

“Oh blind to Truth! the *Sylphs* contrive it all”:
Revealing “trivial Things” in *The Rape of the Lock*

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Introduction

After the enlarged version of *The Rape of the Lock* was first published in 1714, Pope had several immediate responses on it which were not always so respectful. The first quotation is culled from Charles Gildon’s pamphlet which belittles the masterpiece:

Why, Sir, you must know for getting a Reputation for *Poetry*, there are some Qualifications absolutely necessary, as a happy knack at Rhime, and a flowing Versification; but that is so common now that very few do want it; then you must chuse some odd out of the way Subject, some Trifle or other that wou’d surprize the Common Reader that any thing cou’d be written upon it, as a *Fan*, a *Lock of Hair*, or the like. (Barnard 94-95)

“Trifle” seems a set word which is repeatedly employed to categorise this light and witty poem as a joking account of a minor dispute. Likewise, John Dennis, later in 1728 in his *Remarks on Mr. Pope’s Rape of the Lock*, made a derogatory remark calling its subject “trifling”:

The impartial Reader . . . will be able to determine whether *A. P—E* has shewn one Dram of Judgment, either in the Choice of this trifling *Subject*, or of his more senseless *Machinery*, or in the *Manners* and *Behaviour* of his fine Lady, who is so very rampant, and so very a Termagant, that a Lady in the Hundreds of *Drury* would be severely chastis’d, if she had the Impudence in some Company to imitate her in some of her Actions. (Barnard 97)

As he gets more excited in criticising (as the frequent italicisation shows), Dennis appears to confuse its “trifling” subject with the poem as a whole:

The *Rape of the Lock* is a very *empty Trifle*, without any *Solidity* or *sensible Meaning*; whereas the *Lutrin* is only a *Trifle* in *Appearance*, but under that *Appearance* carries a very grave and very important *Instruction* (Barnard 99)

Comparing it with Boileau’s poem, Dennis is quite determined that *The Rape of the Lock* itself, not its theme only, is merely “trifling”. For those who question it, what especially undermines the status of the work is its persistent engagement with objects like hairs or cosmetic, which gives the impression that “there is not the least Shadow of a Moral or Fable in the *Rape*” (Barnard 101). Interestingly, though not necessarily in the context of *The Rape of the Lock*, Dennis says, again connecting “the trivial contents” with the broader topic of poem-writing: “can such a Creature as this be deserving of the noble Name of a POET, the Name and Function which he has so much blasphem’d? Nay, can he deserve even the Name of a Versifyer, whose Ear is injudicious and undistinguishing as the rest of his Head?” (Barnard 97). Dennis thus particularly denigrates Pope, as if there is something unique in his treatment of triviality.

Later on, critics have also focused on the description of objects in various ways. Nicholson states that “*The Rape of the Lock* provides a poetic grammar for the process whereby relations between people acquire the characteristics of being relations between things, a process during which commodities acquire an autonomy which conceals their true nature” (71). This dehumanising process which, according to Nicholson, reflects the ongoing development of a capitalist economy is echoed in Quinsey’s argument:

[T]he recurrent image of people transformed to objects, giving us a beautiful portrait of the world as Belinda sees it and of the deeper psychology behind her view. Men and Maids here both resemble and have the same importance as the objects in her cluttered dressing table, which delineates her whole world: she can have no conception of them as anything more complicated than a jar or a bottle. (87-88)

This kind of materially-oriented standard is called “Thalestris-morality” by Grove: “a code of Appearances, where nothing counts unless seen, and every truth is reduced to the nice (or horrid) ‘things they say’” (Grove 58). Thus, Grove employs a problematic adjective “horrid” to express the spiritually barren world of things. Following these readings, the presentation of objects functions as a satire against the shallowness of the *beau-monde* at that time which had the “tendency to deify its trivialities and exalt its social occasions into rites, while casually neglecting what ought to be sacred” (qtd. in Quinsey, 90).

