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## Altars in The Rape of the Lock : Global Commerce and Catholic Implications

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## Altars in *The Rape of the Lock*: Global Commerce and Catholic Implications

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### Abstract

This essay examines the altars in Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, as well as its accompaniment *A Key to the Lock*, and sheds light on the salient link between the influx of foreign commodities and Catholic proselytizing movements by the Society of Jesus. The essay argues that the added altar in Belinda's boudoir in the 1714 version emphasizes Catholic presence, so as to connect the poem to larger Catholic contributions in Europe, of which Protestant England was no exception. Parallel to the nascent consumerist culture, fascination with the Orient was a hallmark feature of eighteenth-century England. Exotic products as well as imitations abound, and the history of trade of oriental items reveals that it was intricately intertwined with Jesuit missionary activities. The mock-epic poem was composed during a period in which Pope aspired toward constructing a public image as a member of the upper echelons of English society. The essay suggests that, in depicting Belinda's soirée at Hampton Court, Pope projects his own anxieties about entering mainstream Protestant society while keeping intact an overt Catholic identity.

**Keywords:** Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, *A Key to the Lock*, japanning, Jesuit missions

### Introduction

Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, first published in 1712 in two Cantos, was followed by an expanded Five-Canto version in 1714. Though not the apotheosis of his career, the latter marked a significant commercial success for the poet. Pope writes rapturously to Caryll on 12 March 1713/1714 that the mock-epic work "has in four days time sold to the number [of] three thousand" (*Corr.* 1:214). As Pope recounted to Joseph Spence, the eponymous incident occurred between members of two prominent Catholic families:

The stealing of Miss Belle Fermor's hair was taken too seriously, and caused an estrangement between the two families, though they had lived long in great friendship before. A common acquaintance and well-wisher to both desired me to write a poem to make a jest of it, and laugh them together again. It was in this view

that I wrote my *Rape of the Lock*. (*Anecdotes* no. 104)

Religion figures prominently in the poem, both in the topicality of the work and in looking at the origins of the multifarious commodities on the “shining Altars of *Japan*” and in Belinda’s boudoir. This essay examines the altars in *The Rape of the Lock* and *A Key to the Lock*, which serves as its accompaniment in many ways. There appeared only two altars in the early version of 1712, yet a third altar was added two years later. The essay focuses in particular on the addition of Belinda’s dressing table as an altar in the 1714 version and argues that, although his native England remained staunchly Protestant, Pope draws attention to the Catholic Church and its contributions in early global expansion and trade, the fruits of which also reached England.

Scholars have offered various interpretations concerning the three major altars and the larger theme of religion in the poem. Robert W. Williams describes the altars as symbolizing what society highly values - “physical beauty, erotic love, and the formal ceremony of life” - and argues that they are “all false Gods” (28). On the Bible sitting on Belinda’s altar, Alex Eric Hernandez has noted the “confusion of religion and consumer culture” in a nation that upheld the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura* and that “patriotism and religious affiliation” were two sides of the same coin in Pope’s England (569, 570). Paul Hammond calls Pope’s *A Key to the Lock* a “pre-emptive strike” against vitriolic criticism, a part of which Pope anticipated would be against his openly professed Catholic faith (*Selected Prose* 73).

In *A Key*, Pope discusses the Baron’s altar to love and the japanned tables in political contexts. Both of the altars in fact carry Catholic connotations, however, and the cosmetic array on Belinda’s altar too, as Pope suggests in *A Key*, can yield a Popish reading (*Prose* 197-201). Pope’s altars serve to accentuate Catholic presence and contributions in the English Protestant court culture, and more specifically at Hampton Court, whose opulent and exotic interiors were rendered possible in part through the early expeditions and proselytizing movements of the Jesuit order.

## 1. Altar to Love

The primary signification of an altar is, of course, religious. The *OED* defines altar as: “A block, pile, table, stand, or other raised structure, with a plane top, on which to place or sacrifice offerings to a deity” (364). In a Christian context, the *OED* defines the term as: “In those Christian Churches which celebrate the eucharist or communion service as a sacrifice,

the raised structure consecrated to this celebration” (ibid.). Of more pertinence to the poem and the England in which Pope lived, the *OED* also gives as definition: “As applied to the ‘holy table’ of the English Prayer-book, which occupies the place of the altars removed after the Reformation” (ibid.). Under this section, the *OED* notes that “The word was the subject of much controversy in 17th c.” (ibid.). The repeated mentions of altar in *The Rape of the Lock* are reminiscent of the denominational contentions of the era and serve to emphasize the young pair and the recusant Catholic community from which they spring, even though they constituted only a small percentage of the English population.

