

Commodity and Religion in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*

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Critics reading Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* typically identify the bathetic placement of items on Belinda's toilette as an example of the proliferation of consumables in the poem. The heroine's "Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux," aside from being a moment of literary inventiveness for Pope, serve as a paradigmatic example of the mixture of high and low themes characteristic of bathos.¹ The past twenty-five years have seen influential work proceed from a variety of contextual perspectives in order to analyze the contemporary market for these consumables in relation to Pope's own attitudes to commodity fetishism, drugs, and women, illuminating long-overlooked aspects of the poem.² Yet despite this, little has been said about Pope's decision to include Bibles among these consumables, much less about the vibrant religious imagery the poem is rife with. Indeed, among the major critics of the work, only Geoffrey Tillotson mentions the Bible in the toilette scene at any length—and even he seems less concerned with what the connection between the Bible and the other commodities might mean to the poem as a whole than with the extent to which Belinda can therefore be identified with Arabella Fermor, the real-life victim of the poem's eponymous transgression.³

This essay argues, by contrast, that the placement of the Bible among the other consumables on Belinda's table in fact signifies something important, that it suggests for us a specific confusion of religion and consumer culture in Pope's England. For there, in the heart of the first canto, Pope criticizes those who would commodify the ethical heart of Christianity by mak-

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ing the provocative claim that, like the powders used to beautify Belinda, the Bible may become simply another accessory for those positioning themselves socially—or, perhaps more insidiously, it becomes an ideological tool for a rapidly industrializing society. Pope's point, one suspects, is that such treatment in fact neuters the ethical message at the heart of the religion, that it turns it into something to be traded according to transient market forces. This seems especially true in the charged world of the British *beau monde* in which chastity and propriety in a young woman may operate as marital selling points, themselves instances of the market's potency in structuring the metaphorical space of lived experience. I argue therefore, that Pope draws on a tradition of religious and political debate in which the Bible had become a sort of code, shorthand for a certain view of patriotism and religious affiliation, still relatively synonymous in the context of Pope's England. Extending from slightly before the Interregnum through the Restoration, this tradition sought to map a political middle ground for the Bible, equating it with Anglican Protestantism and civic duty, thereby disenfranchising not only the more radical wing of the Reformation and its attendant schismatics, but also the recusant Catholic community of which Pope was a part. Yet this marginalized position also offers the poet a unique avenue from which to advance his own critique of the religious and cultural status quo, engaging in textual play through *The Rape of the Lock*, and later, in its anonymously published companion "Key to the Lock," that conflates this brand of religious iconography with contemporary attitudes toward and concerns with a changing political economy. Pope is thus imaginatively engaged in a project of yoking two strands of critical thought: one, concerned with the religious and theological signifying potential of the Bible, and another, concerned with early capitalist anxieties latent in the text.

These anxieties, of course, appear most clearly in the relationship between the poem and its consumables. That *The Rape of the Lock* is a text about things and the consumption of things as much as it is about the characters consuming them now seems a critical commonplace; much has been written in recent years about Pope's troubled relationship with the objects that populate his poem. As is well recognized, the period leading up to and encompassing the early eighteenth century had been unique in that it had overseen an exponential growth in the segment of British society with expendable income. The resulting boom in consumerism during the period meant a new and dynamic market for

consumer goods ranging from fashionable clothing and cosmetics to imported coffee and exotic pets.⁴ Belinda's dressing table is illustrative of this change, populated as it is by the commodities made available through the market for wares both foreign and domestic: "Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and here / The various Offrings of the World appear" (1.129–30).

Pope's attitude toward the growing "consumer crisis" is subtle however, resisting simple characterization behind the poem's ambiguities and its tight construction. Indeed, the presumed fruit of consumerism—the objects made available by "all that Land and Sea afford" (5.11)—serves as the raw material for the poet, accumulating in the poem and festooning his couplets with layers of dense, almost tangible details. Belinda's toilette is cluttered with the objects of this process of miniaturization and multiplication, a collection of paraphernalia conferring status upon their possessor while simultaneously signifying the contradictions implied by reference to both market and parish. Pope seems acutely aware of the almost self-proliferating nature of the market for contemporary women's fashion even though he himself indulges in its verbal representation; Belinda becomes the "painted Vessel" of 2.47, a vehicle for her consumables even as she supposes herself in control of them. Here the *topos* of transformation undoubtedly owes a debt of gratitude to Ovid, who as Richard Kroll reminds us, serves as the major classical inspiration for Pope's text.⁵ Belinda's cosmetics in fact transform her into something other, into a pastiche of her things. Like Karl Marx's commodity fetish, her trinkets take on a life of their own when she puts them on, not only suppressing the labor that lies behind their production and availability to the public, but also obscuring the very relationship that obtains between signifier and signified, owner and accessory.⁶

