sup> Lord Byron invoked its 'sense, harmony, effect'.<sup>17</sup> Such remarks usefully indicate the peculiar nature of poetic authority in *The Rape*. At worst, it might appear patronising; yet affectionately 'paternal' might seem the better formulation. In fact, there is something in its voicing of the indulgent Father Confessor,<sup>18</sup> and in this poem the function of counsellor and guide seems more relevant than satiric precedents in, say, Dryden or Horace.<sup>19</sup> In counselling situations, tone is essential to create a 'safety zone', and Pope's subtle voicing is throughout a means to 'laugh them together again'. He uses his writerly position to make light of the inter-personal and groupish antagonism and intimate that bad feeling has got out of hand. Hence, although his interpretation of the conflict depends on an in-depth understanding of motives and transactions we now discuss in psychoanalytic terms, his role and tone are those of a family adviser.

This aspect of his strategy is ably prosecuted by his mastery of poetic form. Here his unique handling of the couplet is at the heart of the matter. For the binary nature of the rhyming couplet is uniquely appropriate, in Pope's hands, to mediate the mysterious duality of

sexual desire. The chiming of the line-endings (alike through *différence*) is typically reinforced by devices such as parallelism, antithesis or doubling. The antithetical character of the sexual dance is mimicked and rendered pleasurably ironic in a poetic play of comparison and contrast:

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. (II, 25–8)

Heroes' and Heroins' Shouts confus'dly rise,  
And base, and treble Voices strike the Skies. (V, 41–2)

The cumulative force of the verse creates a pattern of contrasts and comparisons where the overwhelming principle is insistent repetition. The couplet in Pope's tactful usage, one might say, represents the poetic enactment of *Fort/Da* – the child's endless fascination with absence–presence, Freud's observed cotton-reel game, eroticised hide-and-seek. In 'Freud's Masterplot', Peter Brook writes:

The analyst can detect a 'compulsion to repeat', ascribed to the unconscious repressed ... To state the matter boldly: rhyme, alliteration, assonance, metre, refrain, all the mnemonic elements of fictions ... are in some manner repetitions which take us back into the text ...<sup>20</sup>

In *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope has transformed the satiric cutting-edge of his hero, John Dryden ('God's pampered people, whom, debauched with ease,/ No King could govern, nor no God could please'),<sup>21</sup> into a counselling tool which plays back, as humour, the polarities of confused heterosexual feelings. The couplet is used as a hypnotic form of literary repetition-compulsion. Operative, here, is the insistence (and ambiguity) of Desire itself – Eros channelled into a 'Pairing' which R.W. Bion ascribes to a social aristocracy, but typically surfacing in normal group phenomena.<sup>22</sup> However, Pope is not a would-be 'analyst' but a proto-counsellor. And since Eros is always implicated with Thanatos (Brooks says 'what operates in the text through repetition is the death instinct, the drive toward the end'),<sup>23</sup> the drive, here, is sublimated in mock-Homeric farce, where 'dying' has its sexual *frisson*. Overall, the couplet functions as a psychotherapeutic 'container'.<sup>24</sup> The binary 'rocking-horse'<sup>25</sup> simulates the flow

and recoil of feeling between couples, and, at the same time, it also evokes and replicates the primary dynamics of the mother-child dyad. Mirroring has the inter-relational complexity expressed in Donne's lines: 'My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears'.<sup>26</sup> Further, the couplet corresponds to the leisurely in-breath and out-breath of contented child and mother:

From silver Spouts the grateful Liquors glide,  
While China's Earth receives the smoking Tyde.  
At once they gratify their Scent and Taste,  
And frequent Cups prolong the rich Repast. (III, 109–12)

In short, Pope succeeds in achieving a counselling tone (for both the offended parties and posterity alike) by transmuting the satiric couplet into a finally maternal container.

