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Imagining India and Britain: Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*

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ABSTRACT

As the first principal work of Elizabeth Hamilton, renowned woman novelist in the Romantic Period, her *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* has received renewed scholarly attention in recent years on its engagement with feminism and imperialism, especially since the publication of Edward Said's influential *Orientalism*. This paper explores the use of satire arising from the conflicting views advanced by Hamilton's fictional Hindu letter-writers on their travels in India and Britain. Hamilton modified the well-known device of the pseudo-Oriental letters popularized by Montesquieu so as to offer an oblique critique of contemporary British society as well as to address the questions of British India and Indian civilization. While her Hindu characters are made to support British rule of India, her work's satire of the ubiquitous human folly cuts across any simple binaries of Britons and Hindus. With its specific concerns about imperialism, however, the critical authority of these imaginary Hindus became more limited as Eastern civilizations were increasingly subject to more critical judgment. Hamilton's distinctive remodeling of pseudo-Oriental letters exemplifies British Orientalism in transition, which is particularly remarkable in the work's dual focus on Britain and India, and in the transforming relations between its British and Hindu protagonists.

KEY WORDS: Orientalism, Persian Letters, epistolary novel, satire, the Romantic Period

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想像印度與英國：伊莉莎白・漢米爾頓的《英譯一位印度王公的書信》

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摘　要

《英譯一位印度王公的書信》是伊莉莎白・漢米爾頓這位浪漫時期有名女小說家的首部主要作品。自從薩伊德影響深遠的《東方主義》出版之後，近年來學者們尤其著重探討漢米爾頓此作品與女性主義和帝國主義的關係。本文著眼漢米爾頓的虛構印度寫信者們對英國與印度互有出入的各種觀感，探究此作品複雜微妙的諷刺意涵。漢米爾頓改寫因孟德斯鳩而風行一時的虛擬東方信，以對英國社會做出批判，並處理英屬印度及印度文明等議題。雖然她令這些虛構的印度人表明對英國統治印度的支持，作品本身對普遍人性弱點的批評跨越了英國和印度人種的簡單二元對立。然而由於本作品與帝國主義明確的關聯，在當時東方文明聲望江河日下的同時，其印度角色批判的權威也變得更受限。漢米爾頓對虛擬東方信獨特的改寫與詮釋體現了轉變中的英國東方主義，這個趨勢在本作品印度與英國的雙焦點，以及英國與印度角色間變動的關係尤為明顯。

關鍵詞：東方主義、《波斯信》、書信體小說、諷刺文、浪漫時期

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At first glance, the very title of Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796) could be misleading. In fact, Hamilton's work is neither a translation nor letters written by a Hindu prince. Thus at least three of the reviews Hamilton's work received thoughtfully reminded their readers of its fictionality while praising its verisimilitude (Hamilton, *Appendix A* 309-17).[1] Of late, a number of fine studies have also acknowledged the categorical slipperiness of Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah*. Pamela Perkins and Shannon Russell's introduction to their Broadview edition discusses Hamilton's engagement with what they term "jacobin and anti-jacobin literature" as well as "European literature about the East" (Perkins 7-45). Claire Grogan similarly points out the difficulty of categorising Hamilton's work because of the various literary genres it draws on, in addition to its wide-ranging subject-matter (Gorgan 21-42). Other scholars address specific aspects of Hamilton's multi-faceted work: Susan B. Taylor argues that Hamilton's Orientalism works as a kind of front to advance her feminist agenda, as well as to remind readers of its "blind spots" (Taylor 555-81), while Mona Narain considers *Hindoo Rajah* as a "colonial fantasy" of "redemption" because of the vision it offers of "a benevolent English Empire" (Narain 585-98). Nigel Leask draws attention to elements of "the 'Persian Letters' genre of pseudo-oriental reverse travel accounts" (Leask183-202) and Anne K. Mellor to the "multiple narrative viewpoints" in Hamilton's work which she considers offering a "more liberating vision of the social roles of women" (Mellor 151-64).