Ovidian metamorphosis, accordingly, serves as an underlying thematic for many of the poem's consumables. A closer sampling of Belinda's beautification tools reveals a collection of exotic toys: Indian gems, Arabian trinkets, and combs fashioned from ivory and tortoise shell, all of which figure a culture of mercantilism, examples of the transformation of raw materials into handheld goods fit for market. Similar metamorphoses occur in the Cave of Spleen of the poem's fourth canto, where, in an almost prescient awareness of commodity fetishism, Pope extends the Ovidian *topos* by transmogrifying the various bodies that line the cave into objects of trade (4.47–54).⁷ These passages ought to be read, however, not as an appropriation of such views on Pope's part, but

rather as an attempt to represent fundamental changes in public perception toward markets and world trade. Pope is not offering a simplistic condemnation of consumerism, just as he should not be reductively identified as the culprit behind fetishism. His relationship to the commodities of the poem is, by implication, much less static than some have assumed it to be; rather, he figures a world and a body politic that he himself is attempting to negotiate.⁸

Nowhere does this seem more pertinent, I suggest, than in episodes that conflate religious iconography with the ideology of capitalist mercantilism. Pope achieves this most systematically in the first canto, where preparations for the day soon throw not only Belinda but also the comic spiritual realm of the Sylphs into a frenzy of cosmetic activity. This frenzy gives way to a ritual of sorts, one not concerned with liturgical devotion but nevertheless organized by a quasi-religious cadence. Structured around the routine of Belinda's maid Betty, the "inferior Priestess" of 1.127, the ritual enacts a procession within the text, moving toward an altar consecrated in the name of self-beautification. And here in fact, Pope's *ekphrastic* technique allows him to paint vividly the walls of the church, rhetorically calling forth the implements of the service in a "verbal representation of visual representation."⁹ He proceeds explicitly then, identifying Belinda's toilette as the bathetic "Altar" at the service of the "Rites of Pride" (1.127–8). The "*Toilet*" thus displayed recalls the altar of the Mass cluttered with the instruments of the liturgy; but whereas the altar in the Mass displays the host and chalice for the Eucharist, Belinda's altar displays the various ornaments, vases—in "mystic Order" no less—that stand ready to invoke the "*Cosmetic Pow'rs*" (1.121, 124). The theurgical movement of the Mass is thus replicated as Ariel rallies the Sylphs to her service and protection. Pope goes on, however, to reveal Belinda's parodic Mass as ultimately nothing more than self-referential. The congregant comes to gaze on what is only her own image reflected in the mirror (1.125–6). And yet, Pope surprises the reader by placing the Bible—a proper religious symbol—among the puffs, powders, and patches that litter Belinda's table. Like the patches fashionable in polite society during the period, the Bible becomes cosmetic, an item worn (or displayed) that intimates virtue similar to the way a powdered face suggests youthfulness and fertility. The religious signifier, in the poem, is reduced to fashion.

But it is at this point that we ought to ask: why Bibles? Why not use, for instance, the cross later referenced in the sexually

charged zeugma of 2.7–8 as the symbol of religious and material confusion? The answer may lie in Pope's vantage point as a Catholic outsider and the turbulent overdetermination the Bible underwent in the years spanning the Interregnum and the Restoration, both of which provide localized examples of the seismic conceptual shifts that came to characterize the Reformation in general. In fact, this is perhaps what is so striking about the Bible's placement among the consumables on Belinda's dressing table: commingling with the self-referential tools of the "Rites of Pride" stand the scriptures, the book which had, at least ostensibly, come to embody the very condition of meaning. The poetic and political stakes are high here for Pope precisely because the Bible represents so much.