However, altars can also contain a pagan meaning. The “Trophies” (240) and the lighting of the pyre (241), like Pope’s altars in *The Dunciad* (e.g. 1.137, *TE* 5:80), evoke images of sacrifice in ancient epic. As the subtitle “An Heroi-Comical Poem” suggests, the Baron’s altar to love (237) seems to epitomize the poem’s qualities as a pastiche of classical epic rather than assert the Christian sense of an altar. In the political reading of the poem offered in *A Key*, the altar of love is built for France. However, even the Baron’s altar includes a topical exotic product: the fan. Pope in *A Key* characterizes the fan as the “Emblem of *Woman*” (*Prose* 187), and contrasts it with all other accoutrements on the pyre which can be construed as military accessories and accolades. The handheld fan can be dated as far back as the ancient Greek civilization. Yet it reached its zenith in popularity in Pope’s era largely due to the proliferation of art objects in the style of chinoiserie, and the rising interest in the Far Eastern lands was supplemented by travel accounts written by Jesuit missionaries.

The *OED* also defines the phrase “to lead a bride to the altar” to be: “the place at which the marriage service in a church is concluded” (365). The altar as bearing links to, ostensibly, love leading to conjugal union comes as no surprise, and contemporary evidence suggests that the paired terms were employed in Pope’s time as well. To cite one example, before the title page to *A Commentary Upon Mr. Pope’s Essay on Man* from 1738, one advertisement in the list of new books available reads: “The Altar of Love: Or, The Art of Kissing, in all its Varieties. Being a curious Collection of Poems, and other Miscellanies. Designed for the Improvement of both Sexes” (De Crousaz). The interpretation as a hymeneal altar gives birth to the possibility, if the fate of the young pair were to culminate in nuptial vows, of propagation of the Catholic population, a plausible yet uncongenial scenario for Protestant England.

## 2. Coffee at Hampton Court: Masculine and Protestant Territory

The exotic beverages of coffee, tea, and chocolate, all of which appear in *The Rape of the Lock*, constituted a familiar part of Pope's life. Pope, like statesmen and other prominent literary figures, was a frequenter of coffeehouses in London. In sending a letter to Pope, Nicholas Rowe indicated as address Button's Coffeehouse in Covent Garden (20 August 1713, *Corr.* 1:187). On visiting Jonathan Swift, Pope writes to John Arbuthnot: "There was likewise a Side Board of Coffee which the Dean roasted with his own hands... He talked of Politicks over Coffee" (11 July [1714], *Corr.* 1:234). In his correspondence with Thomas Dancastle, Pope reveals that his married half-sister, Mrs. Rackett, is having tea with her breakfast while, for himself, "the Coffee smokes less & less, & tells me it will speedily be cold, unless I conclude this letter" (25 October [1718], *Corr.* 1:519). Chocolate houses were far fewer in number than coffeehouses, but on his excursion to Bath, Pope describes to Martha Blount the "Variety of Diversions & new Objects," which included "Chocolate houses, Raffling Shops, Plays, Medleys, &c" (6 October [1714], *Corr.* 1:260).

Not all exotic consumables had associations with early Jesuit missions, and coffee and tea were no exceptions. In *A Key*, Pope in fact dismisses the two exotic goods as rather insignificant gains (*Prose* 194). Nonetheless, underlying currents of religious schism persist in the poem. The entertainments offered at Hampton Court, including Belinda's unlikely win at ombre and her joining the men for coffee, are foreign to the Catholic heroine in two ways: they belong to the masculine social circle and they occur on Protestant grounds.

The first coffeehouse in England was opened in Oxford by a Greek merchant in 1637, and coffee was consumed by both genders in Pope's era. Eugenia Zuroski-Jenkins points out, however, that the beverage was associated with masculine society and political debates and was often ordered at coffeehouses (84). Tea had been introduced in England in the previous century. Thanks largely to Catherine of Braganza, wife to King Charles II, it had become the choice drink among aristocratic women, especially when she entertained her own guests indoors, in her private apartment (Zuroski-Jenkins 83). It would be overstating the case to suppose that the tables would have been turned if the beverage served was tea instead of coffee during Belinda's evening out. Nevertheless, Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace describes a "world 'turned upside down'" in Simon Mason's *The Good and Bad Effects of Tea Considered*, in which women as tea-drinkers "have seized the initiative and conspire to emasculate men by stripping them of their power" (35). Such empowerment is not accorded

Belinda. Coffee does connote a male sphere, and Belinda is a vulnerable figure in such surroundings.