Pope's aesthetic representation of a parental counselling tone is evident from the beginning of the narrative proper. The poem focuses intimately on Belinda as the morning of the 'dire Offence' begins: '*Sol thro' white Curtains shot a tim'rous Ray,/And op'd those Eyes that must eclipse the Day*' (I, 13–14). The sun's light is shown as fearful, and reveals Belinda as, no doubt, she would like to see herself – outshining the dawn. In his mediating position, Pope hints at his heroine's narcissism, but the accusation of male voyeurism<sup>27</sup> may miss the main point. The reader is made to appreciate Belinda as she appreciates herself and, through the permission of light irony, admire her. This becomes even clearer toward the end of Canto I:

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. (I, 125–8)

In fact, much of the magic of this scene comes from the evocation of what most children (of either sex) have seen and marvelled at – their mother at the make-up table. And the early importance of the mother's face to the growth of an 'apprehension of beauty' has been emphasised in recent psychoanalysis.<sup>28</sup> This rather different 'Mirror Stage' enables Pope to enhance Belinda's appearance by calling up early memories in his description: '... awakens ev'ry Grace/And calls forth all the Wonders of her Face' (140–1). This could hardly be displeasing to Mrs Arabella Fermor, as 'interpellated' client: it also offers to

the large readership of posterity a memorable epiphany more appreciative than disparaging.

Canto I, as a whole, establishes the general tone of *The Rape of the Lock* and confirms the description of that most 'valent'<sup>29</sup> of critics, George Wilson Knight:

... by ... humour Pope integrates his whole poem into the heroic and religious traditions, religious tonings taking their place beside those royalistic and heroic, under similar semi-humorous conditions. The poem is not iconoclastic, but holds a warm humanism as surely as the somewhat similar *Love's Labour's Lost*. It is written not from a scorn but from a love.<sup>30</sup>

Such love, I am suggesting, conforms to the ethical responsibility of the 'good enough' therapeutic counsellor.<sup>31</sup> The honourable aim is to get Arabella (and the families concerned) to see a traumatic incident in another light. In a quasi-paternal role, Pope tells her story as bizarre and amusing – much as Lewis Carroll would tell Alice Liddell a phantasmagoric story, over a century later. A beautiful young woman is aroused by dawn sunlight, but her 'balmy Rest' is prolonged by a 'Morning Dream' provided by her guardian Sylph (a kind of Baroque representation of the projection/ introjection dynamic).<sup>32</sup> A desirable 'Youth' counsels her as to the nature and function of the 'unnumbered Spirits' surrounding her, who signify essences of female possibility. These become reduced to the binary opposition 'Sylph'–'Gnome'. Ariel declares himself as her protecting Sylph and warns Belinda of the dangers inherent in 'Man!'. But then Shock, her lapdog, wakes her, she peruses a love-letter and forgets her dream. She then proceeds to her gorgeous 'Toilet'. The reader is coopted into the poet's intimacy of address and is intended to approve Pope's tactful handling of the 'Case' through comedic transformation.

Canto II then commences with an ironically hyperbolic description of Belinda launched in a 'painted Vessel' on the 'silver Thames' (59) – an evocation which slyly flatters Arabella/Belinda by comparisons with Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Elizabeth I as water-born 'Gloriana'. However, 'sweet Thames' is rapidly subordinated to the spectacle of the heroine's 'two Locks', both signifiers of feminine beauty and perverse fetishes. The significance of the locks' fascination for the observing Baron is perhaps best approached, for psychoanalytical purposes, via the Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Lacan theorises a 'world of desire as such',<sup>33</sup> and this accords closely with

Pope's configuration. Desire, says Lacan, is a 'relation of being to lack', is unconscious and, while we 'make use of it ... for describing a certain biological cycle', it is not itself a matter of 'this particular sexual object'.<sup>34</sup> In short, desire is a fundamental state, very like St Augustine's human 'restlessness',<sup>35</sup> which precedes, interfuses and transcends any particular signification. It is this elemental and untameable force that renders the Baron's obsession with the locks robotic and absurd:

Th' Adventurous *Baron* the bright Locks admir'd.  
 He saw, he wish'd, and to the Prize aspir'd:  
 Resolve'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. (II, 29–34)

Desire, as Lacan argues, is 'qualitative',<sup>36</sup> but its interpersonal manifestation may become a matter of quantitative repetition–compulsion. The mechanical puppetry involved in such outworking is wonderfully enacted in Pope's perfection of Dryden's minimalist technique: 'He saw, he wish'd, and to the Prize aspir'd' (II, 30). The comedy becomes darker with the terms 'Force' and 'Fraud', yet if these are connected with Queen Anne's 'three Realms', 'Indian', 'Arabia' and so forth, then the play on Julius Caesar's 'veni vidi vici' takes on a colonial dimension, incorporating the families' recusant status within the overall ideology of Empire. However, the political is here grounded in inter-personal Desire, and the Baron's 'Altar', with its 'twelve vast French Romances', garters, gloves, trophies (as kindling for burning) constitutes a bonfire of the vanities of human wishes. Where Belinda's own negotiation of sexuality remains ambivalent – somewhere between the Sylph's elaborate defences at the end of Canto II and the 'Earthly Lover' of III – the Baron is a satiric Desire-machine:

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. (II, 42–4)

Pope's comedic treatment has its corollary in Lacan's free association on Desire 'at the joint of speech':

Wit is only wit because it is close enough to our existence to cancel it with laughter. The phenomenon of the dream, of the psychopathology of everyday life, of the joke are to be found in this zone.<sup>37</sup>

Canto III employs such wit precisely to ‘cancel’ the stress on inter-familial discord (or the sex war in general) ‘with laughter’. It rewrites the sexual misdemeanour as mock-heroic conquest: in this, at the least, the aggressive forces of Death Instinct (epic heroism)<sup>38</sup> are recast as an over-insistence of male eroticism (comedic absurdity). It displaces violated virginity (‘rich *China Vessels* .../In glittering Dust and painted Fragments lie!’), III, 159–60) into a more sportive, social faux pas: ‘The meeting Points the sacred Hair dissever’. In this way the rash act becomes transmuted into a farcical outrage that might cause both family parties to ‘laugh ... together again’.<sup>39</sup> The over-reaction of both sides is sent up in a burlesque of epic battle-scenes – vanquished and victor:

Then flash’d the living Lightning from her Eyes,  
And Screams of Horror rend the th’ affrighted Skies .../  
Let Wreaths of Triumph now my Temples twine,  
(The Victor cry’d the glorious Prize is mine! ...) (III, 155–6, 161–2)

Belinda, who has won at cards and already celebrated her own triumph (probably inspiring the envy of Clarissa, who lends the Baron her scissors), now tastes what she sees as outrageous humiliation. Yet the Baron is even more ridiculous, seeing ‘Honour, Name, and Praise’ in an act bound to lead to ostracism, mistaking the lock of hair for a maidenhood. And, in fact, his action is less motivated by sexuality than by mischief: he wants to pull Belinda down a peg or two. Yet even this may serve to demonstrate perversity in Lacan’s sense: ‘the subject’s interest in the person who suffers humiliation must obviously be due to the possibility of the subject’s being submitted to humiliation himself’.<sup>40</sup> Through Pope’s literary ‘dream-work’, the Baron appears as both party-pooper and a bit of a weirdo. The poet, as counsellor, underlines Petrie’s outlandishness to help confirm Belinda’s *amour propre*.