This is not to say in any way that the Bible was monolithic. Pope's England, on the contrary, was one of religious contradictions and surprisingly diverse complexity, though not of course to the degree we associate diversity with today.¹⁰ The Bible, to some extent, came to absorb and encompass these tensions, to provide a point of reference across the ideological spectrum. And yet, the Bible was also uniquely Protestant. In contradiction to Catholic authority, which found its source in not only the Bible but also in the traditions of the Church along with, crucially, the active and continuing interpretive mandate of Rome, English Protestants, following Martin Luther and John Calvin, sought to locate meaning and religious authority in the biblical canon alone. So, for instance, as early as the Thirty-Nine Articles (1562), the self-sufficiency of scripture comes to take on a confessional character as an item of faith on par with the very fundamental historical beliefs of Christianity.¹¹ Understood this way, therefore, the rallying cry of *sola scriptura* is an explicit rejection of Catholic dogma. By elevating the Bible's authoritative role, Protestant theology comes to view itself, in the words of Nicholas Boyle, "as the *negation* of Roman Catholicism."¹² Of course, for a British kingdom that was also now acting as dean over the church, theological matters took on a decidedly political character. Anglican divines during the period took to articulating a distinctive Protestantism that stressed sobriety in matters religious, anchoring their understanding of the world in the literature of the scriptures.

Despite this, Anglican Protestantism during the years leading up to the Interregnum was rarely an easy fit. Following the *via media* of Elizabethan England and its elucidation during the Jacobean period, tensions within Protestant factions and between Anglicans and the minority Catholics threatened to derail the

political and religious settlement brokered by these moderating voices. By the reign of Charles I, these tensions had erupted into a series of religious controversies that saw Laudian Protestants and the Great Kew “rationalists” fighting hard to maintain what they saw as the politico-theological center. In a rear-guard action, they sought refuge during the religious controversies of the seventeenth century in the reaffirmation of *sola scriptura* and the historical convictions of the Anglican tradition. William Chillingworth, perhaps the central figure in the Great Kew circle of Anglicans—himself a former Catholic—is key here, moving to identify English Protestantism *synecdochically* with its holy book. His tome *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation* (1638) is notable for its overt explicitness in this respect, declaring in response to the Catholic position: “The BIBLE, I say, the BIBLE only, is the religion of protestants!”¹³ With respect to this tradition in British theology, Joseph M. Levine makes the point that during the early years of the Commonwealth government, moderate English religious voices increasingly sought to ground the Bible itself in the history of the English state and the Christian canonical tradition. The years surrounding Oliver Cromwell’s revolution saw challenges to authority from all sides, so further articulation of ostensibly official positions became essential to maintaining some measure of stability. Thomas Hobbes’s skeptical account of the scriptures in *Leviathan* (1651), for instance, exacerbated Protestant anxieties over the Bible’s authority. Hobbes raised doubts about the canon’s authenticity, noting: “Who were the originall writers of the severall Books of Holy Scripture, has not been made evident by any sufficient testimony of other History, (which is the only proof of matter of fact).”¹⁴ Hobbes’s argument is that, ultimately, the authority of the Bible—if it is to be authoritative not only to theology but also, in Hobbes’s case, with respect to the new science of politics—must come from within itself. But, as Hobbes goes on to note, the careful reader is apt to encounter repeated inconsistencies in the text; the canon, left to itself, seemed to necessitate an authority externally, or else abdicated its own authoritative position.¹⁵ What influence Hobbes initially had was no doubt viewed as unorthodox, but his argument proved enduring. Nevertheless, his savvy reading of the political, religious, and philosophical issues dividing the body politic did not win him many friends—he was labeled an atheist and enemy of the crown.¹⁶ Challenges to scriptural authority persisted, however, from explicitly theological circles as well. Catholics and an emboldened radical Protestant subculture (composed mainly of

Quakers, Baptists, and some extremist Presbyterians) argued that the Bible was an insufficient arbiter in epistemological inquiry. Against these groups and in response to Hobbes, Chillingworth's theoretical descendents for a time became consumed in an apologetic project to both reassert the historicity of the Bible and, perhaps more importantly to their own context, provide a link between the early Christians and contemporary Britons via a chain of successive witnesses to the Bible's infallibility.¹⁷ In an almost fetishistic attachment to the Bible, Anglican moderates became bibliolaters as the lesser of two evils. Inheritors of the *sola scriptura* traditions, these apologists looked to the Bible as a talisman of sorts, the textual object on which the Anglican tradition was philosophically and historically built.