While being indebted to the insights of these studies, especially those of Leask's and Mellor's, this paper turns to examine three structural features of Hamilton's work: the contrast between its "Preliminary Dissertation" and letters, the different perspectives of the three fictional Hindu letter-writers, and the change of the Rajah's viewpoints during his journey from India to Britain. By dealing with these three aspects of the *Hindoo Rajah*, this paper will be investigating how Hamilton's work engages with the eighteenth-century satiric device of the imaginary Oriental traveler; in so doing, this paper explores how Hamilton's work responds to the changes in English writing about the East at the turn of the century and where it diverges from Edward Said's concept of Orientalism. This paper will also pay particular attention to the recurrent references to women's social positions in the *Hindoo Rajah*. In the

[1] See Hamilton, Appendix A for *Critical Review* 17 (1796): 241-49; *British Critic* 8 (1796): 237-41; *Monthly Review*, 2nd ser. 21 (1796): 176-81 (Hamilton, Appendix A).

1770s, scholars like William Robertson and John Millar speculated about the progress of human society and the role of women as an index of civilization. The proverbial idea of women's servitude and confinement in Eastern countries later became a powerful metaphor of despotism in Mary Wollstonecraft's acclaimed *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published just four years before Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah*. As this paper will show in the discussion of contemporary reviews, Hamilton's position as a woman writer in the volatile time of the French Revolution is especially vulnerable when it comes to politics and specialized "manly" disquisition. For Hamilton, to articulate views on British society via figures of Hindu travelers offers a double perspective. With a wide array of male and female characters from India or Britain, Hamilton's work takes stock of such categories of difference as religion, gender, and race, and introduces different sets of solidarity and affinity which cut across the single dichotomy of Self and Oriental Other.

The satirical technique of having an imaginary Oriental travelling to Europe to comment on European politics and customs was popularized by Giovanni Paolo Marana's *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy, Who Lived Five and Forty Years, Undiscover'd, at Paris* (1684-86). In the eighteenth century, this device became well-recognized if not being very frequently in use, claiming such famed examples as Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), George Lyttelton's *Letters from a Persian in England, to His Friend at Ispahan* (1735), and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* (1762). The assumed Oriental perspective allowed writers to explore the boundaries of ethnicity, nationhood, and identity by interrogating what had been taken for granted as particularly polite, civilized, Christian, British or French. In terms of entertaining readers, the defamiliarizing viewpoint of the fictional traveler not only added novelty to mundane descriptions of common customs, but also revealed the butts of satire to be those who or which readers least expected. What particularly distinguishes Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah* from its literary predecessors is its dual focus on India and Britain in very specific settings of the two loci in the 1770s.

As Hamilton's work differs from its predecessors with its particularized time frame and landscape, the discrepancy between its fictional time of the 1770s and its time of publication in 1796 provides insights into Britain's evolving relation with India. Although the East India Company had been conducting business at its coastal factories from the start of the seventeenth

century, more extensive and scholarly accounts about India were not available to Britons until the 1770s and 80s when the Company acquired administrative responsibilities towards the indigenous population after obtaining *diwani* rights in Bengal in 1765, which made intimate knowledge of local customs and manners essential to the Company's servants. A land once remote to ordinary Britons was reported on in more details after the 1770s when parliamentary inquiries were launched into the Company's affairs and when commentators debated the effects of territorial sovereignty on British liberty. In 1784, the founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal further institutionalized research into Eastern languages, religions, and literature, and the scholarship of its members was made available to readers in India and Britain via the regular publication of *Asiatic Researches*.

