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ENGL 2210

Essay 1

In Alexander Pope’s heroi-comical poem, The Rape of the Lock, Pope makes some very vivid descriptions of Belinda and her features. He gives adjectives about such things like her curly hair being “Labyrinths” and her eyes as, “lively looks.” Pope used a lot of this imagery in Canto II as we get a true vision of what Belinda looks like. With her beauty being as pronounced as it is, it would be easy for someone to become obsessed like the Baron did. I believe that Pope was intentionally detailing Belinda’s looks because he wanted the readers to visualize how beautiful she was, he tries to prove to the readers that she is deserving of her guardians, and he wanted to convey the feelings of the Baron. a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a aa a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a aa In Canto I and II, Pope doesn’t hold back when speaking about his number 1 lady. Belinda is shown of to be one of the most beautiful women to ever grace the land and she knows it. The words “Goddess!” and “Heavenly” are thrown around loosely about her inside the text. Pope is very particular in how he uses diction in his writing. As shown in the text, “…to all she smiles extends; Oft she rejects, but never once offends. Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazer strikes.” (Canto II, Ln 11-13, Pg. 347) From this excerpt, Pope speaks on Belinda’s smile and her eyes and compares them to the sun. The word, “gazers,” in the Oxford English Dictionary refers to the people who look onto or gaze at. Pope wants to paint the picture that Belinda is a sight to behold with people around her staring at her eyes and her smile. Another piece from the text is, “But every eye was fixed on her alone. On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore, Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.” (Canto II, Ln 6-8, Pg. 347) Belinda is said to have a gorgeous cross hanging from her neck. Pope then states, “Which Jews might kiss,” he is comparing the cross over her breast to something out of a Synagogue. Pope uses very good terms to show just how beautiful and elegant Belinda is and how she is seen by others.

Belinda’s “protectors,” the Sylphs, are described by Pope as wise Celestials and angels of women’s chastity. These spirits have sent Belinda a dream of warning about future events that might threaten he safety. According to the text, “Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught, Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,…Or virgins visited by angel powers,” (Canto I, Ln 30-31, 33, Pg. 344) Pope paints the image of these Sylphs as angel-like and air-bound creatures. The Oxford English Dictionary definition of Sylphs can be made out two ways that relate to the text. The first version, One of a race of beings or spirits supposed to inhabit the air, and the second which is, Applied to a graceful woman or girl; usually with implication of slender figure and light airy movement. The first definition can be seen as the true definition for Sylphs by pertaining to the spirits. The second version can be used as a description od Belinda, a graceful lady with a slender figure. Pope did this intentionally because he saw the two-edged sword and how he could relate these two characters together.

The Baron gets introduced in Canto II as apart of the crew Belinda is sailing with on the “pleasure-boat.” The text says, “The adventurous Baron the bright locks admired,” and Pope knew that he would have to immediately make the Baron see Belinda as the goddess she is claimed to be. Baron even built an altar to pray and sacrifices tokens of his previous lovers to have Belinda be his. In the text, “With tender billet-doux he lights the pyre, And breathes three amorous sighs to raise the fire.” (Canto II, Ln 41-42, Pg. 347) The Baron was already madly in love with Belinda as shown by him using billet0doux as tender for his fire. The word billet-doux, means a love-letter and in French, it translates to sweet note. He burned all these love-letters and sacrificed all the former trinkets from failed love attempts and eventually, the gods listened and granted him half of his prayers. The Baron wishes to be with Belinda as he admires and ultimately shears one of her locks. After the card game, the Baron begins to make his move as Belinda is enjoying her victory. Belinda gloats as much as she can without knowing that her happiness will soon end.

In conclusion, Alexander Pope showed many examples of the beauty that Belinda has and how we, the readers, get to see other characters view her beauty. The words used early in the poem described Belinda’s looks and her charm while adding plot armor found in the Sylphs. Her eyes as “lively looks” and hair as “bright curls.” Pope didn’t hold back with his use of adjectives and imagery because it needed to give reason for a character like the Baron to have meaning. The Sylphs did their very best to prevent the “threating dream” that they showed Belinda. The fifty chosen were put at task to keep watch over her and protect Belinda at all cost. The army is threatened with dire punishments if they can’t fulfill the task. The Baron, who was planning on obtaining Belinda’s hair from the start, made sacrifices and offered love letters and tokens to a “higher power.” Pope really helped the audience see Belinda as this one in a million lady and showed what happens when people become obsessed with beauty. These chapters clearly showed why Belinda was deserving of the protection of the angels and worth being objectified by the Baron.

Work Cited

POPE, ALEXANDER. *Rape of the Lock*. MOUNT ORLEANS PR, 2019.

Simpson, John A. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Clarendon Press, 1991.