Canto IV becomes more obviously ‘psychological’ in that it introduces the ‘Cave of Spleen’ – the Spleen having something of the same cachet in the eighteenth century as anger or depression have today. Belinda’s humiliation is given a similar three-term description as the Baron’s triumph – ‘Rage, Resentment and Despair’. However, these



terms come with qualifiers – ‘Caves’, passions and physical symptoms. In the cave, itself, satire also accommodates the regressive states that humiliation can bring: what is ‘Affectation’ in an eighteen-year-old may be a repetition of much earlier behaviour:

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. (IV, 33–6)

The Spleen also had the reputation for causing delusive phantasies. And Pope's emotional intelligence is proto-Freudian enough to make these, among other things, sexually suggestive:

Here living *Teapots* stand, one Arm held out,  
One bent; the Handle this, and that the Spout .../  
Men prove with Child, as pow'rful Fancy works,  
And Maids turn'd Bottles, call aloud for Corks. (49–50, 53–4)

This creates a phantasmagoria as weird as anything in ‘postmodern Baroque’. Yet Pope uses phantasy less to shock than to soothe, by making of it something rich and strange. The ‘hateful Gnome’ pours ‘Sorrows’ over Belinda and worsens her depressive state. At the same time, her piteous appeal adds to its own self-division and comedic sexual confusion: ‘Oh hadst thou, Cruel! been content to seize/Hairs less in sight, or any Hairs but these!’ (IV, 175–6). If Pope has been able to keep Arabella ‘on-side’ through this sally, he must have gone some way to transmute her sense of outrage into embarrassed laughter.

Canto V commences with the Baron's rejection of Belinda's plea, followed by Clarissa's attempt to play Shakespeare's Portia. Although Clarissa had aided the Baron's scheme, she now tries to impose a ‘Reality Principle’ through ‘good Sense’, while endorsing ‘Merit’ rather than ‘Passion’. But her counsel falls on deaf ears. The general ‘Audience’ are intent on a showdown, which accordingly follows in mock-heroic dream-work (‘Like Gods they fight, nor dread a mortal Wound’, 44). Throughout, Thanatos is displaced as Eros (‘Arms’, ‘living Death’, ‘reviv'd again’, ‘die’, ‘subdued’, ‘burn alive’). Belinda attacks the Baron's nose (with snuff) – which might have interested the Freud of the Wilhelm Fleiss years.<sup>41</sup> But the Baron refuses to ‘restore the Lock’, and Pope begins to resolve the conflict by a phan-

tasmagoric conjuring-trick: 'The Lock, obtain'd with Guilt and kept with Pain,/In ev'ry place is sought, but sought in vain' (109–10). Thereafter, the lock succumbs to public rumour, mounting to the 'lunar sphere' in the poet's comedic blend of condensation and displacement:

'There broken Vows, and Death-bed Alms are found,  
And Lovers' Hearts with Ends of Riband bound ....  
Cages for Gnats, and Chains to Yoak a Flea (V, 117–21).

It finally metamorphoses into a starry 'Trail of Hair', thus transforming the whole incident into the 'artifice of eternity' – '*This* Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to Fame,/ And mid'st the Stars inscribe *Belinda's* Name!' (149–50). With this ending Pope invokes the power of imaginative transcendence to heal discord and, at the same time, calls attention to the power of his own poetic art to sublimate temporary passions by transmuted them into cultural form. Hence Pope the therapist is at one with Pope the artist: and his concluding offer (of aesthetic immortalisation) is one the wrangling families could scarcely refuse. The poem would be 'well received'.

In all of this, the epic precedent also operates as a kind of allusive dream-work – even now for a culture largely unversed in the Classics.<sup>42</sup> Just as Freud would use the mythology of Greek tragedy to help codify operations of deep psychic states, so Pope here employs the mythology of Greek epic to translate a recent 'Offence' into a high-cultural codification of Desire. This was greatly aided by his contiguous project of translating Homer. As Rebecca Ferguson has observed:

the process of exchange was often complex, with Pope apparently forging allusive links between the *Rape* and sections of the *Iliad* translation as yet unpublished.<sup>43</sup>