Though not extra-European, ombre was also a foreign import with origins in Spain and was brought back from France by Charles II upon the Restoration. Both men and women participated and that card-playing reached its height of popularity in England in the eighteenth century (Ashton 78). A passage in *A Key* mentions that Pope “unawares paid a Compliment to the Queen, and her Success in the War” (*Prose* 193). Like the Bible on her dressing table, Belinda occupies an ambiguous position. She is a member of an ostracized faith in England and yet her national identity lies with England, not with a Catholic country like Spain or France. Although she emerges triumphant in the game, it is neither national nor religious boundaries that matter in the end but barriers originating in the perceived ontological differences according to gender. The dual factors of minority in Belinda apply to Pope as well, as he too was a Catholic and his short stature was the staple fodder for his foes who insulted him by questioning his masculinity.

Finally, although Hampton Court is the chief setting of the poem, there remains no evidence that the incident between Arabella Fermor and Lord Petre actually took place at the royal palace. Pointing out the lack of contrary evidence, Geoffrey Tillotson states that such a scenario would have been “improbable, but possible” in reality (*TE* 2:83). Hampton Court is the location at which the Catholic heroine faces her demise, as, towards the end of the poem, Belinda’s wailings that she should have never attended the soirée echo throughout the royal palace. However, the history of Hampton Court is strongly intertwined with the Tudor dynasty and the English Reformation, and Pope’s choice of its setting at the royal abode evinces the poet’s conflicting attitudes in confronting the denominational barrier.

### 3. Jesuit Missions and “Shining Altars of *Japan*”

The recently introduced coffee is what ultimately sends “New Stratagems” (3.120) to the Baron’s mind in the form of vapors and becomes the cogent force that finally propels him to commit the eponymous act. The controversial beverage is served on lacquered tables referred to by Pope as the “shining Altars of *Japan*.”

For lo! the Board with Cups and Spoons is crown'd,  
The Berries crackle, and the Mill turns round.  
On shining Altars of *Japan* they raise

The silver Lamp; the fiery Spirits blaze.

From silver Spouts the grateful Liquors glide,

While *China's* Earth receives the smoking Tyde. (3.105-10)

Navigating her way around such “shining Altars,” Belinda joins the male guests to savor the hot liquid. The objects pertaining to the ritual of coffee drinking come from the world over. Pope may have imagined the “Cups” to be hard-paste porcelain from China, which was much coveted in Europe for its translucent and non-porous characteristics. “*China's* Earth” indeed refers to a European myth that the Chinese produced porcelain by burying clay in the ground for a century (Liu 749-50). In Pope’s imagination of the wares at Hampton Court, the teapots with “silver Spouts” were most likely porcelain as well. Such ceramics were often produced in and shipped from China and Japan as export art, and silver or other metal fixtures were attached to them upon arrival in Europe (Suntory 18, 223).

From the mid-twentieth century on, substantial scholarship has been dedicated to the history of the trade of lacquer ware between Europe and the Orient. The first scholarship devoted exclusively to the trade of the aforementioned objects between Japan and Europe appeared as an article in 1941 by T.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Aanbesteding en verspreiding van Japansch lakwerk door de Nederlanders in de zeventiende eeuw*, which attempted, for the first time, to match trade records of the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, hereafter VOC) with extant lacquer items. John Irwin’s *A Jacobean Vogue for Oriental Lacquer Ware* of 1953 relied on records of the Honourable East India Company of London. In 1959, Martha Boyer’s book *Japanese Export Lacquers from the Seventeenth Century in the National Museum of Denmark* focused on the Danish Royal Collection and the Royal *Kunstkammer*. Scheurleer’s groundbreaking research has been largely continued to this day by Christiaan Jörg. The late Oliver Impey published numerous articles on the trade of porcelain and lacquered artwork, the latter of which culminated in the seminal work *Japanese Export Lacquer: 1580-1850*, co-authored with Jörg.

