

TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

Woman and the Empire in Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*: A Rereading Umme Salma

You and I were slaves together
Uprooted and humiliated together
Rapes and lynchings ...

Felix Mnthali, 'Letter to a Feminist Friend'¹

Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is a legend of the rape of a woman named Belinda. But with this there is entwined another story of rape, that is, the ravishing of the British Empire, the metaphorical female. Whereas the real female figure is active in the epic, the metaphorical female is passively present in its gorgeous setting, laden with the prizes of the imperial excursions during the first phase of the British Empire. As Belinda becomes an object of desire because of her ornamented locks, so does the British Empire, the female land-body, because of her precious treasures. This indicates that to the patriarchy and its by-product, imperialism, female – whether it is real or metaphorical – is the object to be desired and possessed. And as the objects of that masculine desire woman and the Empire have the same doom – rape. The paper, accordingly, argues that the ornamented locks of Belinda and the treasures from the Empire function as synecdoche and the seizure of the locks means brutal violation of the Empire. Consequently Belinda and the Empire become interchangeable, and this identical identity offers a rereading of the epic as a model for patriarchal and colonial dominance.

The term 'lock' in *The Rape of the Lock*, since its inception, has been bearing a bundle of meanings to many critics, as Murray Cohen describes in his 'Versions of the Lock: Readers of *The Rape of the Lock*': 'For less limiting readers, the lock signifies a symbol of the war of the sexes, and the poem represents either Belinda's husband seeking or continuing coquetry. Critics have seen the lock as a sign of "immoderate female pride," a totemic object, a soft and sensuous symbol of a golden world, a fertility symbol, an immortalized star envied by all belles; and interpreted the poem as a version of the fortunate fall, a "vision of a world emporium," a diverting attack on the vices of private life.'² I am interpreting the lock as the supplies from the Empire equivocating Belinda and the Empire in three ways. Firstly, treating the seized and possessed materials through colonisation, present in the backdrop of the poem, as a synecdoche like the synecdoche lock; secondly, using the famous trope of genderisation of the far-flung attractive lands as feminine in the colonial relationship; finally, through the politics of representation camouflaged in the Game of Ombre episode. In consequence Belinda becomes an emblem of the colonised and controlled

¹ The poem quoted is cited from 'Firth Things First: Problems of a Feminist Approach to African Literature' by Kirsten Holst Petersen, published in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft et al (London and New York: Routledge, 2003). It indicates the similarity of the condition of women both in West, governed by male authority, and in the colonised world, ruled by the colonisers. Here it refers to the similarity of Belinda and The Empire, the metaphorical female, expressed in the words 'you' and 'I' respectively.

² Murray Cohen, 'Versions of the Lock: Readers of *The Rape of the Lock*.' *ELH* 43.1 (Spring 1996) 53.

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world suffering under an oppressive superior power. I have divided my discussion into two parts. Firstly I will highlight the setting, taking into account the history of the First British Empire, and then focus on the resemblance between patriarchal and imperial thoughts. In the second part, I will support my analysis with reference to the text.

Part I

The epic is set against the backdrop of London metropolis ‘made of gauze and silver spangles’, in William Hazlitt’s phrase.³ Here everything is shining, shimmering and glittering. Both private and public life – the huge decorated mansion of Belinda, the barge on the Thames and the court Hampton – are full of the trappings of an extravagant and comfortable way of life. Like G. Wilson Knight, We feel that this society is ‘eminently desirable’⁴ and the description wafts us away to the world of Belinda. At first we intrude into the belle’s palace where she is enjoying a peaceful, sound sleep. It is a palace with ‘Queen Anne’ features which include enormous sash-windows with large glass panes, broad panels, and high-roofed well-ventilated rooms and separate attached dressing parlour. In terms of interior design, there are blue and white jars in paneled recesses, a tall grandfather clock with lacquered work against the wall, lacquered furniture such as chests, cabinets, tables, screens to prevent heat from the fireplace, a soft bed with downy pillows and curtains around the bed enclosing it as a separate realm, ‘numerous wax-lights in bright order’ to ‘blaze, (3: 168)’ wooden work in Mahogany, finer furniture with cabriole and long mirrors in the dressing room.⁵ Hampton Court is also a huge palace with ‘majestic frame’ (3: 3) surrounded by the Thames River and meadows with flowers all the year round. Here we see the use of china porcelain crockery, shining spoons, ‘altars of Japan’ (3: 107) – that is, small, lacquered tables – silver lamp, ‘silver spouts’ (3: 109)– that is, kettles – ‘rich china vessels’ (3: 159), a watch with silver sound, and ‘the glittering forfex’ (3: 147) in ‘shining case’ (3: 128) for both daily necessity and decorative purposes.⁶