In the 1790s when Hamilton published her work, most Britons were no longer opposed to the reality of Britain's territorial acquisitions in India. As P. J. Marshall points out, even during the period of the Hastings trial, the climate of opinion changed markedly, from condemning Hastings' intervention in indigenous politics to praising his role in consolidating British rule in India and supporting his successor Lord Cornwallis's wars against the Marathas and Tipu Sultan (Marshall 3-4). Hamilton has her Hindu Rajah impressed by a tour around British India that serves partly to vindicate the former Governor-General of Bengal—Warren Hastings, as well as to pay tribute to the scholarship of Jones and other British Orientalists. Hamilton's work might consequently be regarded in Saidian terms as a classic example of an "Orientalist" text, which presumes authority over the East by writing about it in a scholarly and quasi-scientific manner (Said 2-3; Macfie 4-5, 8-9). Nevertheless, this paper maintains that the defamiliarizing mechanism of voicing comments on Britons via Oriental figures makes it difficult to determine whether the satirical target is the Oriental travelers and/or their British hosts. Hamilton's work is especially self-reflexive in its presentation of cross-cultural encounters as well as giving expression to such encounters in a variety of different ways. That the Rajah leaves Britain disappointed at the uncharitable behaviour of some Britons and yet remains appreciative of British rule in India hints at the narrowing possibilities for subsequent representations of the fictional Oriental traveler.

"Preliminary Dissertation": Hamilton's "Scholarly" Exposition of a Peaceable India

The title page of *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* bears Hamilton's name, which was unusual at that time for a woman writer who was making her first major literary venture. The two-volume work consists of a fifty-two-page "Preliminary Dissertation," a five-page "Glossary," eighteen letters, and 112 footnotes (Grogan 30-31).[2] While being misleadingly entitled "the letters of 'a' Hindoo Rajah," the first volume in fact includes two sets of letters: one is the correspondence between Zaarmilla, Rajah of Almora, and Mandaara, Zimeendar of Cumlore; the other is the Bramin Sheermaal's three letters to Maandaara for the purpose of dissuading Zaarmilla from going abroad. The second volume consists entirely of the Rajah's letters to Maandaara about his trip in England. In the work's time-scheme, Hamilton's fictional Rajah writes the first letter to Maandaara about his chance encounter with a British officer Captain Percy who is wounded during the Rohilla War, in 1774.[3] Percy's Christian virtue prompts the Rajah to seek more acquaintance with Britons, and he finally makes the journey to Britain five years later, despite the opposition of Maandaara and Sheermaal who have been unimpressed by their own previous encounters with Britons.

In contrast to the scanty ethnographic detail and commonplace satire in earlier works featuring fictional Oriental travelers in Britain, Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah* uses the specific setting of the Rohilla War, the conduct which comprised one of the "Articles of Charge" that Burke cited against Hastings.[4] In the 1790s, many of Hamilton's readers would have been familiar with the names of "Almora" and "Cumlore" and the titles of "Rajah" and "Zimeendar" thanks to the publicity surrounding Hastings's trial. Among Hamilton's aims in the "Preliminary Dissertation" are to defend Hastings and to disseminate knowledge about India so that readers can appreciate the collection of letters better.

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[2] The numbers of pages and footnotes refer to the 1796 edition.

[3] At the end of the seventh letter, Hamilton the editor notes "a chasm of several years" which separates it from the next letter, and informs her readers that from the "circumstances" mentioned in the letters, she judges the earlier ones to have been written "toward the beginning of the year 1775" and the succeeding ones around 1780 (Hamilton 144).

[4] Burke accused Hastings of lending the Company's troops to its ally the wazir of Oudh to annex Rohilkhand, then dominated by the Rohillas of Afghan origin, in order to extract more payment from the wazir (Marshall, "Hastings"). In 1786 and 1787, the House of Commons rejected "the Rohilla War of 1774" but passed "Hastings's treatment of the Rohilla Faizullah Khan" as one of the charges against Hastings (Marshall, *Impeachment* xiv-xv).

Hamilton's "Dissertation" moreover discusses Hinduism and the history of India not only as a way of familiarizing her Hindu protagonists to British readers but also to provide a specific engagement with the imperial context. Apart from giving occasion to the comparison and contrast between Britain and India and setting up the Rajah's progress towards a fuller understanding of his own and British culture, the Rajah's travels in India allow Hamilton to elaborate on British rule there and to give readers some preliminary ideas of the Rajah's character. The "Dissertation" and the Rajah's narration of his movements in India together function as a sort of miniature (auto)biography and serve to flesh out the figure of the Rajah and to provide him with a history by locating him in the specific context of Rohilkhand and Bengal in the 1770s. In this respect, Hamilton's Rajah differs from his predecessors, figures whose conduct in their home countries remain largely unknown and who often in effect appear from nowhere.