The “shining Altars of *Japan*” on which the fateful coffee is served may be traced back to early Jesuit maritime ventures, and there is a significant relationship to be noted between Catholicism and lacquer ware. The first Europeans to arrive in Japan were Portuguese traders who landed on the island of Tanegashima around 1543. Owing to the fact that the King of Portugal supported the spread of Christianity in Asia, both Portuguese and Spanish Jesuit missionaries began to arrive in Japan soon after. The first half of the sixteenth century witnessed the Iberian powers leading the way in European territorial discovery

and conquest. In 1549, the Jesuit priest Francisco Xavier, having heard about Japan while in Malacca, visited Japan, from where he avidly wrote to the King of Portugal and the Jesuit headquarters in order to fulfill the dual goals of propagation of Christianity and territorial expansion. Unlike the Protestants who would later take over with clearer visions of entrepreneurial success, the Jesuits ostensibly upheld their telos of proselytizing and the dearth of trade records by the Portuguese and Spanish is partially attributed to their lack of ever establishing trading companies. There indeed remains no record of commercial trade of lacquer ware by the Portuguese. However, Impey and Jörg assert that the existence of imported lacquer goods in Europe indicates that trade was carried out on a private basis and that the Jesuit missionaries played a significant role in it (19). The Jesuits often commissioned lacquer objects, not only for use in Japan by local converts, but also as export material to be shipped back to Europe. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there were Portuguese and Spanish missionaries who commissioned Japanese craftsmen to make cabinets, bookstands, and other furnishings, usually for holding the Bible or for use in the Mass. Some bore the IHS insignia. There were also folding lecterns, missal stands, portable altars, and pyxes, for use in the Eucharist (Nagashima 35-36).

Protestant commercial tides follow soon after, and in 1609, the VOC established a factory in Hirado, in Kyushu. Queen Elizabeth I granted a royal charter to “The Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies” in 1600, and the Company opened a factory in 1613 also in Hirado, nearby the Dutch. The English East India Company traded with Japan only from 1613 to 1623, and, apart from one large order from 21 September 1613 which made scant profit at an auction in London on 20 December 1614, the Company did not engage in the trade of lacquer goods. It was conducted only privately by Company employees (Impey and Jörg 240, 20). In contrast with the English, the VOC participated in the trade. The first orders were placed by the Company in 1607, and the installment of Japanese lacquer arrived in Europe in 1610. Writing desks with drop-down panels, cabinets with side-hung doors, and cabinets with drawers were some of the larger lacquer commodities exported to Europe as well as to the Mughal Empire in India, Batavia, and present-day Thailand, Cambodia, and Mexico. The first export rush of Japanese lacquer ware occurred in the late 1630s and early 1640s (Impey and Jörg 27, 233, 85). In 1665, for example, approximately 2,675 small lacquer items, along with larger boxes and chests of drawers, were shipped from Japan to Holland (Nagashima 43).

Nevertheless, the above figure seems a meager amount when compared to historian J.H.



Plumb's account that one single ship in 1700 unloaded 146,748 porcelain pieces in Europe (59). All in all, trade of large lacquer items was limited in quantity. One reason may be that VOC personnel were allotted private cargo on ships, thus resulting in lacunae in written evidence of transactions and invoices. C.R. Boxer has also pointed out that lacquer goods accounted for only a tiny portion of the maritime trade between Japan and the rising European powers. Except for bullions of silver, as well as some copper and gold, and the small number of luxurious commodities of lacquer ware and porcelain, Japan did not have items of appeal for Europe (163-64). Yet by far the principal reason was that each lacquer piece was costly. Although the VOC officially withdrew from trade of lacquer objects in 1693, the history of the trade of lacquer ware between Europe and the Far East reveals that it was, at least initially, closely connected with Jesuit missions.

#### 4. Arrival of Lacquer Ware and European Imitations

There are two genuine lacquer pieces in Europe which Impey claims are almost certain to be dated to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: the Ambras cabinet (1596); and the Gripsholm coffer (1616), which was presented to King Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden (686). The Ambras cabinet, one of the earliest surviving objects in the East-West lacquer trade, arrived in Austria via Portugal and may have been produced in Asia as early as the 1580s (Impey and Jörg 12). These were some of the first lacquer items to reach Europe. In England, some of the first lacquer works to arrive from Asia are listed in the inventory of 1611 at Hatfield House: "One China table of black[,] gilded and painted" and "1 high chaire ... the frame guilt China worke." Impey conjectures that these were possibly imitations of Japanese lacquer work by the Chinese (687).