We also witness Belinda in her luxurious personal beauty parlour doing her ‘sacred rites of pride’ (1: 128). This episode provides information about the manner of Belinda’s grooming. Yet the whole poem here and there alludes to her precious ornaments and cosmetics. She is revealed as the product of her cosmetics. Then she wears a white gown ‘consisted of a bodice and skirt joined together, with the skirt open in front to reveal’ the silk or brocade or damask or satin petticoat,⁷ and ‘a sparkling cross’ (2: 7) on her breast. She is now before ‘unnumbered treasures’ (1: 129) that are captured in silver vases. This world of ‘cosmetic powers’ (1: 124) is an arena of caskets, vials, and boxes. They contain perfumes, lotions, gel, pomatum,

³ William Hazlitt, quoted in ‘Extracts from Earlier Critics,’ *Pope: The Rape of the Lock* ed. John Dixon Hunt (London: Macmillan, 1968) 93.

⁴ G. Wilson Knight, ‘Drama and Epic in *The Rape of The Lock*,’ Hunt ed., 112.

⁵ G.M. Trevelyan, *English Social History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) 319-20.

⁶ All quotations from Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* have been taken from *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* ed. W. Alexander Allison et al. 3rd ed., (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1983) 408-423. Canto and line numbers are given in parentheses in the text.

⁷ Louis A. Landa, ‘Pope’s Belinda, the General Emporie of the World, and the Wondrous Worm,’ *Pope: Recent Essays by Several Hands* ed. Maynard Mack and James A. Winn (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1980) 188.

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patches, rouge, lipsticks, ivory and tortoise shell combs and jewellery for every part of the body such as pins, pendant, brooches, necklace, bodkins, rings, earrings. The most attractive part of her beauty is her locks which are decorated with 'shining ringlets' gracefully hanging over her 'smooth ivory neck' (2: 22).

The young men of this world are also smart and fashionable, wearing clothes of silk and linen, having adornments like wigs, coronets, rings, swords and canes, and are habituated to taking snuff and tobacco.

Then comes the matter of drinking, which makes the rich life of the rich richest. We experience aural, visual and tactile sensations visualizing coffee as 'the grateful liquor' which is coming out of the 'silver spout' (3: 109) with smoky tide into the China cup. Liquid chocolate is frothing like a trembling sea, and tea is served in between the serious discussion of state affairs. These liquors add grandeur to the dazzling life of Pope's poetic world where every day is for beautification, each hour is for ceremony and each minute is for gossiping, flirtation and social hullabaloo. But Pope, in spite of his fascination with this world, remained unsure about the nature of his epic: 'People who would rather it were let alone laugh at it, and seem heartily merry, at the same time that they are uneasy. 'Tis a sort of writing very like tickling.'⁸ Richard Kroll very recently in his 'Pope and Drugs: The Pharmacology of *The Rape of the Lock*' pinpoints this indecisiveness, arguing that Pope both celebrates and criticises his poem's consumerist society. 'It is a society his poem does not totemize but views dialectically.'⁹ This makes me pause and think about the epic, and to say, with a slight modification of Laura Claridge's words, 'As a *postcolonial* reader, I should have trouble enjoying *The Rape of the Lock*.'¹⁰ (my emphasis).

This stunning enrichment of the setting of *Rape* provokes us to take into account a particular history of the world, that of today's third world which became the whiteman's burden because of its 'wealth, sweetness, glory'¹¹ and 'cultural backwardness'.¹² As postcolonial criticism weighs up history in evaluating any literary texts, I am using the history of the First British Empire as 'the central reference point'¹³ in my analysis of the setting of the poem and thereafter. Moreover, in the reading and realisation of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature, the history of imperialism must be reflected on. Suvir Kaul in his *Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* says: 'these literary texts are a wonderful archive for any analysis of the connections between the idea of 'English Literature' (that is, a national literature), nation-formation and the making of the British Empire.'¹⁴ Laura Brown in her *Alexander Pope* claims that Pope's work is not only

⁸ Quoted in Geoffrey Tillotson, 'The Rape of the Lock: an Introduction,' in Hunt, 129.

⁹ Richard Kroll, 'Pope and Drugs: the Pharmacology of *The Rape of the Lock*,' *ELH* 67.1 (2000) 103.

¹⁰ Laura Claridge, 'Pope's Rape of Excess,' in Brean Hammond, ed., *Pope* (Harlow: Longman, 1996) 88. Original Quotation, 'As a feminist, I should have trouble enjoying *The Rape of the Lock*.'

