

Notes for classroom teaching

Rape of the Lock Canto - 4, Part VI

B.A. Part - I, Paper - II

In Pope's time, the spleen or organ was believed to send up vapors to the brain which induced hysteria and ~~also~~ nervousness, as mirrored in the presence of the strange vapor which hangs in the air of the cave. But the effects of spleen were also believed to include various forms of sexual dysfunction. So ~~fit~~ fittingly the cave includes women with distinctly unladylike sexual appetites, Phaeacians who are "expiring" (a term used to mean both dead and orgasm), and women transformed into bottles calling out for plumbic corks. These in conjunction with the pregnant man, represent a hellish vision of the utter violation of the gendered rules of the world above.

Further, *Ulysses* is the Latin name for Odysseus, so here Pope is referencing a scene from Homer's *Odyssey* in which Odysseus secures the winds from Aeolus. This ~~continues~~ continues to mock the epic style of the narration, which comically draws a contrast between the lofty and high stakes world of epic poetry

- and totality of A's poem's own narrative.  
Thalestris' melodramatic description of the pains of Belinda has taken to perfect her pains, including torturing  
ivory and fillets suggests the absurd importance  
of beauty at the court. She thinks of  
Belinda as having been dutifully carried out these  
painful rituals and attributes that to virtue,  
rather than vanity. Umbriel's pouring the vial of  
sorrow over Belinda means she is not totally  
responsible for her actions a recurring problem  
in the poem, since mortals are influenced by  
supernatural forces. It is thus difficult to tell  
if she really means anything she says about  
about wishing she had been more modest and  
stayed away from the ~~glamorous~~ glamorous court.  
The mention of omens also ties into the mock  
epic style, trivially parodying the serious  
warnings of the gods in epic poems with the mention  
of totally banal events like Belinda's dropping her  
'patch box' or her china shaking.