Unlike the contemporary critics quoted before, these modern arguments are successful in drawing attention to Pope’s minute delineation of objects as a strategy. For, after all, he himself declares in the very first lines of the poem: “What dire Offense from am’rous Causes springs, / What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things” (*RL* canto 1. lines 1-2). He emphatically tells Arabella Fermor too never to “Let an Action [of deities and so on] be . . . so trivial in it self, they [the ancient poets] always make it appear of the utmost Importance” (Pope 142).

Yet what these critics seem to share is the idea that the description of “trivial Things” reflects a tragic view on an increasingly dehumanised society. Quinsey repeatedly uses an image of decline: “a civilisation decaying into triviality” (91); “universal concepts reduced to trivialities”; “it [a society] descends into chaos”; “a sense of decline” (94). From this point of view, the poem is a satire against the frivolous world, whose triviality must be ultimately condemned. If we look at the favourable contemporary comments, however, we know that even at that time some regarded it as beautifully presented. The following quotation is culled from the letter addressed to Pope by Reverend George Berkeley:

[I]n this [*The Rape of the Lock*] I am charm’d with the magic of your *Invention*, with all those images, allusions, and inexplicable beauties, which you raise so surprizingly and at the same time so naturally, out of a trifle. (Barnard 94)

According to Berkeley’s wording, describing “trivial Things” so successfully is “surprising”, and the adjective appears coincidentally in Gildon’s pamphlet in the first citation, where he charged Pope with his affected design to surprise readers by choosing uncommon literary themes. So here the strategy is imagined

together with surprise and novelty to work especially well within a literary context.

Triviality does not necessarily make the poem itself trivial as well. Rather the act of describing trifles seems to possess a more positive effect, not always serving as a signifier of a declining morality of civilisation. The importance of triviality mentioned in the beginning of *The Rape of the Lock* is connoted again in the ironical ending where the lock is finally “consecrated”; and this, I suppose, makes the relationship between the theme and the poem worth exploring. In this essay, by focusing on the presentation of the “trivial Things” and on the motif of make-up, especially in the famous toilet scene which brings about a beautiful metamorphosis of the heroine, I hope to show, to some extent, how the description of trifles is significantly juxtaposed with traditionally romantic motifs, and apparently assumes at times an epic style of composing, in which we find fantastic figures like sylphs that seem incompatible with the standard of realism. Though the work is not a novel, it would be profitable to consult Ian Watt’s classic definition: “The previous stylistic tradition for fiction was not primarily concerned with the correspondence of words to things, but rather with the extrinsic beauties which could be bestowed upon description and action by the use of rhetoric” (28). If we think about the detailed presentation of “trivial Things” in the poem, I do not think that its concern is limited to verbal ornament; after all its style is *mock*-heroic, and the description is too elaborate to be inserted merely for the sake of “the extrinsic beauties”. What is also significant is the fact that the publication of the final version of the poem was soon followed by *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). The literary genre of the work as a satire may come to seem relevant to the newly-born line of realistic novels if we take into account the satiric drive to criticise old forms.¹ It would be worth exploring how the poem laughs not only at contemporary society but also at the artificiality of a conventional romance or epic poem.

1. Definition of Triviality

Before we move on to discussion of the poem, I would like to attempt one definition of the tricky concept of triviality. *The Oxford English Dictionary* explains: “Of small account, little esteemed, paltry, poor; trifling, inconsiderable, unimportant, slight”. Samuel Johnson also defines the term “trivial” somewhat