Hamilton writes her "Dissertation" in the third person, which is common in Oriental scholarship of the period, but different from the more personal tone of first-person narration in the succeeding collection of letters. Writing the "Dissertation" in the third person seems to lend a sense of scholarly authority to her exposition. Grogan points out that Hamilton's work is a mixture of Oriental fable and Oriental study and that critics often downplay the more scholarly aspect of her work because of her gender (Gordan 25-26).[5] In the turbulent context of the 1790s when Hamilton published *Hindoo Rajah*, it was controversial for a woman writer to talk about philosophy, politics, and Orientalist learning. To forestall critics' censure of her encroachment on the masculine field of colonial politics and Orientalist scholarship, Hamilton in her "Dissertation" also emphasizes her indebtedness to her brother and her perception of her Christian duty as combating ignorance. This strategy seems to have worked, for the *Hindoo Rajah* sold moderately well, went into five editions between 1796 and 1811, and received respectable reviews (Hamilton, *App. A* 309-12, 317-19).[6]

[5] The full title of Hamilton's work aptly illustrates its generic mix of Oriental pseudo-letters and Oriental study: Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah; written Previous to, and During the Period of His Residence in England. To Which is Prefixed a Preliminary Dissertation on the History, Religion, and Manners, of the Hindoos.

[6] See Hamilton, Appendix A for *Critical Review* 17 (1796): 241-49; *British Critic* 8 (1796): 237-41; *Analytical Review* 24 (1796): 429-31; *Scots Magazine* 59 (1797): 47-48 (Hamilton, Appendix A).

Following the lead of Sir William Jones, Hamilton draws attention to the similarities between Greek and Roman gods and Hindu divinities: she notes for instance that, "Surraya, or the God of Day […] in his chariot, drawn by seven green horses, bears so near a resemblance to Apollo, that it is impossible not to recognize them as the same" (Hamilton 64). Indian literature is at least as worthy of British readers' attention as classical learning, though Hamilton notes that "the names of the Heroes of Greece and Rome, are rendered familiar at a period of life, when the mind receives every impression with facility," while "the Persian and Hindoo writers are entirely destitute" of "these advantages, resulting from early prepossessions" (Hamilton 55-56). Consequently, with her "Dissertation," Hamilton attempts to remedy what she perceives as "that ignorance, and apathetic indifference with regard to the affairs of the East, which is frequently to be remarked in minds, that are in every other respect highly cultivated, and accurately informed." Hamilton particularly directs her efforts towards popularising knowledge of India for readers "of [her] own sex," and describes her work as a means of encouraging "a laudable curiosity, upon a subject where so much is to be learned" (Hamilton 56).

Late-eighteenth-century British writers tended to reduce the complex interrelation of different ethnic groups in India to the binary opposition of Muslim against Hindu, privileging religion as the defining factor of differentiation, and Hamilton upholds this conventional distinction (Mani 16-20). As in her account of the Rohilla War via the Rajah, Hamilton presents Muslims as usurpers who transform the time-honoured paternalistic rule of Hindu princes into a reign of oppression and intolerance.[7] She praises the "salutary regulations" of "Mr. Hastings," to whom she dedicates her work, for his policy of restoring to Hindus "their ancient laws" and for his patronage of the British Orientalists translating Hindu and Muslim laws to this purpose (Marshall 242-62). After the Company took over the rule of parts of India, according to Hamilton, "in those provinces, the horrid modes of punishment, inflicted by the Mahommedans, have been abolished; the fetters, which restrained their commerce, have been taken off," and thus "it is to be hoped that the long-suffering Hindoos have experienced a happy change" (Hamilton 70). Hamilton attributes disorder and decline solely to the rapacity of Islamic

[7] Hamilton's account of Britons saving Hindus from Muslims is only "partially correct in the precise case of Rohilkhand," and presents a limited picture of the Company's strategic campaigns which include making wars and forming allies with both Hindu and Muslim rulers (Narain 596).

rulers, thus presenting Hastings and the Company as saving the Hindus from their Islamic oppressors, and Hindus themselves as free from the charge of indolence or corruption.