¹¹ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) 35.

¹² Michael Parenti, *Against Empire* 3 August 2009, 4. <<http://www.michaelparenti.org/imperialism101.html>>

¹³ Laura Brown, *Alexander Pope* ed. Terry Eagleton (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1985) 4.

¹⁴ Suvir Kaul, *Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) 4.

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related to history, but 'History is Pope's poetry, in the sense that these poems construct a version of history for their age'.¹⁵

The First British Empire began to shape from the late fifteenth century, reaches its height in the mid-eighteenth century and ended with the Industrial Revolution and the war of American Independence. It was protectionist in strategy with objectives such as a balanced business policy leading to future monopoly, forceful control and gathering of precious materials and production, backing up of home industry, and rivalry with the other competing imperial powers such as Spain, Holland and France. During the Elizabethan and Jacobean period imperial enterprise included patronisation and encouragement of the raiding of the Spanish ships, establishment of the settlement in North America and formation of trading companies to do business in the Levant, Turkey, Morocco and the East Indies. Oliver Cromwell gave it impetus through his 'Western Design', adding Jamaica, Barbados, and Montserrat to England's possessions,. And after the formation of Great Britain in the eighteenth century, consolidating Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England, the Empire became robust and vigorous under the aegis of the military force.¹⁶ Consequently, during the reign of Queen Anne, England was on the way to prosperity with 'a healthy national life in which town and country, agriculture, industry, and commerce were harmonious parts of a single economic system.'¹⁷ London was the centre of this trade, as Richard Kroll argues, since the Englishmen regarded the world trade as their prerogative. Using Harveian theory of the body natural, in which the heart as centre circulates the blood all through the body, commercial philosophy used to explain London as the heart, the Thames the artery, England the body politic, and trade the blood. And this trade established 'One commonwealth,' the healthy Empire which 'shall no Limits know, / But like the Sea in boundless Circles flow.'¹⁸ This economic stability that caused England to move unknowingly towards the Industrial Revolution. Hobsbawm claims that if Britain had not possessed the colonies, the Industrial Revolution could not have occurred, because its home market had less to offer in comparison with the offerings of the Empire.¹⁹ In *The Spectator* no.69, Joseph Addison expresses the same notion in this way:

If we consider our own Country in its natural Prospect, without any of Benefits and Advantages of Commerce, what a barren uncomfortable spot of Earth falls to our Share! Natural Historians tell us, that no Fruit grows originally among us, [...] Our ships are laden with the Harvest of every Climate: Our Tables are stored with spices, and oils and Wines: Our Rooms are filled with Pyramids of *China*, and adorned with the Workmanship of *Japan*: [...] Nature indeed furnishes us with the bare Necessaries of Life, but Traffic gives us a Variety of what is Useful, and at the same time supplies us with everything that is Convenient and Ornamental.²⁰

¹⁵Brown 4.

¹⁶Kaul 15-18.

¹⁷Trevelyan 309.

¹⁸Dryden, quoted in Kroll, 108, 109.

¹⁹Quoted in Ashcroft et al 125.

²⁰Quoted in Kaul 91.

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So it can be assumed that the Empire was the Treasure Island that ‘has long produced great treasures of foods, minerals and other natural resources. That is why the Europeans went through all the trouble to steal and plunder them.’²¹

Most of the cosmetics, jewellery, comfort items and drinks we encounter in the setting of the *Rape* come from the Empire. England was changing perceptibly with its ‘splendid bazaar’²² overseas due to the Atlantic and the Asian routes – ‘to have your finger on the national pulse was to feel a domestic diastole as well as an international systole.’²³ The first English ship with a cargo of Indian textiles, spices and indigo sailed from Surat in 1615. Because of the lack of demand for coarse English cloth in the tropical countries, the Company in the reign of Elizabeth I started bringing home huge amounts of silver and gold after every voyage by selling the coins of England. Accordingly, by 1621 the company exported £100000 bullion and imported wares worth five times that from the Orient. The country consumed only a quarter of them and the remaining was sold at a higher price in foreign countries. The textile industry in Bengal supplied cotton and muslin which met worldwide demands for raw silks and cheap, light-weight fabrics for dresses and furnishings. Suvir Kaul says in the one hand there was an outpouring of travelogues, poems, and fictions about the Empire, and on the other, valuable foreign imports quickly changed the vogue, fashion and taste of the English. Chinese aesthetics and chinoiserie changed the decoration of homes and gardens. ‘Spices from India and south-east Asia, tea from China, chocolate from America, and sugar from Caribbean plantations flavoured tastes; imported cottons, calico, silks and textile dyes altered clothing; rum and tobacco offered addictive pleasures.’²⁴ A catalogue of foreign commodities – specifically that for female consumption – comes from J. Jocelyn in 1718: ‘salt-petre, Indigo, Muslins, Cotton-Yarn, Cotton-Wool, Ereny-Yarn, Florett-Yarn, Herba Taffaties, Herba Longees and Calicoes, besides Diamonds, Drugs and Spices.’²⁵ And the ‘Antiquity and Honorableness of the Practice of Merchandise’ (1744), a mercantilist sermon of the period, compares England to the biblical trade centre of Tyre, where ‘fleets brought... all the useful and rare commodities of the then known world... silver, iron, tin, lead, brass, slaves, horses, mules, ivory, ebony, emeralds, purple, embroidery, fine linen,... precious cloaths, lambs, rams, goats, spices, precious stones, gold, blue cloaths and rich apparel.’²⁶ Michael Parenti also highlights this process of expropriation of the natural resources of the Empire in this way:

first, the colonizers extracted gold, silver, furs, silks and spices, then flax, hemp, timber, molasses, sugar, rum, rubber, tobacco, calico, cocoa, cotton, copper, coal, palm oil, tin, iron, ivory, ebony, and later on, oil, zinc, manganese, mercury, platinum, cobalt, bauxite, aluminum, and uranium. Not

²¹Parenti 4.

²² James Joyce, *Dubliners* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956) 32.

²³Kaul 108

²⁴Kaul 14.

²⁵Quoted in Brown 11.

²⁶Quoted in Brown 11.

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to be overlooked is that most hellish of all expropriations: the abduction of millions of human beings into slave labour.²⁷

The liquors along with tobacco, of which the characters in the epic are fond, were known in Pope's contemporary world as the 'exotic liquors or opiates.' Some addressed coffee as the "'Turkish Enchantress" as dark as the styx.' In spite of the presence of a dialectic attitude towards these as to their harmful affect as drugs on the nation, Englishmen welcomed the supply of the East India Company from the East:

Trade, which connects each distant shore, [...]
Adds *Chinese* Tea to crown their boards;
Coffee of Moca, which bestows
Tranquility and calm repose;
And the black *Indian* bev'ridge fam'd,
Ambrosia by the *Spaniard* nam'd.²⁸

G.M. Trevelyan also expresses his joy at having these drinks in England: 'Thanks to the East India Company's great ships, not only tea but coffee was now a usual drink at least among the wealthier classes.'²⁹ Though Defoe, as well as many thinkers, viewed these foreign substances with suspicion, concerned at their promotion of vice and luxury in society, he acknowledged them as 'the capital Branches of the Nations Commerce.'³⁰ Moreover, snuff was supplied by the capture of Spanish ships by bold English pirates. Thus 'by the time of Queen Anne, the East Indian trade had materially altered the drink, the habits of social intercourse, the dress, and the artistic taste of the well-to-do classes among her subjects.'³¹ It is clear that the setting of the poem is very significant as a bearer of the marks of imperial mercantile exploitation.

After the focus on the historical reality, I will focus on some homogeneous characteristics of patriarchy and imperialism reflected in the existing patriarchy of the *Rape*. John McLeod in his *Beginning Postcolonialism* defines patriarchy as 'those systems – political, material and imaginative – which invest power in men and marginalize women.'³² Like it, Imperialism is a supremacist, andocentric ideology that makes the vision of the world as desired by males normal and universal. It is a world 'For "big and little boys"' because it was built up by white men on masculine ideals, for testing masculinity and to inspire the '*manly* man'.³³ Both define women and the colonised subjects through the intrusive male gaze and thus generate a binary between we and the other where 'all that was not white and not male' becomes 'feminine'.³⁴ With reference to the scientific findings such as the low-weighted brain, deficient brain structure, and child-like soft skull woman, is described as lacking and

²⁷Parenti 4.

²⁸Kroll 9.

²⁹Trevelyan 339.

³⁰Kroll 15.

³¹Trevelyan 233.

³²McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007) 173.

³³Boehmer 71.

³⁴Boehmer 74.

inferior to white men and equal to the lower races such as animals and blacks.³⁵ Whereas women were instinctive, white men were rational – ‘the leading exemplum of scientific humanity’ [...]. who is the ‘Master of himself [...].’ and to whose ‘categories of knowledge’ alone the world fits.³⁶ Thus women and the colonised are represented as innocent, child-like, effeminate, irrational, secondary, weak, seductive, wild and part of nature. Hence they become fragmented personalities as they can only form ideas about their selfhood from a world view provided by men. Moreover, in spite of resistance by women and the colonised, patriarchy and imperialism continue assuming different names and vision. The *Rape* presents such a patriarchal society which marginalises Belinda and indicates the homogeneity of Belinda and the British Empire.