negatively: “Vile; worthless; vulgar; such as may be picked up in the highway” (*A Dictionary of the English Language*). Triviality is regarded as morally wrong in strong terms. Though he mitigates his tone in the second definition, the way in which he does so sounds quite frustrated: “Light; trifling; unimportant; inconsiderable. This use is more frequent, though less just” (*A Dictionary of the English Language*). The contemporary critics mentioned above, who rather preferred the word “trifle”, share the same inimical attitude when they attack the poet. “Trifle”, which generally means “. . . [a] matter of little value or importance; ‘a thing of no moment’ (Johnson); a trivial, paltry, or insignificant affair” (*OED*), also had an obsolete meaning: “[a] false or idle tale, told (a) to deceive, cheat, or befool, (b) to divert or amuse; a lying story, a fable, a fiction; a jest or joke; a foolish, trivial, or nonsensical saying” (*OED*). It is significant that Pope employed not “trifle” but rather “trivial”, which seems more detached from moral arguments. Even this term connoted a moral defect as Johnson’s definition suggests, but I think Pope treats the concept in a more objective way; what he calls “trivial” in *The Rape of the Lock* appears more like “[s]uch as may be met with anywhere; common, commonplace, ordinary, everyday, familiar, trite” (*OED*). Only when we know that for him, triviality is not a vice but a symbol of everyday ordinariness, the reason why he puts such importance on the term in the very beginning of the poem really becomes understandable.

Triviality is also found in the poem called *Trivia* (1716) by John Gay (1685-1732), who had a close relationship with Pope. It is a witty poem giving some tips about how to keep oneself clean while walking through the streets of London. Here it would be useful as a comparison to introduce an example of triviality from this work; the quotation below is from book I, which is about “the implements” necessary for the walk:

When the *Black Youth* at chosen Stands rejoice,
 And *clean your Shoes* resounds from ev’ry Voice;
 When late their miry Sides Stage-Coaches show,
 And their stiff Horses thro’ the Town move slow;
 When all the *Mall* in leafy Ruin lies,
 And Damsels first renew their Oyster Cries:
 Then let the prudent Walker Shoes provide,
 Not of the *Spanish* or *Morocco* Hide;

The wooden Heel may raise the Dancer's Bound,
And with the 'scallop'd Top his Step be crown'd:
Let firm, well-hammer'd Soles protect thy Feet
Thro' freezing Snows, and Rains, and soaking Sleet. (Gay 1. 15)²

Here can be recognised a certain similarity to Pope's poem; there is frequent focus on clothes or accessories, that is, something material that covers human beings. Interestingly, the mutual theme also reveals difference between the two mock-heroic poems; while in *Trivia* those "implements" are recommended as something useful, in *The Rape of the Lock*, because the decorative objects are juxtaposed with vain Belinda, together with the poem's satiric atmosphere, they inevitably stir up moral arguments as is clear from the opinions of contemporary readers. Even some of the critics who do not argue that triviality suggests ethical wrongness do not necessarily leave this sort of censorious reading; Price, stating that "[t]he world of Belinda is a world of triviality measured against the epic scale; it is also a world of grace and delicacy, a second-best world but not at all a contemptible one" (7), maintains that the sylphs as "[t]he principal symbol of the triviality" "are . . . her [Belinda's] acceptance of the rules of social convention" (8)³ Yet I think that triviality which is related to the everyday is a fruitful topic to explore even if detached from moral context because the ordinariness deviates from literary convention to such an extent that the poem surprises its contemporary readers. By shelving the popular moral argument here, I would like to survey the poem's way of presenting trivial objects especially in the toilet scene.

2. Realistic Description

One of the things that stands out in the description of Belinda's dressing-table is the elaborate details of cosmetics and trinkets. Here Pope seems somehow anxious to provide us with a detailed account of the original location of each item:

Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and *here*
The various Off'rings of the World appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,

And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil.
This Casket of India's glowing Gems unlocks,
 And all *Arabia* breathes *from yonder* Box.
 The Tortoise *here* and Elephant unite,
 Transform'd to *Combs*, the speckled and the white.
Here Files of Pins extend *their shining Rows*,
 Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux. (1. 129-38, emphasis added)

We are offered this description of the objects with demonstratives, which helps us imagine the overall settings of the toilet.⁴ Even the scene of the Cave of Spleen, famous for its fantastic atmosphere, shows a similar tendency:

