

Rape of the locke



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Order 342492 Topic: Rape of the Lock

This the 'laughter medicine' of the eighteenth century England prescribed not by the doctor, but by the poet Alexander Pope (1688-1744) The poem satirizes how a trifle becomes a great issue with men of upper class society. The poet holds in admiration Belinda and the society in which she moves. He was not part of the 'beau-monde'. (Society of the elite) His parents were not that rich. He associated with intellectuals and poets and their interaction was at Will's Coffee House. The elite frequented the Hampton court. The poem provides the pen-portrait relating to the estrangement of two families and important reason for that is the Baron's theft of a lock of hair. A dire offence is seen in it and a grim situation emerges.

What dire Offence from amrous Causes springs,

What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things, [l. 1-2]

This indicates the false vanity of the elite section of the society. An issue of no consequence is blown out of proportion.

The early part of the poem by the revelation of Ariel (l. 27-114) gives the philosophical touch to the missing lock. He says, she should be happy that the lock will survive after her death—what a satirical style to highlight her self-importance!

Think not, when Womans transient Breath is fled,

That all her Vanities at once are dead:

Succeeding Vanities she still regards,

And tho she plays no more, oerlooks the Cards.

Her Joy in gilded Chariots, when alive,

And Love of Ombre, after Death survive.

For when the Fair in all their Pride expire,

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To their first Elements their Souls retire: [l. 51-9]

This pot-shot by the poet is to tell her that her soul consists of only vanity and a love of pleasure.

The sexuality prevalent in the elite society is subtly tackled by Alexander Pope. He explores the bifacial strategy of the elite to look sober and polished but sexual passion is hidden behind the surface. The act of cutting the hair though a joke, is a form of intimidation and rape. Further, sexuality is also implicit in the following couplet:

On her white Breast a sparkling Cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore. [ll. 7-8]

There is enough stuff in the poem to indicate how the so-called civilized and high class people behave silly like children, and behind the dignified demeanor, violent emotions exist. The basest human motives are intelligently covered so that the world outside does not see it. Pope also pictures the world in which a man worships the woman and the woman worships herself. The poet details and rather defends the compulsions of Belinda as to the necessity for her to behave the way she behaves. The subtle competition and the rat-race to excel, amongst the members of the elite society, create poignant situations for individuals like Belinda. Nowhere the poet condemns her; he sympathizes with her plight.

This poem is supposed to be based on the vanities of two families with whom Pope was well-acquainted with. It acts like the soothing balm to cool hot tempers and inculcate the habit to laugh at one's own folly. Though epic is a serious literary form, Pope derives maximum fun and satire out of this poem. He has a dig at the society in which values have been sacrificed for silly-nothings. A society that gives more importance to the container and not the

contents! The society that has been rendered helpless, engaged in a good for nothing competition to uphold the non-essentials at the cost of sacrificing the essential values! But the approach to the issues by Alexander Pope is satirical, and he doesn't adopt the preacher's stance!

Works Cited

<http://poetry.eserver.org/rape-of-the-lock.html>