At the Restoration, many of the central controversies on bibliolatry again surfaced because, in truth, they had never gone away. Anxieties about Roman Catholicism grew increasingly acute even as the pendulum of political rule swung away from the more hard-line Puritans toward the moderate position. And this is crucial to the argument, for it is the specter of Catholicism (and its political incarnation, Jacobitism) that, repeatedly materializing within the cultural fabric of early eighteenth-century England, causes yet another reassertion of *sola scriptura* as a central politico-religious imperative in the years directly leading up to Pope's composition of *The Rape of the Lock*. In some ways, this is to be expected, since Britons had become uncomfortable with the restored Stuart dynasty's sympathies with the Catholic position. Such concerns carried with them a distinctly political and economical character; against James II in particular, Protestants connected an alleged political despotism with his Catholicism and its association with Continental culture and temperament. To be British also meant to be Protestant. Thus, the problem with Catholicism became increasingly synonymous with a double allegiance to both Crown and pontiff at times bordering on sedition.¹⁸ These concerns never stray far from the central problem of grounding meaning in the biblical text that forms a pervasive undercurrent for these tensions and remained a persistent object of Anglican attention. In the minds of satirists such as Jonathan Swift (who, we ought to recall, would later become a close friend to Pope and a Scriblerus collaborator), it is precisely Catholicism's propensity to change the plain truths of scripture through excessive interpretation that is problematic. His *Tale of a Tub* (published in 1704, but likely written up to a decade earlier in the waning years of James II's reign) figuratively imagines this

problem by allegorizing the debate. It is Peter—the eldest brother and the allegorical figure for the Catholic Church—who, against his deceased Father’s will, incessantly alters the coat that represents religious tradition. Crucially, it is precisely Peter’s inability to interpret the last will and testament of the Father (what Swift presumably means us to identify as the Bible) in its plain sense that proves problematic; instead, Swift’s editor William Wotton notes: “When the Papists cannot find anything which they want in Scripture they go to *Oral Tradition*.”¹⁹ Conversely, Swift identifies the British *via media* with a keen attentiveness to biblical text. Yet it was not only popular satire that excoriated Catholicism’s deviation from the reasoned bibliolatry that came to characterize early Latitudinarian devotional practices. Scarcely two years before Pope’s expanded, five-canto version of the poem (in which, it is often noted, he added the supernatural machinery, the Cave of Spleen, and much of the poem’s most memorable scenes), Samuel Clarke, Latitudinarian and theological inheritor to Chillingworth, sought to broker a more definitive politico-theological peace. His 1712 publication *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* begins by noting that in opposition to the Roman Catholics, Protestants held up all creedal beliefs to the words of the Bible. Controversially, he went on to democratize bibliolatry in a sense, by adding the clarification “every person may reasonably agree to such Forms [of creedal confession], whenever he can in any sense at all reconcile them with Scripture.”²⁰ Unlike the Catholics then, Protestants held fast to the Word. For the book trade especially, this was welcome news; the literary market was soon glutted with religious literature.²¹ The Bible though, was the hot commodity, an early bestseller. Furthermore, the fact that Pope was acquainted with this apologetic literature seems highly probable if not absolutely certain. In a letter to Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, who had contacted the poet about converting to the Church of England after his father’s death in 1717, Pope writes, “Shall I tell you a secret? I [read the controversies between the Churches] at fourteen years old, (for I loved reading, and my father had no other books) there was collection of all that had been written on both sides in the reign of King James the second: I warm’d my head with them, and the consequence was that I found my self a Papist and a Protestant by turns, according to the last book I read.”²² Surely as well, Pope’s Catholic education ensured a level of facility with the controversies that would inform his own experience as a recusant believer.²³

With regards to the everyday experience of Catholics like Pope, bibliolatrous theology took on a decidedly political impor-

tance and served to banish them to the fringes—both literally and figuratively—of political power (the law barred Catholics, it will be remembered, from living within ten miles of London).²⁴ The Toleration Act of 1689 would be needed to relax the oppressive measures of the Commonwealth and legalize certain forms of dissenting religious practice. In fact, this act may have “commercialized” religious devotion since it opened a marketplace of sorts by withdrawing the exclusive support of the secular courts from Anglicanism. Clergymen assumed a more aggressive stance to proselytism and theological matters in order to vie with new denominational competition and the plurality of views.²⁵ But although a measure of toleration was achieved through this legislation, Catholics were still oppressively marginalized by the Test Acts (1673, 1678), which prohibited those who would not commune with the Church of England from holding official positions.²⁶ Such measures combined to effectively exile the Catholic to a narrow coterie of like-minded recusants, an exile that undoubtedly formed a central part of Pope’s life. The memory of his family’s ostracism would remain vivid; as late as 1737, he lamented “And certain Laws, by Suffrers thought unjust, / Deny’d all Posts of Profits or of Trust.”²⁷ He would likewise never own his own property, a result of the emasculating anti-Catholic laws of the period.²⁸