In the "Dissertation," Hamilton goes to some lengths to familiarize Hindu literature and mythology to readers, to point out the merits of the caste system, and to praise the religious tolerance of the Brahmins. To encourage readers' interest in India, she presents Hindu culture as a worthy field of enquiry. She suggests that readers turn inward for the purposes of self-reflection, rather than charging Hindus with idolatry. In comparison with "those argumentative disputations, those cruel and obstinate animosities, which, alas! under a dispensation whose very essence is benevolence, have so often disturbed the peace of society" in Europe and Britain, "there [among Hindus] the acrimonious censure, the keen retort, the vehement invective against those who differed in opinion, was totally unknown" (Hamilton 61).

Within the "Dissertation" and in the fictional letters, however, at least some aspects of Hinduism are also shown to be defective, and Hindu wisdom, albeit that it resembles Christian revelation in its most elevated state, is more a point of comparison than a model for emulation or an alternative to the light of the Gospel. Hamilton's remarks on the Brahmins in fact manifest the divided views of her contemporaries. Though she points out that "all Bramins are not Priests," she nevertheless rehearses the common association of Brahmins with a malign notion of "priesthood" by attributing "the grossest idolatry" of ordinary Hindus to "the jealous care with which the tribe of the Brahma prevented the intrusion of the multitude into these avenues to science and truth" (Hamilton 59, 63). Michael J. Franklin notes that while William Jones did not privilege a supposedly more pristine and classical Hinduism over popular Hinduism, his fellow Orientalist Nathaniel Halhed was contemptuous toward what he perceived as the vulgar Hinduism of his day and preferred ancient Hinduism (Franklin 9). It is unclear whether Hamilton differentiates between ancient and modern Brahmins when she states: "the Bramins, to whom the cultivation of science was exclusively committed, seem to have made no contemptible use of their high privilege. In astronomy they are allowed to have excelled; many works of their ancient writers on metaphysics, and ethics, have already come to our knowledge" (Hamilton 65-66). Hamilton offers a sympathetic explanation of the perceived idolatry of ordinary Hindus, on account of the fact that "ignorance naturally leads to superstition" (Hamilton

63). She also generalizes about humanity as a whole when she notes that it is not "in the religion of Hindoostan alone, that similar effects are produced by causes of like nature" (Hamilton 64), and that "invectives against any society of individuals, are only satires upon human nature" (Hamilton 59). Nonetheless, it remains uncertain whether she differentiates between her fictional character of the individual Brahmin Sheermaal and "Brahmins" as a collective group.

While Taylor argues that Hamilton's engagement with scholarly Orientalism is complicated by her position as a woman writer (Taylor 562), and Mellor claims that the Rajah's views on British women are complicated by Sheermaal's observations on women's education in Britain (Mellor 158), I would like to add that readers' perceptions of the location of critical authority in Hamilton's work would also surely have been qualified by the variant views of Hindus, and especially Brahmins, that were current at the time. *The Monthly Review*, for example, criticised Hamilton for the incorrect information she supplied about India, in particular her "exempting the Hindoos from all hatred or contempt of other nations," something which shows that "she has totally mistaken the genius and character of the sons of Brahma, in whom a contempt of foreigners is inculcated and excused by the precepts of their religion" (Hamilton, *Appendix A* 176-81). In contrast, *The Critical Review* described the Brahmin Sheermaal rather flatteringly as "a man of letters" (Hamilton, *Appendix A* 309, 314). Building on the discussion above, my later comparison of the three Hindus with their British hosts will show that, though to some extent Hamilton, as Leask argues (Leask 188), tends to displace "stereotypes of oriental sexual despotism and superstition" onto the Rajah's Hindu friend Maandaara and to Muslims in general, Hindus as well as Britons are liable to be targets of satire in her work. *Hindoo Rajah*'s satiric complexity arises from the fluctuation of its satiric targets and the critical authority of its three Hindu protagonists.