From the late seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century, "japan" as a noun or a verb was used for artwork produced in England that imitated lacquer by using varnish, which could be procured locally in Europe (Nagashima 30). Techniques to imitate lacquer began to develop in Europe well before renowned figures including Gerard Dagly, Martin Schnell, and the Martin brothers, celebrated for their japanning style *vernīs Martin*, appeared. There was a japanned table-top in the inventory at Schloss Ambras in present-day Austria in 1596. G. Doorman has pointed out the case of William Kick, who obtained patents in 1609 to manufacture imitations of lacquer ware brought from the Indies, and another one a decade later for works in the Chinese style (118, 141).

The term “Japan” which referred to imitated lacquer ware was used only in England and only during a limited period. Unlike “china,” which refers to porcelain and is still in use today, the term “Japan” has become for the most part a lost history (Nagashima 30). Confusions in terminology still confound art historians in dating items and reading through records, because “china” and “japan” meant different objects in different European countries. Porcelain was referred to as “china” and lacquer ware as “japan” in England. Imitations were usually called “japanned” products. In France, “japan” often meant porcelain, and lacquer ware, “laque de chine,” or Chinese lacquer. “Japan” in Germany meant Japanese paper, and lacquer ware was sometimes called “indianisch Lack Kunst,” or Indian lacquer art. The “Indian” Chamber, built by Frederik III of Denmark in 1650, accommodated a large number of Japanese lacquer ware (Nagashima 306). “Japon” in Dutch referred to long dresses and gowns, corresponding to the popularity of Japanese kimono in the seventeenth century (Nagashima 41). Even in England “India work” was a common designation for lacquer ware, and it has been warned time and again by scholars that the appellation “Indian” was far from being an accurate indicator of provenance (Impey and Jörg 283; Pritchard 260).

That such fruits of global trade which were set to flourish by Jesuits missionaries are found at Hampton Court is significant. When expounding on the recent craze over porcelain instigated by Mary II, Defoe also touches on furniture:

...piling their *China* upon the Tops of Cabinets, Scrutores, and every Chymney-Piece, to the Tops of the Ceilings, and even setting up Shelves for their *China*-Ware. (*Tour* 166)

It was these “Cabinets,” “Scrutores,” and “Shelves” that were sometimes japanned works. Queen Mary’s Gallery at Kensington Palace had in 1693 three India Japan cabinets with black carved frames (Lunsingh Scheurleer 43). Many other royal houses across Europe possessed ample collections of lacquer ware from Japan. By “shining Altars of *Japan*,” Pope meant either manufactures that employed heterogeneous materials from both the East and West, or they were entire imitations. Though transformed in material, shape, and style over time, the furnishings which Pope imagines embellish Hampton Court have roots that can be traced back, alongside maritime traders, to the Society of Jesus and their ventures.

## 5. The Added Altar

In 1714, Pope adds in his new edition an additional altar that displays the treasures with which the Catholic heroine prepares to meet her suitor. Most of the adornments are of exotic

origin that had been recently introduced to Europe. Again, this lays emphasis on the roads initially paved by early Jesuit missionaries. The boudoir scene appears for the first time in the Five-Canto version:

And now, unveil'd, the *Toilet* 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 Pow'rs*.  
A heav'nly Image in the Glass appears,  
To that she bends, to that her Eyes she rears;  
Th'inferior Priestess, at her Altar's side,  
Trembling, begins the sacred Rites of Pride. (1.121-28)

In the religious reading offered by Pope in *A Key*, Pope engages in a discourse in which he alleges that the ritualistic commencement of Belinda's maquillage symbolizes indeed an ersatz popish ceremony:

The *Toilette* is an artful Recommendation of the *Mass*, and pompous Ceremonies of the *Church of Rome*. The *unveiling* of the *Altar*, the *Silver Vases* upon it, being *rob'd* in *White*, as the Priests are upon the chief Festivals, and the *Head uncover'd*, are manifest Marks of this. (*Prose* 199)

Such reading of Belinda's preparation as a liturgical procession rather attenuates the importance of feminine beauty enhanced by the "*Cosmetic Pow'rs*" (1.124) and serves to accentuate the fact that the young maiden is Catholic.

