

English (Hons) Part-I, Paper-II, Unit: 3 The Rape of the Lock.

Topic: Characterization of Baron, Lec-Seri-30

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Characterization of Baron: The Rape of the Lock

Baron, the antagonist of the poem 'The Rape of the Lock' represents a historical personality of Robert, the seventh Lord Peter who snips off the lock of hair of Belinda, pseudonym of Miss Arbella Fermor, on account of his infatuation with her remarkable beauty and refuses to give it back.

In the poem, both Belinda and Baron have been given special focus as both the character represent the merits and demerits of their respective classes of the 18th Century England. Logically, Belinda is the heroine of this poem, Baron is the hero, though he plays negative role. But his role is so short and minimized that it is better to say that the poem does not have the hero. Even Pope, the composer of this poem, endeavoured to place Belinda not only the central but the more predominating place. She pervades the poem from a beginning to end. She has been given the status of both the goddess and the human, whereas Baron is given only a human being embodying the

the typical feature of the 18th Century aristocratic English man. His existence in the poem is just for the sake of Belinda, but Belinda does not exist in the poem for his sake. But Baron's appearance in the poem or his importance in the poem as a character is next only to Belinda's because the poem needs him to be the representative fops and dandies of the time. Baron represents the 18th aristocratic man as much as Belinda represents the 18th Century aristocratic feminine sex. Baron is wealthy and has a plenty of leisure to pursue the wildest of his fancies. He dresses in the latest fashion, frequently visits Hampton Court, pays compliments to the charming ladies and picks them up for his own pleasure. He is the male flirt, enticing women pre-disposed to romantic reverie with his soft, sophisticated words, pleasing manners and sweet promises, none of which he intends to keep. His only mission is make love and fun with as many amorous women as he could manage sportingly. His fondness for coffee is also meaningful and remarkable in the poem because there is co-relation between the coffee and his mental strength. His

defeat makes him only revengeful and angry. But next, until he has taken a cup of coffee, he is bristling with fume. It is his mental as well as physical characteristics that he derives inspiration and strength from coffee and from his own self. This again makes him look mocking superficial.

Then, in cutting the lock, he assumes the pose and gesture of the heroic knight of the past in his killing of the gaints and gnomes. He proceeds cautiously, warily, as though he is going to perform miracles. As he cut the lock and possessed it, he does exclaim in joy as if he has actually performed miraculous feat. He regards Belinda's lock of hair as his most valuable possession and this Cowardice victory, he believes, will make him immortal.

Thus, the Baron's character is consistently satirical as he is mocked not only by Belinda but by the situation and by his own statement, too, though unconsciously, of course.

In short, through the characterization of Baron Pope has delineated a highly mocking picture of the foppish, lascivious, superficial man of 18th century aristocratic class.

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