Ferguson stresses Pope's fascination with the anger of Achilles (which he saw as the 'entire force of the *Iliad*', quoted, *ibid.*, p. 35), and neatly demonstrates the connection with Belinda's sense of injury. A quite elaborate scheme of condensed allusions to Homer, including a variety of his rhetorical tropes, is informed by emotional displacement, where heroic rage (which Pope, the Christian, found himself embarrassed in responding to) is mediated into bathos and farce. Where in Homer, Achilles (or 'Death Instinct') and Helen ('Eros') are

deeply serious opposites in the drama of human drives, in Pope the battle of the sexes becomes transmuted into a comedic much-ado-about-nothing.

In fact, Pope's literary dream-work operates much in the way Freud would later theorise: minor motifs appear as major, major ones as minor, and normal distinctions between what is serious and what amusing are turned upside-down. As Freud wrote of displacement:

no other part of the dream-work is so much responsible for making the dream strange or incomprehensible.<sup>44</sup>

In the case of *The Rape* such strangeness is rendered as the comically bizarre. And what holds together both allusive condensation and displacement is the epic precedent, sensed as some half-known 'mind of Europe'<sup>45</sup> – or in Jungian terms, evoked Collective Unconscious – behind the arras of the text. Pope's 'Wit' renders the portentous as comforting comedy, translating Homer's world of Mycenaean, tribal warfare into a 'Queen Anne' realm of consumerism and sexual titillation.

The main justification for bringing psychoanalytical terms and psychotherapeutic practices to bear on the understanding of Pope's poem must be Freud's own:

creative writers are valuable allies and their evidence to be prized highly ... they are far in advance of us everyday people ...<sup>46</sup>

Psychoanalytical understanding did not spring, 'scientifically' and fully armed, out of Freud's head around the year 1900. Rather, as the literary meditations of Freud himself – and of later psychoanalysts such as Jung, Lacan, Klein, Laing or Adam Phillips – make clear, the psychoanalytic movement developed out of a blend of 'clinical' experience and essentially 'literary' theorising. At the same time, the rise of our contemporary counselling institutions, in addition to a response to growing social needs, can be genealogically related to traditional literary attempts to mediate inter-personal conflict. In the case of *The Rape of the Lock*, this dual purpose is especially strong, granted the specific nature of the family quarrel and Pope's stated intention in writing the poem.

Pope's role in *The Rape*, then, is both to address a particular inter-relational crisis and to transform it into a general exemplum for

cultural understanding. This is very similar to the mission of the many recent case-books on groupwork, which draw on specific group experience to suggest typical dynamics in play. Pope's task as literary leader (or 'orchestrator')<sup>47</sup> of this tight-knit, 'recusant' group is to prevent a splitting into 'good' group and 'anti-group', based on the 'Offence'. This, as we have seen, he performs with remarkable poetic skill. His position as rising 'Augustan' writer allows his mediation strong cultural authority, replete with ethical overtones:

Beauties in vain their pretty Eyes may roll;  
Charms strike the Sight, but Merit wins the Soul. (V, 33–4)

Group leadership, in this case as in others, consists in both 'managing'<sup>48</sup> internal rifts and interpreting the salient dynamics so as to transcribe them into an illuminative exemplum in the public sphere. *The Rape*, as constructed dream-world, concludes both as ethical affirmation and comedic apotheosis – the 'Lock' inscribed among indulgently complicit stars. Throughout the poem proto-Freudian imagery has been held within a glittering social surface, which provides aesthetic containment rooted in Homeric precedent, comically displaced. Pope's masterpiece was devised as a poetic mediation to resolve a group conflict; it remains as a 'psychotherapeutic' model of how anger, itself, may be sublimated through a transforming humour.

## Notes

1. All quotations will refer to the useful, recent edition *Alexander Pope: The Rape of the Lock*, ed. Cynthia Wall (Boston, New York: Bedford Books, 1998).