Concerns of this sort no doubt weighed on Pope’s mind at the time he was writing his mock epic. His recent publication of *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) had been attacked by John Dennis along religious lines with uncharacteristic barbarity. Dennis had not only offered rebuttal to Pope’s thesis but proceeded to engage in a program of caustic ridicule and slander, mocking his Catholicism, “revealing” his sympathies with the Old Pretender, and even deriding his physical deformities as physiognomical manifestations of his character (as a child Pope had suffered from spinal tuberculosis, stunting his growth and permanently hunching his back).²⁹ Attacks like these during his formative years—and there were many—forced Pope to reevaluate his own self-understanding as a recusant Catholic. In a letter of 1712 addressed to John Caryll Jr. (the Catholic friend and mentor to whom *The Rape of the Lock* is dedicated), Pope seems to complain of Dennis’s bigotry, referring to himself as “an un-bigoted Roman Catholic.”³⁰ The same year that Pope put the finishing touches on the poem, 1717, saw his definitive identification with the Catholicism that would ensure a life of discrimination. In the same reply to Aterbury in which he reveals his acquaintance with the apologetic literature, Pope politely refuses to convert to Protestantism, dividing his patriotic duties from those religious: “I am a Catholick, in

the strictest sense of the word. If I was born under an absolute Prince, I would be a quiet subject; but I thank God I was not. I have a due sense of the excellence of the British constitution."³¹ Yet, and this is telling, Pope's self-identification with the recusant Catholic community is a direct repudiation of the *sola scriptura* of Protestant England. He would later liken his own spirituality to Blaise Pascal and François Fénelon, two notable Roman Catholic figures, remarking that he would "most readily imitate [them], in submitting all my Opinions of the Decision of the Church."³² This may, of course, be tongue-in-cheek, but certainly, Pope saw himself as one for whom *sola scriptura* smacked of bibliolatry. A caveat here is important, however: for while the temptation to divide Pope's spirituality from his identification with the Catholic community is strong, such an anachronism denies the complexity of the poet's own elusive position on these matters, especially with regards to this trying period in his life. No less a figure than Maynard Mack reminds us that Pope, despite his own tolerant brand of spirituality, nonetheless stubbornly identified himself as a Catholic, even though such identification, as I have emphasized, meant his life was spent dogged by suspicion.³³ What is of central importance to my argument then, is the robust manner in which Pope viewed his Catholicism as a system of signification he existed *within*, a cultural and religious grid with plasticity, through which he engaged the poetic arts as *both* a Roman Catholic *and* an Englishman.

Pope's own imaginative use of the Bible links the central signifier of Protestant thought with the consumables that litter Belinda's dressing table. There is consequently a sort of marriage of the ideological and theological in this figure. His vantage point as a Catholic outsider is thus crucial to understanding the conflation of the religious with the commodity through the bathos of Belinda's toilette. For the Protestant, as I have argued, the Bible came to signify the heart of the Christian religion, the very horizon of interpretation for the citizen-saint. Yet unlike the master signifier of Catholic culture and experience, the Eucharistic wafer, the Bible was available for purchase. Those who could afford the volume kept a copy for private devotional use or as display.³⁴ Thus, in the poem, the very object that contains the Word of God subverts itself, becoming a commodity open to trade. The irony is one that Pope cannot resist, for the very impulse to biblical literacy entailed by the newfound importance of the written Word necessarily feeds a market for religious literature. It is this market, though, that inevitably devalues the religious

by reducing it, in this case, to implements in the pursuit of ever-increasing profit. And we must suspect that as a Catholic in a Protestant kingdom, any reverence Pope has for the holy book ultimately cannot mask what he sees as Protestant bibliolatry run amok. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that Pope's ironic treatment of overdetermined religious interpretation of the poem in his *A Key to the Lock* (1715) conspicuously omits reference to the Bible. As a parody of Protestant anti-Papist tracts, the Bible nonetheless stands as a particularly Protestant signifier; any reference to it would argue against the paranoid reading offered by Pope's fictitious apothecary.³⁵ The poet's exile thus informs the deliberate usage of the Bible as the symbol of religious and material confusion. The printer-merchant becomes the source of religious enlightenment.

