
Review by Gillian Dooley for the *Adelaide Review*, 22 June 2007, p. 22.

Born in Sydney, Sophie Gee is carving a brilliant career in the English departments of America’s ivy-league universities. Her field is the eighteenth century, and her novel *The Scandal of the Season* takes full advantage of her intimate knowledge of this worldly, dazzling age.

Alexander is a frustrated young writer living in the country with overprotective parents, who decides to leave for London to further his stalled career. It won’t take the astute reader long to realise that this sensitive, observant poet with a crippled body and a rapier wit is Alexander Pope, and that this is an account of the events behind ‘The Rape of the Lock’.

Couched in prose which doesn’t strain too hard for a period effect, Gee’s narrative moves elegantly between several characters: Arabella Fermor, the original of Pope’s Belinda, Lord Petre, the wielder of the offending scissors, Pope’s friends Teresa and Martha Blount, and Pope himself. She interweaves a Jacobite plot with her lascivious society tale, spicing it with narrowly-escaped peril and providing a clever pretext for Lord Petre’s enigmatic act. This is a brilliantly imagined behind the scenes account of the insecurities, vanities and lusts of the young, fashionable set in London in 1711.