Hamilton concurs with leading British Orientalists in citing "the separation of the different Casts from each other" as a particularly powerful factor in preserving Hindu society from "the turbulence of ambition, the emulations of envy, and the murmurs of discontent" (Hamilton 60). During the 1790s, in the aftermath of the French revolution, Hamilton's picture of Hindu stability would have had a special resonance for her readers. Yet although Hamilton acknowledges the desirability of peace and stability, she does not omit to point out that "the peculiar construction of the Hindoo

government, and the precepts of Hindoo faith, […] were not so favourable to the cultivation of the mind, and to its advancement in the paths of useful knowledge." Hamilton maintains that "while the strife of emulation, and restlessness of ambition disturb the quiet of society, they produce, in their collision, the genius that adorns it," and quotes the claim of *Asiatic Researches* that "Reason and Taste are the grand prerogatives of European minds, while the Asiatics have soared to loftier heights in the sphere of Imagination." It seems that Hamilton upholds the superiority of European government and religion, while also drawing attention to Asian achievements in the arts which "sufficiently evince their advancement" (Hamilton 65). Even though Hamilton acknowledges that Hinduism provides for social stability, and praises Hindu tolerance for not "disturbing those who are of a different faith, by endeavours to convert them" (Hamilton 60), thereby indicating that she does not see active Christian proselytisation of Hindus as a priority, she nonetheless makes it clear that only Christianity can foster toleration as well as stimulate "intellectual energy" (Hamilton 65).

Letters of Three "Hindus": Britain vs. India

Compared with previous works of a similar kind, Hamilton's is unique in its pairing of the Rajah with other Hindu informants as well as British guides.[8] The dynamics of epistolary exchange gives rise to contrasts and changes in the ideas advanced by the fictional Rajah and his Hindu friends. Of the three fictional Hindus in her work, the Rajah Zaarmilla is the last to have contact with the British. Maandaara and Sheermaal attempt to counter the Rajah's rosy view of British Christians by relating to him their experiences of travelling among Britons. Though he has not been to England, Maandaara has spent time among the British in India. He admits to the Rajah that "the order and regularity which prevailed among them, impressed [him] at first with the highest idea of their virtue and wisdom," but later his experience appears to discredit his initial high esteem of Britons. After witnessing "one poor soldier stripped, tied up, and almost lacerated to death" as a punishment "for the trifling crime of purloining a few rupees from one of his officers," Maandaara gathers that "the morals of the people must be very pure, in whose eyes so

[8] Montesquieu's Usbek and Rica are fellow travelers in France. Goldsmith's Fum Hoam has the opportunity to observe the Dutch when he is in Japan but does not mention any contact with Britons; Hingpo gets to England later than Lien Chi.

small an offence can seem worthy of so great a punishment" (Hamilton 103). Shortly afterwards, however, he is surprised to find that, in Britain, adulterers are only fined for their offence, which makes him wonder that virtue cannot possibly "subsist among a people, who set a greater value upon a few pieces of silver, than upon their honour" (Hamilton 104).