Unnumber'd Throngs on ev'ry side are *seen*
 Of Bodies chang'd to various Forms by *Spleen*.
 Here living *Teapots* stand, one Arm held out,
 One bent; the Handle this, and that the Spout:
 A Pipkin there, like *Homer's Tripod*, walks;
 Here signs a Jar, and there a Goose-pye talks;
 Men prove with Child, as pow'rful Fancy works,
 And Maids turn'd Bottels, call aloud for Corks. (4. 47-54, emphasis added)

Besides the use of demonstratives, narrative viewpoint is stressed with the verb “seen”, which connotes an interest in the “trivial Things” relatively characteristic of novels.⁵ Of course the description falls short of a complete portrayal of the space, for we cannot imagine exactly what is where. Yet at least that the narrator is actually observing the detailed settings is clear here, and a sense of a real concrete space is provided.⁶ Then it may be safe to say that the feature is an anticipation of the realistic novels which are particularly fastidious about the place of things or people as one element to define “the individual, particular case” (Watt 26). Concerning this exact sense of location, comparison with *Trivia* would again be profitable here. Because Gay's poem is made up overall of pieces of advice to pedestrians, the things mentioned are not always actually there; they are not individual objects but things rather as a concept or an image. On the other hand, things in *The Rape of the Lock* often belong to Belinda and they are identified precisely. In other words, generally speaking, Gay mentions objects

while Pope describes them. Pope's poem, in this sense, seems more similar to the tendency of realism.⁷

Certainly, many of the objects exhibited in the toilet scene may not be mundane; for they are not available for lower-class people, while in Gay's poem, we are given more of those common things. As Brown argues: "Belinda is adorned with the spoils of mercantile expansion: the gems of India, the perfumes of Arabia, tortoiseshell and ivory from Africa—these are the means by which her natural beauty is 'awakened'. In other words, imperialism dresses nature to advantage here . . ." (9). The "trivial Things" may not actually be "trivial" if we pay more attention to their aspect as something exotic and luxurious. Yet it appears also true that here Pope regards their physical smallness as important, which underlines the subversion of scale he intended in the work. William Hazlitt makes an interesting remark on that dimension: "It is like looking through a microscope, where every thing assumes a new character and a new consequence, where things are seen in their minutest circumstances and slightest shades of difference; where the little becomes gigantic, the deformed beautiful, and the beautiful deformed" (qtd. in Wall, 93). Sight is significantly emphasised. A sense of brand-new realisation, with a help of "a microscope", that something is actually there is provided. In this light, the luxurious things in the toilet are, at the same time, intended as something too small to be noticed, something connected with Belinda's everyday life, that is increasingly visualised with a microscopic effect of realistic accounts.

In addition to the awareness of a particular place, while conventional literature regards "reality as subsisting in timeless universals" (Watt 23), "the novel's closeness to the texture of daily experience directly depends upon its employment of a much more minutely discriminated time-scale than had previously been employed in narrative" (Watt 22). It may not necessarily be a mere coincidence that an emphasis is placed on a "Watch" in the following morning scene: "Now Lapdogs give themselves the rowzing Shake, / And sleepless Lovers, just at Twelve, awake: / Thrice rung the Bell, the Slipper knock'd the Ground, / And the press'd Watch return'd a silver Sound" (1. 15-18). The precise time is available here, prompting a summons to a maid (Pope 146fn) which shows that the temporal speed here is following a regular schedule of everyday life.⁸ The relatively specific time and location we have in *The Rape of the Lock* are reminiscent of crucial rhetorical devices in the narrative of realism:

“the most inveterate alternative to narrative . . . reminds us that storytelling is a temporal art, and always seems to single out a painterly moment in which the onward drive of narrative is checked if not suspended altogether” (Jameson 8).