Part II

I have argued that the Empire is passively, not actively, present in the setting. This passivity and shadowy presence are evident in the display of goods and materials from different lands, because in the *Rape* there is not a single word directly speaking of Asia, America or Africa. We know only about the china cup, altar of Japan, ‘[...] the gems of India, the perfumes of Arabia,’ spotted and white combs of ‘tortoiseshell and ivory from Africa’ and so on.³⁷ These are the goods which stand for those continents symbolically, and thus they are some parts which refer to the whole Empire. In this way the names of the materials are functioning as synecdoche as the lock as a part refers to Belinda, the whole. Moreover the role that is played by the ornamented lock of Belinda and the attractive riches of the far-off countries are the same in respect of the beauty-attraction-possession formula of the patriarchal society. In the epic beautiful Belinda is defined by an intrusive male gaze. She is a naturally beautiful woman, ‘A heavenly image in the glass appears’ (1: 125). This naturalness is changed to ‘an awful beauty’ (1: 139) through her excessive use of cosmetics and ornaments by ‘the long labours of the toilet’ (3: 24). The society collects from all over the world all the items of beautification which increase at every touch her beauty, ‘the fair each moment rises in her charms’ (1: 14). She is ‘decked with all that land and sea afford (5:11),’ that means ‘the spoils of mercantile expansion’.³⁸ Because of her exploitation of ‘the glittering spoil’ (1:132) in her make-up, she becomes unparalleled rival of all beautiful natural and artificial objects like sun or the painted vessel. She is the true type of Rousseau’s idea of the ideal women – ‘beautiful, innocent, and silly’ sacrificing her understanding and ‘likens Narcissus who wasted away gazing at his own image in a pool until he becomes a “fragile flower”.’³⁹ Our poet in the very beginning of the epic raises a question about the motivation of the young beaux behind their assault on the ladies: ‘what strange motive, O Goddess! could compel /A well-bred lord to assault a gentle belle?’ (1:7). After the details of Belinda’s beauty he legitimises the temptation of beauty as natural, at first generally and then specifically.

³⁵Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2001) 159-61.

³⁶Boehmer 77.

³⁷Brown 9.

³⁸Brown 9.

³⁹Naomi Jayne Garner, “‘Seeing through a Glass Darkly’: Wollstonecraft and the Confinements of Eighteenth-Century Femininity,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 11 (November 2009) 81-95.

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He says, 'This nymph' 'Nourished two locks' to bring 'the destruction of mankind' (2: 19-20). Whoever sees these maze-like locks falls into the trap of love like slaves. It is such powerful trap that can ensnare 'man's imperial race' (2: 27) with 'mighty hearts' (2: 24). Now Pope goes for the particularisation of the Baron's case that is no exception:

The adventurous Baron the bright locks admired,
He saw, he wished and to the prize aspired.
Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray. (2: 29-32)

Therefore 'why has she cherished the lock at all? [...] "to the destruction of mankind"'. Pope suggests that the Baron may even be the victim rather than the aggressor'.⁴⁰ Hence beauty in woman is the valuable prize which forces the Baron to desire its possession as personal property. For this reason we see him declaring 'the glorious prize is mine!' (3: 162) and expressing his desire to wear the lock in his ring as long as he is alive. So we can deduce from all discussion that beauty compels man to assault woman and woman should accept this subordination to steel, symbolizing man's strength and valour, as historical and universal:

Steel could the labour of the Gods destroy,
And strike to dust the imperial towers of Troy; [...]
What wonder then, fair nymph! Thy hairs should feel,
The conquering force of unresisted Steel? (3: 173-8)

Consequently Belinda should accept it calmly and gently. Because 'female sexuality is a material property over which man has a natural claim [...]. To shine for man's sake – or to reflect his light – is woman's trial on earth.'⁴¹ She accepts it, internalising the rules set for woman in her society. Her mental submission to the patriarchy is apparent, after all moralisation of her activities, when she is saying: 'Oh, hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize/Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!' (4: 175-6). By adorning in such a way with the glittering spoil she herself becomes a glittering spoil, an object of male desire, an essence captured into the casket of the masculine domination. And here is the identification of the lock with the supplies from the colonies and Belinda with the Empire. Ellen Pollak writes:

As a 'vessel' carrying all 'the glitt'ring Spoil' of the world, she herself is identified with that world and like nature, is to be conquered, ransacked, and possessed by commercial man...at once the bearer of ornament and an ornament herself.⁴²

⁴⁰Cleanth Brooks, 'The Case of Miss Arabella Fermor,' in Hunt 143.