Maandaara's comments appear to be sensible and parallel the Rajah's later disappointment with British morals when he witnesses the wretched condition of a debtor's prison in London. Yet, Maandaara's critical authority becomes more questionable when it comes to his remarks on the British consumption of meat, and in particular on their treatment of women. To him, seeing Britons "devour, with looks that betokened the most savage satisfaction, the sacred offspring of a spotted cow" disgusts him even more than the lenient punishment of adultery (Hamilton 104). British readers accustomed to take pride in their liberal consumption of roast beef would have found Maandaara's indignation ridiculous and absurd. Moreover, Maandaara's views on women, with reference to "the words of the sacred Shastra," that "a man both day and night must keep his wife so much in subjection, that she by no means be mistress of her own actions" (Hamilton 106), seems to conform to the image of a conventional Oriental man who insists on women's subjection and who cares much more about women's outward appearance than their understanding. In contrast, although the Rajah is at first astonished to find that according to Christian precepts, "women are considered in the light of rational beings," and sees "the inferiority of women" as "established by the law of nature," he readily embraces the Christian teaching that he learns from Percy of women's "perfect equality with men" (Hamilton 87-88). However, my later discussion over the Rajah's meetings with the local Britons in Britain, in particular the "philosophers" of Ardent Hall, will show that prejudice against women is not unique to Oriental men.

To discourage his friend the Rajah from executing his plan of going abroad, Maandaara enlists the help of the Brahmin Sheermaal who has just returned to India from his ten years' sojourn in Britain. Sheermaal concurs with the Rajah in praising Britons for being "a race of brave and daring mortals, chosen by Veeshnu to curb the fury of destructive tyranny," but, "as to the principles which actuate their conduct, their religion, their laws, and their manners," he thinks the Rajah has erred. In her editorial footnote, Hamilton describes Sheermaal as a "*systematic traveller*" who claims that "in the bosom

of experience [he has] found the expected conviction" (Hamilton 108). By thus characterising Sheermaal, as Nigel Leask has argued, Hamilton satirizes "the act of (mis)representation itself," although this is something to which not only Sheermaal but also the Rajah is susceptible; there is an additional irony in that such misrepresentation and misunderstanding are revealed to be two-way processes (Hamilton 190), as some Britons, even including Hamilton herself, also uphold preconceived ideas about India, as I will go on to discuss.

The satirical treatment of the travelers' misconceptions is not new in works featuring fictional Orientals in Britain, and Goldsmith's Lien Chi in particular elaborates on his ideal of the philosophical traveler, who is receptive to different customs and claims to study humanity rather than specific but inconsequential details about, for example, styles of architecture or dress.[9] Though the Rajah is shown to be open to new ideas, as in his friendship with Percy, his censure of Sheermaal for condemning "whatever he does not understand" ironically reflects on himself. He insists to Maandaara that "by the unerring answers of *experience*" which he is to obtain when he eventually undertakes his overseas journey, he will be able to refute "the misrepresentations of this wicked Bramin" (Hamilton 142). Meanwhile, even though he has not yet been to England, he nevertheless persists in discrediting Sheermaal's accounts. The Rajah remarks: "What a pattern might Sheermaal have found in the travelers, and the travel-writers of Europe. […] Happy for Sheermaal, if he had followed the laudable example of these sapient youths; how deep would then have been his observations!" (Hamilton 139) British readers would have known differently about the learning of fashionable young men on the Grand Tour. Hamilton's pairing of the Rajah and Sheermaal, presenting competing views on Britons, further interrogates the genre of travel literature and the formulation of knowledge, by contrasting Sheermaal with the Rajah.

In the letter I have referred to, Sheermaal maintains that "a Bramin of [his] character is not easily to be deceived," and he objects to the Rajah's claim that Britons have "a Shaster promulgating the glorious hopes of immortality; calculated to produce the universal reign of peace and justice" (Hamilton 109). Only relying on such second-hand knowledge as Percy's accounts and an Arabic translation of the Christian Bible, the Rajah writes to Maandaara about the wise institution of "Boarding-schools" in England where

[9] See Letters 7 and 108 in Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*.

women complete "their education in these seats of science, these nurseries of wisdom" (Hamilton 87-88). Assuming that all Britons are devout Christians, he infers from his reading of the Scriptures that, "in that enlightened country, a wife is the friend of her husband" (Hamilton 88). Based on his experiences in Britain, Sheermaal attempts to correct the Rajah's error by going through the curriculum of boarding schools. There, "far from being treated as 'beings, whose intellectual faculties are capable of progressive improvement through the ages of eternity', their time is employed in learning a few tricks, such as a monkey might very soon acquire, and these are called accomplishments!" (Hamilton 127)[10] The satire which Hamilton directs at women's education in Britain via Sheermaal's narration was not lost on reviewers, and the liberal *Critical Review* and *Analytical Review* included extensive extracts from Sheermaal's letter in their articles on Hamilton's work.