But Pope seems to push us further, for we might ask: what is the effect of rendering the Bible a commodity in this sense? Inevitably, the identification of the Bible and powder can only result in stripping the Christian narrative of its power of prophetic critique, the ethical heart of which Pope was no doubt fond of as a satirist *cum* moralist. And perhaps most insidiously, the Bible—synecdochically identified here with a culture's core ethico-religious values—becomes implicated in an ideological project of capitalist expansion, conspiring against itself and those very same core commitments. Regarded as little more than a fashion accessory to the wardrobe of the elite, it becomes complicit in the hierarchy of this social class. Here indeed, the supposedly religious silences anxieties over a changing economic and ideological order, even becoming complicit in the proliferation of Belinda's cosmetics. As a part of this collection, and therefore part of the collection of commodities that adorns the society woman, in an important sense it ceases to mean *religiously*. It ceases to signify the inscrutability of faith and the concomitant ethical demands placed on the reader. Rather, it becomes an advertisement of piety, a collectible meant to be brandished, implying a greater domestic use-value through an implied virtue.³⁶ Recall, for instance, Clarissa's pedantic moral, herself engaged with Belinda in the agonistic competition of markets:

But since, alas! frail Beauty must decay,
Curl'd or uncurl'd, since Locks will turn to grey,
Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a Man, must die a Maid;
What then remains, but well our Pow'r to use,

And keep good Humour still whate'er we lose?

.....
 Beauties in vain their pretty Eyes may roll;
 Charms strike the Sight, but Merit wins the Soul.

(5.25–34)

But as a commodity—and this is the crucial point—the Bible is open to be owned, personalized, and privatized so that it loses its claim to broad universality. Pope's suggestion is that this type of ownership is never quite possible since the moment that the ethico-religious is owned in this fashion it in fact ceases to be robustly so.

What Pope does so well in the *Rape of the Lock* is to engage in a mode of imaginative play through which these two strains of thought can be brought together, all the while maintaining a poetic distance. It is, in fact, rather similar to what he does in his treatment of Belinda, for he seems to understand intuitively that Belinda's own body, in becoming a sort of receptacle for these objects, conspires in devaluing itself.³⁷ As the "painted Vessel," Belinda wears her status and in turn becomes herself an object for possession. It is important to note, therefore, that Pope is far from offering a simple condemnation of his heroine since she too is a victim of the ideologies that order their world. One ought not, as some have mistakenly argued, to suppose Pope's critique is merely an excoriation of his heroine. On the contrary, she is engulfed in a sort of ideological fantasy, structured as a *consumer* by the very interpellation that ultimately transforms her into a *consumable*. Pope, on the contrary, looks on the "Goddess" with uncharacteristic sympathy for the period (l. 132). After all, Belinda herself is being traded. It is her body, in the end, that is exploited; it is her body, in the end, that is the base commodity of the culture. As a figure for patriarchy's deepest values and desires then, she comes to embody the confusion of the ethico-religious with the commodity. Marx's classic definition of ideology is, to some extent, appropriate here with respect to the heroine, for she does not know it but she is doing it.³⁸ No one is more cognizant of this than the poet himself, for whom Belinda is not only a comic but also a tragic figure.

NOTES

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¹ Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock, and Other Poems: An Heroi-Comical Poem. In Five Canto's*, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, vol. 2 of *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt, 11 vols. (London: Methuen, 1938–69), 2:140–206, canto 1, line 138. All subsequent references to the poem will be to this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text by canto and line number.

² For instance, Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660–1750* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1984); Laura Brown, *Alexander Pope*, Reading Literature (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985); and Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993) are characteristic of approaches to Pope's poetry in respect to its women and consumables.

³ See "Appendix F: Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux," to Pope, *Rape of the Lock*, 2:401–3. Tillotson's discussion covers barely more than two pages, and of that, most is concerned with the grammatical construction of the couplet ending in line 138.

⁴ Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa Publications, 1982), pp. 9–10. I am greatly indebted to McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb for my understanding of early consumer culture in England.

⁵ Richard Kroll, "Pope and Drugs: The Pharmacology of *The Rape of the Lock*," *ELH* 67, 1 (Spring 2000): 99–141, 101–3. The argument can be made, of course, that Pope's poem—perhaps paradoxically, both epic and miniaturized—owes its debt primarily to *The Iliad*. For an interesting discussion of some of these parallels and Pope's Homeric inspiration, see Helen Deutsch's chapter, "The Rape of the Lock as Miniature Epic," in *Resemblance and Disgrace: Alexander Pope and the Deformation of Culture* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 40–82.

⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, 3 vols. (1976; rpt. New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 1:164–5. Marx's classic definition of commodity fetish is appropriate here: "It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (p. 165).

⁷ It is passages like these that lead Brown to indict Pope for indulging in the ideological fantasy of commodity fetishism, arguing that he aestheticizes the consumable object, engaging—with Belinda—in objectifying the labor that populates the text in the form of fantastical commodities. Yet it is far from clear that Pope's own attitude toward commodities can be (or ought to be) neatly identified with his heroine's, an identification that Brown's argument tends to make. See, for instance, Brown's *Alexander Pope*, pp. 8, 25–6.

⁸ A point of disclosure is pertinent here, though, since we ought to note that Pope himself prospered nicely from the increasing economic vitality of the book trade. See Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life* (New York: Norton; New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 416–7.

⁹ James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 3; qtd. in Tita Chico, "The Arts of Beauty: Women's Cosmetics and Pope's Ekphrasis," *ECLife* 26, 1 (Winter 2002): 1–23, 11.

¹⁰J. C. D. Clark's *English Society, 1660–1832: Religion, Ideology, and Politics during the Ancien Regime*, 2d edn. (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000) is perhaps the major text arguing for a reassessment of religion during the period. Clark notes that the Church and its symbols existed in a complex relationship with the broader public and in many ways resisted the secularizing impulse of the period.

¹¹Number six of the Thirty-Nine Articles is "Of the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation."

¹²Nicholas Boyle, *Sacred and Secular Scriptures: A Catholic Approach to Literature* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 11, emphasis added.

¹³William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation* (1638; rpt. London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), p. 463, qtd. in Boyle, p. 11.

¹⁴Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (1968; rpt. Hammonds-worth UK: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 416.

¹⁵Hobbes, pp. 416–8. Hobbes devotes a good part of the third chapter of book 3 of *Leviathan* on what he sees as textual puzzles and inconsistencies in both the Old and New Testaments, pp. 416–27.

¹⁶Joseph M. Levine notes that the accusations against Hobbes formed a litany of theological heresies: "He was an Anthropomorphist, Sabellian, Nestorian, Sadducean, Arabian, Tacian, Manichee, Aetian, Priscillianist, Luciferian, Origenist, Socinian, and Jew" ("Matter of Fact in the English Revolution," *JHI* 64, 2 [April 2003]: 317–35, 321).

¹⁷Levine states this most clearly on p. 322.

¹⁸This anti-Catholic paranoia—and its explicit connection to the biblical impulse of Protestant England—is illustrated well by John Cooke's words to the lower house of Convocation (1704): "the barbarous policy of the Church of Rome may be discover'd; to shut off the scriptures from the people, to keep them, as if mad and distracted, in darkness, knowing they must necessarily rave against their keepers, the priests, whenever they come into the light" (Cooke, *Thirty-Nine Sermons on Several Occasions: By the Late Reverend John Cooke, A. M. Rector of the United Parishes of St. George the Martyr and St. Mary Magdalen in Canterbury and of Mersham in Kent, and One of the Six Preachers of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury*, 2 vols. [London, 1729; Eighteenth Century Collections Online, 2004], 2:497, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO?locID=txshracd2542&d1=0105400202&c=4&a1=thirty-nine+sermons&df=f&s1=barbarous+policy+of+the+Church&d2=2&vrsn=1.0&h2=1&af=RN&a5=A0&d3=0&ste=10&a6=TI&d5=d6&dd=0&srchtp=a&aa=AND&SU=All&a0=Cooke%2C+John&docNum=CW3317844653&al=All&ab=AND&db=Title+Page&d6=2&stp=Author&d4=0.33&n=10>). Jeremy Gregory notes that Anglicanism allied itself with the Enlightenment as a remedy to Catholicism. While it is not clear to me that Anglicanism, or even England for that matter, embraced the Enlightenment in the way Gregory suggests, his overall point—that the Church of England defined itself in opposition to the suspicious reliance on the pope's interpretive authority—nevertheless seems to me a sound conclusion (Gregory, "The Eighteenth-Century Reformation: The Pastoral Task of Anglican Clergy after 1689," in *The Church of England, c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Steven Taylor [New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993], pp. 67–85).

¹⁹ Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, in *Jonathan Swift*, ed. Angus Ross and David Woolley, Oxford Authors (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 62–164, 100n.

