

# "cave of spleen" to the rest of the "rape of the lock" essay sample

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## **“ Cave of Spleen” to the rest of the “ Rape of the Lock” Essay Sample**

This episode in Canto IV opens an insight into the unconscious mind of Belinda, following the loss of her “ lock”. The episode gives a clear yet somewhat complicated view of the state of Belinda’s unconscious. Pope thus presents the issues, which were later put forward by Freud, concerning the role and importance of the unconscious. Therefore, using a Freudian theoretical framework, one can explore the role Pope may have intended for this episode, or indeed the role, which can now be interpreted.

Umbriel’s journey to the “ Cave of Spleen” echoes the translation of the “ Aeneid”, where Pope writes “ But anxious cares”, it is followed by Dryden with “...already seized the queen / she fed within her veins a flame unseen”. This is the point where Dido is in love with Aeneas. This is thus perhaps a point of Belinda’s growing affection for the Baron. This creates the complex that Belinda was feeling, preceding the eventual delve into the complexities of her own unconscious mind. The “ Cave of Spleen” is put forward as a place of malaise and melancholy, not only by its definition, but also in the onomatopoeia and melancholic tone in the words “ Gnome...dome”.

Therefore, the mental state of Belinda is put forward quite literally as a physical place, personified with illness and depression. The “ dreadful East” shows further imagery of depression. The “ East” referred to by Pope could be referring to the same reference made in the previous Canto’s, as the eastern world, a place of which is interesting and intriguing.

Therefore, Pope is presenting the early eighteenth century "orientalism" as a dreadful terror. However, there is also a suggestion that he is referring more locally to the stench of humanity in East London blown towards the west from the trade areas. Pope also presents a socio-geographic point in the presentation of the setting of the "Cave of Spleen". Thus even before the plot of the "Cave of Spleen" has started; a dark imagery of Belinda's mind is shown. One can understand this imagery as a result of the events, which have recently occurred in the previous Canto, concerning the actual raping of the lock, and Pope thus precisely shows the state of Belinda's emotional thoughts, and sets the manner for which he will present them.

A religious comment is made on line twenty-eight with the description of the "ancient maid" in the form of "Black and White", almost as a nun. He is saying that this "nun" personifies "ill-nature". However, a nun is expected to be pious and devote. Nevertheless, he presents an argument suggesting that in her heart, she is eager to do ill, thus a comment of religious hypocrisy. Is Pope therefore saying that however pious and devote one may think that they are, they cannot resist the ever present unconscious desire of "ill-nature"? This refers to the unconscious desires of Belinda, following the raping of her lock by the Baron. This argument is supported by being set in a story of an unconscious framework. However, Pope may also simply be showing the lack of religious morality. The ever present sexual desires are shown by the flirtatious manner of the handmaids by having a practiced "lisp" and hanging their "head aside", for a look of innocence.

Also the fact that they would be " Wrapt in a gown for sickness or for show", implies the flirtatious desire to show flesh by wearing a night gown.

The continuous parallel between the world of the " Cave of Spleen" and the world of Belinda shown in the previous Canto's is shown by the " Vapour o'er the palace flies". This personifies the obstructed vision in Hampton Court, and the " half shut eyes" portrayed earlier in the poem. This therefore also an allusion to Hampton Court and an insight into the moral blindness of the society embodied within it. It is only possible to look at Pope in this way, using a Freudian theoretical framework. The vocabulary and imagery used also gives an insight into the unstructured nature of Belinda's unconscious with " Purple fires" and " Strange Phantoms". The implication of the royal colour purple juxtaposed with sexual imagery of " gaping tombs" puts forward a phantasmagoria of Belinda's mind, to signify the catalogue of mists on Belinda's emotions. The imaginative imagery is legitimated by being anchored in fact. Pope, embodied in an age of reason, becomes the pre-cursor of romanticism. This is supported by the relevance of the " goose-pye" to which Pope creates his own footnote, and makes the point that it " alludes to a real fact".

There is a conflict of man and woman within the " Cave of Spleen", yet this conflict is shown throughout the other Canto's as well. The point that " men prove with child" is perhaps, Pope saying that men are becoming pregnant. This, view, here being contained in Belinda's unconscious mind, shows what is being repressed is a female sense of unfairness. This follows the possible sexual raping of Belinda. Thus, the " Cave of Spleen" is once again

shown as an allegory of the relative emotions in Belinda's head. This also, though re-iterates the possible sexual encounter between herself and the Baron.

A far different argument is presented on line fifty with " Who give th'Hysteric or Poetic fit". The issue is created that, in exploring Belinda's mind, he in turn is exploring his very own mind, the poetic mind. Pope can therefore be accused of hijacking the poem to talk about himself; he takes the culture, society and the argument of man against woman, and uses it to explore " the creative genius". This thus accounts for the magical transformations which have been occurring within the " Cave of Spleen". The cave is therefore becomes the refuge of this romantic mind of Pope, trapped within the age of reason, a struggle which he previously has presented through the language, but now envelopes into the plot.

The presence of commodity within society, an argument shown throughout " The Rape of the Lock" is once again shown within the " Cave of Spleen". Pope, ironically, presents humans' emotions as commodities with " The gnome rejoicing bears her gifts away". In the case of the unconscious world, the gifts are the emotions, though personified as commodities. However, the irony is that Pope is also saying that humans are only able to understand their emotions in the form of commodity, shown by personifying the entire satirical attack in this way. This is supported by the description of Belinda's dressing table in Canto I and the vast commodities described there, held with such importance. Indeed the idea of the actual raping of the lock of hair

placed importance upon what is simply a commodity, yet a commodity of such relevance.

Pope goes on to ridicule the society with the figure of Sir Plume. Pope presents an argument to suggest that the knightly, chivalric imagery saving a maiden, has degenerated into what is shown in the character of Sir Plume. What is shown is a riddled speech with foppish slang and no logical or oratorical power, expected of a knight. This is however, also a personal attack on actual person by Pope. Sir Plume is said to have been modelled upon Sir George Brown. Pope thus annihilates in words this mans reputation and in turn shows the power of words at the time of being able to destroy "honour".

Various issues are thus presented within this delve into an unconscious state. In taking the reader into the unconscious mind of Belinda, great significance is placed on major events throughout the poem, such as commodity and the romantic nature of Pope himself. The state of Pope's mind is also explored and gives the reader a way into the battle for Pope in taking the romantic mind against the age of reason. The satire of the society has continued from the original satire of epic style in Canto I, and into a general society battle which is in some places satirical. This particular event, thus does hold significance within the rest of the poem in creating a parallel world which embodies the thoughts of Pope and Belinda, using the images taken throughout the poem.