We return to the theme of triviality. Wall states that this was not such an appealing matter to write about for authors of traditional literature: “Domestic interiors—the furniture and fabric and object details of particularized rooms as part of ordinary life and action—rarely appear in the high-level hierarchies of poetry or prose until later in the eighteenth century, but then dominate nineteenth-century novels and poetry” (10). In this sense, describing “trivial Things” has an important meaning, for it gives the poem somehow a novelistic, realistic quality in spite of its outward frame of an epic poem. Interestingly, Nicholson compares *The Rape of the Lock* with *Moll Flanders* to distinguish the autonomy of the things in the former, and this comparison but paradoxically highlights their mutual concern with realism which had generally been ignored in literary tradition.⁹

3. A Sense of Concealment and Revelation

We can recognise Pope’s interest in realistic description also in the image of make-up. Thanks to this “art”, Belinda is transformed into a more sophisticated figure:

Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux.
Now awful Beauty puts on all its Arms;
The Fair each moment rises in her Charms,
Repairs her Smiles, awakens ev’ry Grace,
And calls forth all the Wonders of her Face;
Sees by Degrees a purer Blush arise,
And keener Lightnings quicken in her Eyes. (l. 138-44)

The course of Belinda’s change, or more precisely, of the improvement in appearance, with the help of cosmetics, is delineated. Considering the above-discussed concern with the realism in the poem, the process appears similar to that of the production of romance, which “[r]epairs” rough raw materials into a sanitised graceful piece of work. Through getting “armed” (a word which is

reminiscent of an epic hero preparing for a battle), Belinda's face significantly becomes full of "wonders", a term which is closely connected with the world of romances. Then the comparative degree "purer" sounds slightly satirical since the face of Belinda, like those of heroines of romances, is rather artificial, and in fact, her "Blush" only gets less and less pure. Likewise significant is the movement of the narrative focus towards a more abstract quality of her grace; one of the effects of make-up is depicted with a metaphor, not by a physical description: "And keener Lightings quicken in her Eyes". Thus, physicality of description gradually gives way to symbolic phrases. This verbal shift, therefore, can be regarded as parallel with a transition from the phraseology of realism towards that of romance, and as the make-up goes on, "trivial Things" gradually lose their claim to be depicted in the poem. Later "armed" Belinda, with the assistance of the sylphs (one more factor of a romance), symbolically suffers considerable personal damage to both her appearance and reputation. The visible trace of the severed hair in Belinda's head shows that the grotesque nature of masculine desire, which is carefully concealed beneath the smooth surface of high literature, finally corrupts the clean world of feminine romance.¹⁰

As is typical with the theme of make-up, *The Rape of the Lock* is full of image of something unseen or something hidden. The following is again from the toilet scene:

And now, *unveil'd*, the *Toilet* [emphasis original] stands display'd,
Each Silver Vase in mystic Order laid.
First, rob'd in White, the Nymph intent adores
With Head *uncover'd*, the *Cosmetic* [emphasis original] Pow'rs. (l. 121-24,
emphasis added)

It is worthwhile noting that what is "unveiled" here is the very "*Toilet*", which, as Wall states, was not noble enough to be the concern of high literature. "[T]rivial Things" have always been there in front of us, but we have been blind to them since they did not get attention in the classical world. The theme of concealment remains important even later in the poem after Belinda's lock is ruthlessly cut off: "Oh hadst thou, Cruel! been content to seize / Hairs less in sight, or any Hairs but these!" (4. 175-76). If romance decorates crude reality beautifully, this scene where hidden reality suddenly comes out into our "sight"

may be said to be an excruciatingly novelistic moment.¹¹

While what readers of romance cannot see is symbolised by Belinda's appearance (without make-up), for the characters of the poem, what is unseen is the ubiquitous presence of the sylphs. Frequently the plot is driven by these transparent beings:

The busy *Sylphs* surround their darling Care;
These set the Head, and those divide the Hair,
Some fold the Sleeve, whilst others plait the Gown;
And *Betty's* prais'd for Labours not her own. (l. 145-48)