2. Quoted in *Pope: The Rape of the Lock: A Casebook*, ed. John Dixon Hunt (London: Macmillan, 1968), Introduction, p. 11.

3. The status of Pope's poetry within gender studies has been quite persistently addressed over the last twenty years, in particular. See, for instance, Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All we Hate: English Satires on Women, 1560–1750* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), Ellen Pollak, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and His Eighteenth-Century Women Readers* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994) and Christa Knellwolf, *A Contradiction Still: Representations of the Feminine in the Poetry of Alexander Pope* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998). For an overview of the debate see Paul Baines, *The Complete Critical Guide to Alexander Pope* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

4. The extension of individual depth-psychoanalysis into varieties of general counselling practice is largely a post-Second World War phenomenon. It represents something of a democratisation of psychotherapeutic theory and treatment and is also related to the rise of psychoanalytic group-studies. Of particular relevance here is the practice of couple counselling and family counselling. For a basic guide, see *Counselling and Psychotherapy: A Consumer's Guide*, ed. Windy Dryden and Colin Feltham (London: Sheldon, 1995) which includes a useful bibliography. The main studies of literature and psychoanalysis largely ignore the counselling phenomenon – even though they may well have been written within strolling distance of the university Counselling Centre. A good book on psychotherapy, in general, is the updated text of Anthony Bateman, Dennis Brown [not the author of this article] and Jonathan Pedder, *Introduction to Psychotherapy: An Outline of Psychodynamic Principles and Practice* (London and Philadelphia: Routledge, 2000). They describe counselling in this way:

Counselling is another name for a form of psychotherapy at this outer level, which has rapidly developed as a method of help for specific groups of people. For example, Marriage Guidance Counsellors are consulted by those with marital problems; Student Counsellors at universities, colleges, and schools see students with emotional and academic problems; Samaritans are contacted by people in states of suicidal despair.... Recruitment, training, techniques, and standards of counsellors are inevitably varied, but are co-ordinated by the British Association of Counselling established in 1976. (90)

5. After the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1689, when James II became exiled for his Roman Catholic sympathies, the situation of 'recusant' families was difficult and put them on the defensive. It was self-defeating for such groups to become divided. The foundational texts of British psychoanalytic group-work are S.H. Foulkes and E.J. Anthony, *Group Psychotherapy: the Psycho-analytic Approach* (1957 – second edition, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) and W.R. Bion, *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers* (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1961). For more recent accounts, see *The Practice of Group Analysis*, ed. Jeff Roberts and Malcolm Pines (London: Tavistock/Routledge 1991), *Koinonia: from Hate through Dialogue to Culture in the Large Group*, ed. Patrick de Maré et al. (London: Karmali, 1991) and, especially, Morris Nitsun, *The Anti-Group: Destructive Forces in the Group and their Creative Potential* (London and NY: Routledge, 1996). In Bion's terms, Pope operates in the poem as an 'interpreting' group leader to smooth away an aberration in 'Pairing' behaviour: De Maré's book suggests ways in which he also mediates between small-group phenomena and the larger literary culture.

6. Cf. '... one finds it hard to believe, after some of the material in the 'Cave of Spleen' section... that Pope would have been too much startled to come upon the theories of Sigmund Freud', Cleanth Brooks in *A Casebook*, p. 145.

7. In capitalising 'Desire' I seek to signal the larger sense of a (finally unappeasable) drive associated with the Lacanian tradition. See, for instance, Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1980), *passim*. See also 'Desire, life and death', in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, Book II, trans. Sylvane Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 221–34. I quote some key points below. For some hints as to how Desire may be transmuted into poetic 'social phan-

tasy', see Antony Easthope, *Poetry and Phantasy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), *passim*. For a theorisation suggestive of how Pope's poetry can mediate between the 'symbolic' and 'semiotic' levels of language, see 'Revolution in Poetic Language', *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 89–136.