Moreover, the cosmetic paraphernalia exhibit "various Off'rings of the World" (1.130):  
This Casket *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. (1.133-38)

They indeed showcase the "glitt'ring Spoil" (1.132), the harvests of territorial discoveries and expansion. In the East and the West alike, gemstones including turquoise, amber, jadeite, and coral and items made from rhinoceros horn and ivory were used for jewelry and to decorate snuff bottles (Nagai-Berthrong 60). In the passage on Belinda's boudoir (1.121-139), both the "glitt'ring Spoil" and "Arms" (1.139) are hallmarks of a mock epic poem which *The Rape of*

*the Lock* is. The “Treasures” (1.129), “Off’rings” (1.130), and “Spoil,” which entail gems from India, perfume from Arabia, and combs made from tortoise shells and elephant tusks, all provide the “*Cosmetic Pow’rs*” that enhance a young woman’s beauty in England. Although not directly associated with the activities of the Jesuit order, on one level, the accessories indeed showcase the “Spoil” acquired by way of early expeditions. In addition to lacquer ware, the “various Off’rings of the World” in the English domestic sphere emblemize the development of global exchanges whose origins are inseparable from early proselytizing movements.

On another level, the array of consumables on the dressing table serves as a reminder of Belinda’s ambiguous status. It was not only Belinda but affluent ladies for whom the vogue was to display themselves “deck’d with all that Land and Sea afford” (5.11), just like porcelain displayed ostentatiously on cabinets in a China or India Room. Pope in *A Key* is aware that Belinda’s “heav’nly Image” (1.125) could be construed as “*Image-Worship*” (*Prose* 199). Swetha Regunathan has argued that this is the prototypical image of the “empty idol,” which often designates a woman who is also an extravagant consumer, especially of exotic commodities (46). In this way, Belinda embodies the typical well-to-do woman, but at the same time she remains ever a perennial outsider. The decorations also reveal Belinda’s attempt, perhaps unconscious, to arm (1.139) herself upon her entrance into mainstream English society, as, on her dresser there effectively lies a Bible, a symbol of Protestant bibliolatry. It has been reduced to mere merchandise in the nascent consumerist culture and lies scattered among feminine trinkets, but Pope subtly reminds the reader of the acquiescent concept of *via media* in the politico-theological arena of England. In *A Key*, he also depicts Belinda wavering between obstinacy and conformity, and points out that Belinda’s cross could be the “Ensign of *England*” (*Prose* 186). In the alternative reading which has a “Tendency to Popery” (197), the cross becomes the “Ensign of Popery” (200). The cross at once points to the uncertainty of her identity and the absurdity of the religious divide within England. However, the armor fails to protect her, as it is not the embellishments which are robbed but what is more inherent: the lock, which is a part of her bodily makeup, a part of what constitutes her existence. By extension, her intrinsic spirituality is imperiled. As we shall see, this is a projection of Pope’s own disquiet when he aspires to carve out a place for himself among the English nobility and ruling class.

## 6. Belinda's Demise, Pope's Anxiety

Upon his fourth attempt in Canto 3, the Baron succeeds in clipping Belinda's lock. For all that she had equipped herself to make her debut in polite Protestant society, and in spite of the hopes of coming closer to a fellow Catholic who may possibly lead her to a hymeneal altar, the evening concludes with her bewailing the loss of her "Honour" (4.110). Despite the "Screams of Horror" (3.156) and, due to Thalestris' doing, her burning with "more than mortal Ire" (4.93), one cannot deny Pope's deft ploy of displaying Belinda's vanity: "For ever curs'd be this detested Day" (4.147) and "By Love of *Courts* to num'rous Ills betray'd" (4.152). In religious contexts, however, the callous indifference of the Protestant edifice towards the ignominy of the Catholic maiden stands out:

O wretched Maid! she spread her Hands, and cry'd,  
(While *Hampton's* Ecchos, wretched Maid! reply'd). (4.95-96)

Part of Belinda's regret lies, not in the unfortunate interactions with the Baron but, in her choice of location:

Happy! ah ten times happy, had I been,  
If *Hampton-Court* these Eyes had never seen! (4.149-50)

The palace remains ever unresponsive in Belinda's losing chase to reclaim her lock in the final Canto:

*Restore the Lock!* she cries, and all around  
*Restore the Lock!* the vaulted Roofs rebound. (5.103-4)

Belinda's laments resound through the royal house in vain. Underlying the "glitt'ring Spoil" (1.132) which adorns Belinda and makes her the cynosure of all eyes is the poet's attempt to penetrate the Protestant threshold and emphasize Catholic contributions at Hampton Court, a palace that serves as an ineluctable Protestant symbol as the birthplace of Anglicanism as well as the residence of multiple Protestant monarchs.