⁴¹Ellen Pollak, 'The Rape of the Lock: A Reification of the Myth of Passive Womanhood,' in Hammond 81.

⁴²Pollack 78.

Thus Belinda's beauty bears the seed of her destruction as the treasures of the lands lured the imperial races to seize, expropriate and own them. Arthur Brittan explains this phenomenon: 'That is making a woman an object of desire places her in physically and politically subordinate position, like that of an exploited country in the hands of its colonizer.'⁴³ Thus Belinda equates with the overseas colonised country.

This synecdoche turns to metaphor when we go for the genderisation trope – the Empire as feminine – in colonial discourses. Kadiatu Kanneh in 'Feminism and the Colonial Body' writes: 'The feminizing of colonized territory is, of course, a trope in colonial thought.'⁴⁴ Gilbert and Tompkins also argue: 'There is a metaphorical link between woman and land, a powerful trope in imperial discourse.'⁴⁵ In fact the association of the geographic region with the feminine traits is a classical trend. Dr. Valerie Rumbold's arguments in her lecture 'The Reason of this Preference: Sleeping, Flowing and Freezing in Pope's *Dunciad*' can be cited as evidence here. The Northern Arctic region, where Moeotis sleeps and the Tanais freezes, is associated with a 'dubious female cults and moon divinities' by the Roman poets such as Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Seneca and Statius due to the terrifying bloodthirstiness and cruelty of women there.⁴⁶ However, from the very beginning of imperialism the attraction and allure of the far-off countries drew comparisons with the unresisted attractions of woman. It was simultaneously the joy of having relationship with and dominance over the unknown virgins. Ever since the discoveries of the new lands all over the world, the colony is portrayed as a woman. The Flemish painter and printmaker Joannes Stradanus portrays Amerigo Vespucci after his discovery of America in the late sixteenth-century. In the engraving Vespucci, holding a banner with the Southern Cross in one hand and a mariner's astrolabe on the other, staring at America, who is a naked woman half rising from a hammock. The frontispiece of the first great sixteenth-century atlas, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570), depicts America as a woman waiting to be penetrated. The accompanying lines are:

the one you see on the lower ground is called AMERICA, whom bold Vespucci recently voyaging across the sea seized by force, holding the nymph in the embrace of gentle love. Unmindful of herself, unmindful of her pure chastity, she sits with her body all naked, except that a feather headdress binds her hair, a jewel adorns the forehead, and bells are around her shapely calves.⁴⁷

⁴³Quoted in Beth Kramer, "'Postcolonial Triangles': An Analysis of Masculinity and Homosocial Desire in Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Greene's *The Quiet American*,' *Postcolonial Text*, 4.4 (2008): 2.

⁴⁴Kadiatu Kanneh, 'Feminism and the Colonial Body' in Ashcroft et al, 346.

⁴⁵Quoted in Susan Philip, 'Dismantling Gendered Nationalism in Kee Thuan Chye's *We Could **** You, Mr Birch*,' *Asiatic* 2.1 (June 2008) 86.

⁴⁶ Valerie Rumbold, 'The Reason of this Preference: Sleeping, Flowing and Freezing in Pope's *Dunciad*,' Warton Lecture on English Poetry, The British Academy, Carlton House Terrace, London, 4 May 2010. Published in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 167 (2010) 437. <<http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2010/warton/index.cfm>>

⁴⁷Loomba 76, 77.

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In the same way, in *King Solomon's Mines* H. Rider Haggard shows metaphorically, 'The treasure map the male party follows takes the form of an inverted female body, running from Sheba's Breasts to the Three Witches, a cave hiding the treasures of the mines.'⁴⁸ Sir Walter Raleigh during his voyage to Guiana describes the colony as a virgin ready to lose her maidenhead. With his narrative he attached a poem by George Chapman, 'De Guiana', where he depicts Guiana as a submissive Amazonian lady 'whose rich feet are mines of golde,'[...] and who 'Stands on her tip-toes at fair England looking,' making signs of submission. John Donne does the same thing in his 'To His Mistris Going to Bed' drawing analogy between lover and beloved and colonial interactions. He, addressing the beloved as 'o my America!my new-found land/My kingdom [...] /My Myne of precious stones,' seeks her permission to make love with her.⁴⁹