8. Wall's edition, p. 53. Further quotations indicated by Canto and lines.

9. See Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996). The title-phrase seems to have caught on despite the somewhat indifferent quality of the book. Interpersonal awareness and judgment is surely the real issue.

10. For example, 'The world is miniaturised', Wall's edition, p. 25. Geoffrey Tillotson uses the word 'diminution' in *A Casebook*, ed. Hunt, p. 126.

11. For the function of condensation and displacement in dream-work, see Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), *passim* and index references. The Hampstead Clinic Psychoanalytic Library handbook has a technical description: 'By the process of displacement one idea may surrender to another its whole quota of cathexis; by the process of condensation, it may appropriate the whole cathexis of several other ideas', *Basic Psychoanalytic Concepts on the Theory of Dreams*, ed. Humberto Nagera (London: Maresfield, 1981), p. 79.

12. The close relationship between Pope's translation of the *Iliad* and writing of *The Rape* is explored in Rebecca Ferguson, *The Unbalanced Mind: Pope and the Rule of Passion* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), pp. 32–63. Arguably, we now read *The Rape* 'backwards', after our own cultural *Iliad*, the historical narrative (and mythologisation) of the fateful Great War.

13. Countertransference has recently been prioritised by psychotherapists (and counsellors) as the determining factor in understanding clients' experiences. The classic work on this is Harold Searles's *Countertransference and Related Subjects* (New York: International Universities Press, 1979). See also Robert M. Young, 'The vicissitudes of transference and countertransference: the work of Harold Searles', *Free Associations*, Vol. 5, Part 2 (Number 34), 1955, pp. 170–95. This article has a substantial bibliography on the subject. For an account of how this operates in counselling practice, see Marilyn Pietroni and Alison Vaspe, *Understanding Counselling in Primary Care: Voices from the Inner City* (London & New York: Churchill Livingstone, 2000).

14. *A Casebook*, ed. Hunt, p. 112.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

18. Michel Foucault has, of course, argued that psychoanalysis itself is genealogically related to the Catholic institution of Confession. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1: An Introduction*, trans. R Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1979), *passim*.

19. See, for instance, Howard D. Weinbrot, *Alexander Pope and the Traditions of Formal Verse Satire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982). It is revealing that this scholarly book contains very little reference to *The Rape*, as opposed to Pope's other poems.

20. His essay is in *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), quotation from p. 287.

21. John Dryden, 'Absalom and Achitophel', lines 45–8.

22. See Bion, *Experiences in Groups*, p. 62, etc. 'Pairing' is one of Bion's 'basic assumptions' in group dynamics.

23. *A Casebook*, ed. Hunt, p. 291.

24. 'Bion ... developed the concept of "containing" in respect of a hypothesis of a mental process, in which elements of primitive psychic experience which cannot be understood by the infant, are fantasised as being projected into the mother. She, by dint of her maturity, is able to bring her understanding to these experiences, and being attentive to her infant, facilitates the beginnings of understanding of these experiences in her infant.' D. Colin James, 'The borderline patient ...', in *The Practice of Group Analysis*, ed. Jeff Roberts and Malcolm Pines (London and New York: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991), p. 102. See also W.R. Bion, *Attention and Interpretation* (London: Tavistock, 1970), *passim*. Michael Rustin has extended this concept into the aesthetic sphere: 'Cultural forms are one mode of containment and facilitation for ... growth, throughout life, and their availability to all as living forms is therefore central to the possibility of a good society'. Michael Rustin, *The Good Society and the Inner World: Psycho-analysis, Politics and Culture* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 196–7. I have elsewhere suggested how this extension of 'containment' to the affect of poetic form may operate: see Dennis Brown, *John Betjeman, Writers and their Work* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1999), pp. 6–9.

25. Cf. John Keats's famous critique of the Augustan couplet: 'They swayed about upon a rocking-horse,/And thought it Pegasus', 'Sleep and Poetry', lines 186–7.

