

'The Rape of the Lock' as a Social Satire

'The Rape of the Lock' is Pope's first satire. It is a social satire as well as a mock-epic. It is a mocking poem in which Pope mocks not only at the "little unguarded follies" of the fair sex, but at the artificial social life of 18th century London as a whole. The fashion, the artificiality, the vanity and frivolity of the age is exposed and ridiculed with the unfailing grasp of a master. "The piece sparkles in every line." "The touch is never too heavy, an air of gay good humour is preserved throughout." 'The Rape of the Lock' is the triumph of the insignificant. The mockery arises from the exaltation of the trivial. At every step there is skilful mingling of the great with the trivial. In Pope's mock heroic, the forms of chivalrous devotion

to women are combined with the reality of cynical contempt. The force of Pope's raillery is increased by his neat and dextrous handling of the heroic couplet. Pope's workmanship bears the stamp of Dryden, but in the fullness of sound, energy and majesty he excels his master. In the handling of his chosen metre, as well as in the force and vividness of his satirical portraiture, he leaves the ~~other~~ elder poet far behind. John Dennis, therefore praises his skill and says, "It is a satirist that Pope, with one exception, excels all English poets and Pope's careful workmanship often makes his satirical touches more attractive than Dryden's."

The end. //

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