This genderisation takes us to the centrally significant word 'rape,' originated from the Latin *rapere*, 'to seize'. It is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'the crime of forcing [somebody] to have sex with you, especially using violence,' and '(literary) the act of destroying or spoiling an area in a way that seems unnecessary'. In the *Rape* the word refers denotatively to the snipping of the lock of Belinda by the adventurous peer the Baron and connotatively to the actual rape of Belinda as Belinda's lock is 'the symbol of her chastity'.⁵⁰ As the materials and goods present in the setting signify the Empire as synecdoche, the capture of these goods signifies metaphorically the 'rape' of the colony by the master rapist. Shreya Bhattachrji in her article 'Sex and Empire Building in the Fiction of Chinua Achebe' clarifies:

Colonial romance is thus built on brutal rape. The female body symbolizes conquered colonial space. Women and land are interchangeable terrain for the active deployment of colonial power. While America and Africa appear naked and ripe for colonial discovery, possession, plunder, and conquest, Asia appears heavily draped often veiled ...

The colony is thus the very docile, the very-willing-to-be dominated, the very willing-to-be-appropriated prey of the male colonist, the master rapist. Sexual and colonial relationships thus become analogous. Riches promised by the colony signify both the joys of the female body and its status as legitimate object of male possession.⁵¹

Thus the Empire is present in the *Rape* and the story entwines with it this story of the rape of the Empire which foreshadows the rape of Belinda. And this proves that as the objects of masculine desire these two feminine counterparts have the same fate and they are suffering in the hand of the brutal homosocial masculine power – patriarchy and imperialism.

⁴⁸Conor Reid, "'We Are Men, Thou and I': Defining Masculinity in H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*.' *Journal of Postgraduate Studies*, 6 (2007): 14.

⁴⁹Loomba 72,78

⁵⁰Pollak 79.

⁵¹Shreya Bhattachrji, 'Sex and Empire Building in the Fiction of Chinua Achebe,' *Studies in Media & Information Literary Education* 4.4 (November 2004) 2.

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The final aspect of the equation of Belinda and the Empire is the Game of Ombre episode. This episode is a remorseless presentation of imperial representational politics. Actually the representational thought discloses itself in the very beginning of the epic. Ariel says:

If e'er one vision touch thy infant thought [...]
Some secret truths, from learned pride concealed
To maids alone and children reveal'd:
What, though no credit doubting wits may give?
The fair and innocent shall still believe. (1: 29, 37-40)

The question that arises from this equation of the maid and children and fair and innocent is 'Do the fair believe in the sylphs because they are still children?'⁵² The answer to this question lies in the women-as-inferior doctrine of the male-centred society. Heike Wrenn in her 'The Woman in Modernism' asserts:

For centuries, women were defined by men; [...]. Male philosophers and social theorists were the ones who identified woman with disorder, savagery, chaos, unreason and the excluded 'other'.⁵³

The image of woman that started with Eve, as originated from the rib of Adam and the temptress who tempted him to eat the forbidden fruit, continued in different form until the twentieth century. Plato, Aristotle, Galen, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Freud, Allan McGrigor, Carl Vogt, Charles Darwin all in one way or other defined woman with various non-affirmative adjectives, socially, culturally and scientifically. To them women are childish, silly, passive, less evolved, weak, stupid, cool, lustful and less receptive of education and environmental influence:

Darwin argued that the 'adult female' in most species resembled the *young* of both sexes,' and his contemporary anthropologist Allan McGrigor 'concluded that [...] physically, mentally, and morally, woman is a kind of adult child'.⁵⁴

Carl Vogt, a Geneva professor, went further arguing that "the child, the female, and the senile White" all had the intellectual features and personality of the "grown up Negro", and that in intellect and personality the female was similar to both infants and the "lower" races.⁵⁵ Though the scientific explanation was yet to come in Pope's time, in the eighteenth century it was strongly believed that woman was 'a beautiful romantic animal' and could never be equal to men intellectually.⁵⁶ So there was in all spheres the arrangement to keep 'woman in the power and service of man'.⁵⁷ From

⁵²Brooks 142.

⁵³ Heike Wrenn, 'The Woman in Modernism,' *ELF*, 2 (2010): 9.

⁵⁴ Jerry Bergman, 'The History of the Teaching of Human Female Inferiority in Darwinism,' *Answers in Genesis* 21 (July 2004) 3-5.

⁵⁵Quoted in Bergman 4.

⁵⁶Landa 180.

⁵⁷Brean Hammond, *Pope* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986) 152-3.