26. John Donne, 'the Good Morrow', line 15.

27. E.g. Antony Easthope's suggestion of the poet's 'determining male gaze', *Poetry and Phantasy*, p. 113.

28. See Donald Meltzer and Meg Harris Williams, *The Apprehension of Beauty: The Role of Aesthetic Conflict in Development, Violence and Art* (Strath Tay: Clunie, 1988), *passim*. The title-phrase replicates Freud's important admission: 'Somewhere inside me there is a feeling for form ... an apprehension of beauty as a kind of perfection', quoted by Jean-Michel Ley in *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, ed. Shosana Felman, p. 306.

29. W.R. Bion's term for inter-relational sensitivity. See his *Attention and Interpretation*, *passim*.

30. G. Wilson Knight in 'Drama and Epic in *The Rape of the Lock*'. *A Casebook*, ed. Hunt, p. 105.

31. See Paul Gordon, *Face to Face: Therapy as Ethics* (London: Constable, 1999), Peter Lomas, *Doing Good? Psychotherapy out of its depth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Dorothy Stock Whitaker, *Using Groups to Help People* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). 'Good enough' is, of course, D.M. Winnicott's phrase to describe satisfactory parenting.

32. Projection and introjection are key concepts in British psychoanalysis. See, for instance, Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works* (London: Hogarth, 1950), *passim*.

33. 'The Freudian experience ... starts by postulating a world of desire ... The Freudian world isn't a world of things, it isn't a world of being, it is a world of desire as such', Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar II*, p. 222.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

35. See Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 21.

36. *The Seminar II*, p. 221.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

38. It is interesting, in this regard, that Freud's later theorisation of Thanatos was closely bound up with his sense of Austria-Hungary's aggressive role in precipitating the First World War. See Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and abridged by Lionel Trilling and Steven Marcus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 509.

39. The use of humour is not necessarily taboo in psychotherapy: 'If we were to break through in this "revolutionary matter of being amused in the sacred process" of psychotherapy, Bion went on, we could see where this more joyous state took us', quoted by Gordon, *Face to Face*, p. 23.

40. Lacan in 'Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet', reprinted in *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Felman, p. 16.

41. For this 'mock-heroic' comedy of errors, see Ernest Jones, *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud*, pp. 249–75. E.g.: 'an inordinate amount of interest was taken on both sides in the state of each other's nose – an organ which, after all, had first aroused Fleiss's interest in sexual processes', p. 266.

42. Despite the relative decline of formal Greek and Latin studies, it is likely that some cultural awareness of the 'matter' of Homeric (Virgilian and Miltonic) epic remains – through the medium of translation, allusion, retellings, films, comics, television cartoons, etc. An early song by the group Cream, for instance, once involved 'tales of brave Ulysses'.

43. Rebecca Ferguson, *The Unbalanced Mind*, p. 33.

44. Freud, quoted in *Basic Psychoanalytic Concepts*, ed. Nagara, pp. 85–6.

45. T.S. Eliot's well-known phrase in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *Selected Essays* (London: Faber, 1958), p. 16.

46. From Sigmund Freud, 'Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's Gradiva', *Art and Literature*, trans. James Strachey, The Penguin Freud Library, Vol 14 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 34.

47. S.H. Foulkes's preferred term. See Foulkes and Anthony, *Group Psychotherapy*, *passim*.

48. For examples of the now-archival literature which adapts psychoanalytic group theory to Business Studies, see R.M. Belbin, *Team Roles at Work: A Strategy for Human Resource Management* (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 1993) and Harry Levinson, *Organizational Assessment: A Step-by-Step Guide to Effective Consulting* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002). See also the periodical *Organisational and Social Dynamics: An International Journal for the Integration of Psychoanalytic, Systemic and Group Relations Perspectives* (London & New York: Karnac Books), sponsored by OPUS.