Betty's agency is denied because of the presence of sylphs. That is to say, stress is placed not on a visible sphere but rather on an invisible one. Certainly, sylphs as fictional creatures belong to a fantasy world; they are not "physical beings", for "they are all light and colour" (Fairer 100); but if we think that "[t]he principal symbol of the triviality of Belinda's world is the machinery of sylphs and gnomes" (Price 8), sylphs, at the same time, have something to do with trifling things like "Puffs, Patches, Powders". In fact, they are not necessarily incorporeal, as each sylph is closely connected with each thing after which, first of all, they are named: "The flutt'ring Fan be *Zephyretta's* Care; / The Drops to thee, *Brillante*, we consign; / And, *Momentilla*, let the Watch be thine; / Do thou, *Crispissa*, tend her fav'rite Lock" (2. 112-15). Again, the individuality characteristic of Pope's description, that is contrasted with the generality of Gay's, is highlighted. This very quality of triviality and of invisibility seems to paradoxically symbolise certain limitations of romance, which does not necessarily capture the whole truth.

It is not, however, that sylphs completely deprive human beings of their subjectivity, for the climactic deed of severing the lock is after all performed by the baron himself. The sylph helplessly lets him cut the lock, simultaneously being cut itself. In the scene of the rape of the lock, at the same time, the instrument itself is significantly focused on: "The Peer now spreads the glitt'ring *Forfix* wide, / T'inclose the Lock; now joints it, to divide. / Ev'n then, before the fatal Engine clos'd, / A wretched *Sylph* too fondly interpos'd; / Fate urg'd the Sheers, and cut the *Sylph* in twain, / (But Airy Substance soon unites again) / The meeting Points the sacred Hair dissever / From the fair Head, for ever and

for ever!” (3. 147-154). The minute description suggests the importance of “trivial Things” for their own sake. It seems, therefore, not that romance is replaced completely by realism, but that the visible world is extended. Then the next quotation becomes significant:

Some secret Truths from Learned Pride conceal'd,
To Maids alone and Children are reveal'd[.] (1. 37-38)

Here the “Learned Pride” can be a symbol of high literature from which some parts of “secret Truths” (as the plural form suggests) might have escaped. By adding “trivial Things”, Pope is trying to point out the uncompletedness and blindness of the world of romance. The sense of concealment and revelation aligned with depiction of triviality seems a unique element that signals his conscious attempt of realism.

If we think about the poem’s focus on realistic description of objects and its disclosure of romance’s artificiality in the representation of make-up, its satire is directed not only against society but also against literary convention. What seems especially marvellous is that the poet visualises trivial objects within the frame of romance: that is, through (mock-)epic or in presentation of sylphs which are, in fact, a fantastic device of romance. Even the personification of things which is completely unrealistic appears suggestive. In the Cave of Spleen “. . . sighs a Jar, and there a Goose-pye talks” (4. 52), and the expression itself may show that “trivial Things” themselves matter and tell something to readers as the “Goose-pye” actually does. The way in which Pope reveals a flaw of traditional genre by thus exploiting its very form is quite a sophisticated irony. The realistic tendencies of *The Rape of the Lock* in various ways seem to anticipate the following flourishing of realistic literature. In this sense, its triviality is not necessarily empty as some contemporary commentators say, nor a signal of decline as later critics argue, but a signifier of literary dynamics just before the age of novels.

Notes

- 1 Nussbaum, in her work on satires against women, argues: “Pope subtly

exploits the antifeminist tradition and employs most of its assumptions, and in addition he combines that tradition with the impulse toward panegyric. When antifeminist satire begins to blend with romance, however, it brings about its own demise for a time. Pope avoids such an artistic dilemma by keeping both the desirable and the undesirable qualities of the sex alive and magnetically attractive” (158). She maintains that Pope is not satisfied with conventional stereotypes of a good or bad woman. He puts that easy dichotomy into one more complex figure, and this seems to enable a relatively real portrayal of a person. Though Nussbaum does not clearly state so, it can be said that Pope’s satire is partly directed against traditional literary form.