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this view of women and the colonised we can say that Pope's poem suggests that Belinda is equivalent to a child in the first place, and then to the non-Europeans. Such debasing thoughts about women cannot be regarded as unusual or calumnious on Pope's part because in his sketch of the presiding Goddess Dulness in his *Dunciad*, 'the mysterious and potentially sinister female cults' of the Northern Arctic region and its coldness, referring to 'lack of creativity', are foreshadowed.⁵⁸

In the Game of Ombre the images and portraits on the cards draw parallels between Belinda and the non-Europeans, and point to her powerlessness and the Baron's strength. Though the game is a three-hand play, Pope has turned it to 'the conventional epic duel, "a straight fight between Belinda and the Baron."' ⁵⁹ It is a game using forty cards removing the tens, nines and eights. Each player holds nine cards while other thirteen are laid as discards on the table. When the play starts we see Belinda's cards – the Matadores, which are, Spadillo, Manillio, and Basto and the King of Spades. Pope is depicting her cards:

Now move to War her Sable *Matadores*,
In Show like Leaders of the swarthy *Moors*. (3: 47-8).

The army of Belinda is peopled by the moors, the African race, like Othello, the Moor. They are sable or swarthy skinned, that is, black-skinned or brunet. Obviously it is the skin colour of the non-western people. Her fifth card is 'the club's black tyrant' with 'haughty mien and barbarous pride' (3: 69-70) defeated by the Baron's 'warlike Amazon,' that is, the Queen of Spades (3: 67). This biological specificity creates racial ideologies in colonial interactions which cannot be overlooked in the *Rape*. Carl Linnaeus in the division between *Homo sapiens* and *homo monstrous* shows:

- c. European. Fair, sanguine, brawny; hair yellow, brown, flowing; eyes blue; gentle, acute, inventive. Covered with close vestments. Governed by laws.
- d. Asiatic. Sooty, melancholy, rigid. Hair black; eyes dark; severe, haughty, covetous. Covered with loose garments. Governed by opinions.
- e. Africans. Black, phlegmatic, relaxed. Hair black, frizzled; skin silky; nose flat, lips tumid; crafty, indolent, negligent. Anoints himself with grease Governed by caprice.⁶⁰

Other cards of the Baron are diamonds – king, queen and knave. Pope describes the massacre of this army:

Thus when dispers'd a routed Army runs,
Of *Asia's* Troops, and *Africk's* Sable Sons,
With like Confusion different Nations fly,
In various habits and of various Dye,

⁵⁸Rumbold 437-8.

⁵⁹ W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., 'The Game of Ombre in *The Rape of the Lock*,' *Review of English Studies*, New Series 1.2(April 1950) 142.

⁶⁰Quoted in Loomba 115.

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The pierc'd Battalions dis-united fall,
In Heaps on Heaps; one Fate o'erwhelms them all. (3: 81-6)

These lines clarify the representation of the Baron as the super European power, the West, the Occident, and the White before which Belinda, the countries Asia and Africa, the East, the Orient, the Black and Brown are like chaff. It is their destiny to be overwhelmed by the attack of the Imperial power. Yet the weak Belinda wins the battle. But this victory is not a permanent one. W. K. Wimsatt Jr. says, 'And here is the prefiguration of the actual downfall [...]. The Baron has other weapons – 'the glitt'ring *Forfex*' – and if he loses the tour of Ombre, he wins the canto.'⁶¹ And this downfall comes in the next episode in the ravishing of the heroine's lock with this engine.

Belinda is now destitute and dishonoured, having lost her lock. Yet she builds up a resistance against this oppression of the male, identified by Pope as 'the unequal fight to try' (5: 77). But her resistance does not work. The war between sexes does not return to her what has been looted. Instead the lock turns into a Stella, a part of the universe. This metamorphosis is nothing but the expression of the consolidation of the male dominance. It is also a technique to squeeze support from the oppressed hegemonically. It is an attempt to convince the woman that to be raped is nothing to take into account. This is actually an 'upward rise' and a blessing – her name will be inscribed in the cosmos among other heavenly bodies. Similarly the imperialists considered their coming to the Empire and reformatting of it a blessing as 'Britain had a divine or civilizational mandate to assume global authority or even dominance.'⁶² Their rape of their natural resources was not something that counted. They came and cured the backwardness of the colonised, and the latter is now developing socially, culturally and economically. Thus the metamorphosis of the lock can be read as the strategy for the continuation of the colonial control so far.

In the above way *The Rape of the Lock* can be reread as 'a model for colonial domination' through 'the patriarchal relation.'⁶³ The imperial goods in the setting function as synecdoche to liken the colonies in the British Empire to Belinda's lock, and the plunder of those riches equates the rape of the female landscape by the colonizers to the rape of Belinda, the female body-scape. Thus Belinda becomes a symbol of the colonised and controlled world – humiliated and appropriated.

⁶¹Wimsatt 143.

⁶²Kaul7.

⁶³Loomba 161.