²⁰ Samuel Clarke, introduction to *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity. In Three Parts. Wherein All the Texts in the New Testament Relating to That Doctrine, and the Principal Passages in the Liturgy of the Church of England, Are Collected, Compared, and Explained* (London, 1712; Eighteenth Century Collections Online, 2004), pp. i–xxxii, xx–xxi, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO?locID=txshracd2542&d1=0269700800&c=2&a1=Scripture+D+octrine+of+the+Trinity&df=f&s1=every+person+may&d2=1&vrsn=1.0&h2=1&af=RN&a5=A0&d3=0&ste=10&a6=TI&d5=d6&dd=0&srchtp=a&aa=AND&SU=All&a0=Clarke&docNum=CW3318752935&al=All&ab=AND&db=Title+Page&d6=1&stp=Author&d4=0.33&n=10>.

²¹ Sermons and the Bible formed the mainstay of the reading public's diet. On the sermon's importance to eighteenth-century oratory see James Downey, *The Eighteenth Century Pulpit: A Study of the Sermons of Butler, Berkeley, Secker, Sterne, Whitefield, and Wesley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

²² Pope to Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, 20 November 1717, letter 70 in *Alexander Pope: Selected Letters*, ed. Howard Erskine-Hill (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), pp. 119–121, 120.

²³ Mack, p. 48.

²⁴ Paul Gabriner, "The Papist's House, The Papist's Horse: Alexander Pope and the Removal from Binfield," in *Centennial Hauntings: Pope, Byron, and Eliot in the Year 88*, ed. C. C. Barfoot and Theo D'haen, DQR Studies in Literature (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), pp. 13–85, 47; qtd. in Peter Davidson, "Pope's Recusancy," *SLitl* 38, 1 (Spring 2005): 63–76, 65.

²⁵ Gregory, pp. 69–71.

²⁶ Clark, pp. 68–70.

²⁷ Pope, *The Second Epistle of the Second Book of Horace*, in *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*, ed. Aubrey Williams, Riverside Editions (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), pp. 231–40, lines 60–1.

²⁸ Indeed it was only through the help of sympathetic Protestant cousins that the Pope family's property was not seized by the state following anti-Catholic legislation barring them from holding land; the legislation was a reaction to renewed Jacobite fears following a failed revolt in 1716. See Gabriner, p. 30; qtd. in Davidson, p. 66. Davidson also notes the terrible irony these laws held for Pope—Horace had defined the "summit of felicity" as ownership of a *paterna rura*, an obvious impossibility for a Catholic in Pope's England.

²⁹ Mack, pp. 178–84. See also Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, ed. Cynthia Wall, Bedford Cultural Editions (Boston: Bedford Books, 1998), pp. 197–203.

³⁰ Pope to John Caryl Jr., 8 November 1712, letter 32 in *Selected Letters*, pp. 56–8, 57. We cannot be sure exactly who Pope refers to here as "the bigot." John Dennis seems to me to be a very likely candidate considering what would have been his recent attacks on the poet.

³¹ Pope to Atterbury, in *Selected Letters*, p. 120.

³² Qtd. in Patricia Brückmann, "Virgins Visited by Angel Powers: *The Rape of the Lock*, Platonick Love, Sylphs, and Some Mysticks," in *The Enduring Legacy: Alexander Pope Tercentenary Essays*, ed. G. S. Rousseau and Pat Rogers (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 3–20, 16.

³³ Mack, pp. 336–9.

³⁴ Thus, Plumb notes that by the 1720s, Bibles were available in parts for as low as a penny. See McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, p. 271.

³⁵ Pope, "A Key to the Lock: Or, a Treatise, Proving beyond All Contradiction the Dangerous Tendency of a Late Poem, Intituled, the Rape of the Lock, to Government and Religion," in *The Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Wilson Croker, 10 vols. (London: Murray, 1886), 10:482–97.

³⁶ Stewart Crehan, "The Rape of the Lock and the Economy of 'Trivial Things,'" *ECS* 31, 1 (Autumn 1997): 45–68, 56–7.

³⁷ Crehan, p. 48.

³⁸ Qtd. in Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Phronesis (New York: Verso, 1989), p. 28. Here, Žižek's analysis is quite instructive: "The very concept of ideology implies a kind of basic, constitutive *naïveté*: the misrecognition of its own presuppositions, of its own effective conditions, a distance, a divergence between so-called social reality and our distorted representation, our false consciousness of it." In this way, perhaps, Pope would have us believe that Belinda exists in such a state of false consciousness.