2 The quotation is from *English Poetry, 1700-1780: Contemporaries of Swift and Johnson* edited by David W. Lindsay.

3 Although they are not concerned about triviality, there are some critics who do not regard Belinda as someone who needs to be educated. Jones maintains that “Pope characteristically blurs his moral terms, so that his own position as a man of good sense is represented by the ironical phrases ‘Learned Pride’ and ‘doubting Wits’, whereas the empty-headed young girls have access to ‘secret Truths’” (15); Fairer also points out the problematic moral attitude by paying attention to the relationship between Belinda and “amoral” sylphs: “The ambiguous *vanity* and *art* of Belinda are rendered harmless through her association with the sylphs, who are *empty* and *decorative* as well as *proud* and *scheming*. . . . In such ways the sylphs literally ‘demoralise’ . . .” (103). Though they agree that the moral code is somehow questionable without regarding Belinda as “a Girl Being Taught a Lesson” as Sedgwick puts in her famous essay on Austen (315), the influence of ethical argument seems persistent through the criticisms of *The Rape of the Lock*.

4 The minute depiction may result from the unique position where Pope was put, with “the conflicting pressures on the poet as he sought to achieve standing in the largely masculine world of letters, while in some ways placed by his personal limitations in a position of feminine dependency” (Rogers 11).

5 Throughout the poem, an observer’s viewpoint is frequently mentioned: in the first introduction of Belinda, “[A Youth] Seem’d to her Ear his winning Lips to lay, / And thus in Whispers said, or seem’d to say” (l. 25-26); later also the narrator says: “’Twas then *Belinda!* if *Report* say true, / Thy Eyes first open’d on a *Billet-doux*” (l. 117-18, emphasis added). This aspect may remind us of early realistic novels which often show an inclination to highlight a presence of an observer for the sake of plausibility of narrated stories.

6 Brown maintains that the depiction of the toilet is pregnant with the ideology of imperialism: “First, the imperial ‘spoils’ are laid out in an imitation of a natural scene. The verbs, especially ‘extend’ and ‘appear’, reproduce the typical predication of Pope’s pastoral description. They are static, pictorial terms designed to locate objects in a framed

setting. Similarly, the repeated indications of specific location—‘this’ and ‘yonder’, ‘here’ and ‘here’—also typical of Pope’s pastorals, imitate verbally the representation of foreground and background in a landscape painting” (10). “Pastorals” are significant since “Pope’s ‘Nature’ is not the landscape of England at all but a naturalized fantasy about English culture . . . with a very specific political significance” (Brown 8); for example, pastoral landscape in *Windsor-Forest*, according to Brown, contains imperialistic resonance.

7 Besides the realistic atmosphere, the description of the toilet makes us conscious of privateness of the small space; and that has a close relationship with a motif of triviality, opposed to large public space of an epic world. Secrecy and privateness are all the more suggestive for the sexual connotation of the poem, especially in the trivialised rape scene where the violent deed symbolises both penetration and castration. Readers are made a sort of voyeur of Belinda’s private sphere.

8 The plurality of nouns like “Lapdogs” connotes that they have their own time, for it is not likely that they wake up at the same time. Hence a sense of individuality is also attached to the scene that Watt considers as a key-thing in novels.

9 Watt also points out the material aspect of Defoe’s novels comparing them with Richardson’s: “With Defoe this closeness [of the text to what is being described] is mainly physical, with Richardson mainly emotional” (29).

10 Büchmann likens the irrevocable occurrence in the poem to the “fall” in *Paradise Lost*: “Prior to the severing of the lock, the world is shown as far prettier: the beauty of the material objects is united with the people, while after the cut the people and their possessions no longer correspond. The idyllic descriptions of the accountments can be taken as satire of materialism where the things are the better part of the people, as well as a parallel to *Paradise Lost*, where the human and the divine are separated; here it is the human and the material which before the ‘fall’ are at one, so that ‘belongings’ is an accurate word” (120).

11 Interestingly, Wimsatt maintains that the severing of the lock, which happens at the centre of the poem, functions as “a kind of reducing or concentrating mirror of the larger, more important, but less decisive, kinds of strife and hints of strife that both precede and follow it” (30). The binary structure which he suggested may be significant if we try to figure out a movement from fantasy towards realism triggered by the crucial event.

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