Looking at its history, Hampton Court irrefutably remains a powerful Anglican presence. In the Domesday Book of 1086, Hampton Court was a manor owned by Walter de St Valery. After being leased to the Knights Hospitaller in the twelfth century, the property gained a moat and chapel. Then, leased by Thomas Wolsey in 1514 and passed into the hands of King Henry VIII in 1528, the king greatly expanded the property. It was also his residence when the first Act of Supremacy was passed in 1534, as it was of Queen Elizabeth I, who reinstated the Act of Supremacy in 1559. Elizabeth also reinstated the Oath of Supremacy,

one which continued to Pope's time. Mary II and William III, who became joint monarchs in 1689 following the Glorious Revolution, made lavish additions and modernized the site as a baroque palace, or, as Daniel Defoe expresses, "[*Hampton Court*] put on new Cloaths" (179).

The hesitancy which Pope felt as an oppressed minority is revealed through the character of Belinda. When examining the topography of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* in relation to his status as a Catholic in an unwaveringly Protestant nation, one sees that Pope's choice of the poem's setting at Hampton Court evinces the poet's conflicting attitudes towards penetrating the religious barrier. In drafting the work, Pope must have had to rely much on images resembling what the postcolonial theorist Edward Said calls "second-order knowledge" (52). Pope's correspondence concerning the Orient indeed displays "second-order knowledge" that "seems to have its origins in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining" (*Corr.* 1.34, 1.188, 1.380; Said 177). It is likewise in many ways with Pope and Hampton Court. At the time of composition of the work, the poet had never set foot on the palace premises and thus would have had to turn to secondhand information, and perhaps his imagination. Just as John Potvin has commented, not all Orientalist representations disclose pejorative connotations (11). Nevertheless, unlike much of Orientalist discourse which never materializes in one's life in an empirical sense, with regards to Pope and the royal palace, one cannot dismiss the element of restless anxiety as he rapidly makes his ascent to fame and his integration into court society becomes imminent and inevitable. The poem's conclusion, in which Belinda suffers the ignominy of purloining by her suitor, undoubtedly reflects the young poet's fear of defeat. As such, Pope's descriptions contain what Roland Barthes terms "funereal" aspects (72). They involve pretending and attempting to breathe life into the inanimate objects on the page, but the descriptions, which rely on images in the mind rather than empirical action, paradoxically serve to create distance.

In 1717, like Belinda in the poem, Pope rode the few miles up the Thames: "I went by water to Hampton Court" where he "met the Prince with all his Ladies on horseback coming from Hunting." His consciousness as a Catholic is made immediately manifest as he continues in the letter to Teresa and Martha Blount that Mrs. Bellendine and Mrs. Lepell "took me into protection (contrary to the Laws against harbouring Papists)" (13 September 1717, *Corr.* 1:427). Judging from his correspondence, in spite of his solicitude, his foray into previously unknown Protestant royal territory was largely safe and successful.

## Conclusion

The altars found in *The Rape of the Lock*, especially when taking into account the added altar of Belinda's dressing table in the 1714 version, serve to lay emphasis on Catholic contributions to the English Protestant court culture, and more specifically at a royal palace, whose opulence was rendered possible in part through the early expeditions of the Society of Jesus. Although his native England remained staunchly Protestant, Pope affirms the triumphs of the Catholic Church in overseas expansion and trade. In addition to lacquer ware, the "various Off'rings of the World" (l.130) in the English domestic sphere emblemize the expansion of global commerce whose origins are inseparable from early Jesuit proselytizing movements.

## Notes

- 1) All citations of *The Rape of the Lock* are from the 1714 version in *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*.
- 2) The following abbreviations are used throughout this essay: *A Key*, for *A Key to the Lock*; *Corr.*, for *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*; *Prose*, for *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope*; *Selected Prose*, for *Selected Prose of Alexander Pope*; *Suntory*, for *Imari: Japanese Porcelain for European Palaces*; *TE*, for *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*.

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