Overall, however, Sheermaal's critical authority fluctuates, and the work stages a complex interplay of different perspectives. Sheermaal claims that the only kind of "serious devotion" he sees performed by the "higher Casts" in Britain is their "Poojah of idols, termed CARDS."[11] Sheermaal notes rather dismissively British card-players' slack devotion of not "rub[bing] their bodies with earth" or "cover[ing] their heads with cow-dung," but he is impressed by their "self-denial" of turning away from "the soul-enlivening rays of the golden sun" and "all the beauties of nature" in order to worship their idol of cards (Hamilton 114-15). He also observes that "the languor, so visible in the countenances of the people assembled in the church was never to be observed during the performance of this more important ceremony" of gaming (Hamilton 115). Hamilton exploits the intermittent ignorance of Sheermaal for different satirical effects, and her varying characterization of Sheermaal seems to play out the divided images of Brahmins in contemporary literature (Appendix A, 309, 314; Franklin 1-18). While his idiosyncratic account of card-games suggests the pseudo-idolatrous obsession with gaming in British high society, Sheermal's comments turn out to offer a double-edged satire on himself as well as on Britons, as in his reference to the Hindu practice of covering the head with cow-dung when performing acts of devotion, and his delight in

[10] The *Critical Review*'s extracts begin here. Sheermaal is parodying the Rajah's praise of the women in boarding schools who "come forth like the mother of Krishna, the torch of reason enlightening their minds, and the staff of knowledge supporting their virtue" (Hamilton 88).

[11] Hamilton's "Glossary" explains "Poojah" as "the performance of worship to the Gods" (Hamilton 75, 114).

discovering the Brahminical origin of gaming during which priests "conceal the simplicity of truth, under the dark and impenetrable cloud of symbolical mystery" to maintain the zeal of the ignorant (Hamilton 114). This kind of double-edged satire and the treatment of gaming are also evident in earlier works of a similar kind, but Hamilton takes things further by juxtaposing the competing perspectives of different Hindu travelers.

Following his account of boarding schools, Sheermaal comments on the "extreme inconsistency of the foolish Europeans," who make "these uninstructed women […] intirely their own mistresses." He claims to have "frequently seen a little family cast upon the care, and depending for protection, on a poor, pretty, helpless being, incapable of any idea, save that of dress, or of any duty, except the Poojah of cards," a contrast with "the institution of Brahma, by which creatures, incapable of acting with propriety for themselves, are effectually put out of the way of mischief, by being burned with the bodies of their husbands.—Wise regulations! Laudable practice! by which the number of *old women* is so effectually diminished!" (Hamilton 129) Sheermaal assures the Rajah that England does not differ much from India, for "all men allow that there is nothing so amiable in a woman as the *helplessness* of *mental imbecility*" (Hamilton 129). Yet he also notes that although Englishwomen are "equally ignorant, and equally helpless as the females of Hindostan, their situation is far more destitute and pitiable," because while Hindu laws enjoin local magistrates to relieve those women in distress, "among the Christians of England," the women are "as destitute of protection as of instruction" (Hamilton 130). Sheermaal is especially vexed by Englishmen's pretension to "sensibility," and remarks that he has seen "those, who could witness the scene of misery exhibited in their own streets, without betraying one symptom of compassion, affect to shed tears of pity, at the description of a Hindoo female's voluntary sacrifice, by which she attained glory here, and had the certainty of happiness hereafter!" He therefore questions: "Is it thus, by a pretended feeling for imaginary sorrows, that the Christian Shaster teaches men to exercise their benevolence?" (Hamilton 132)

In comparison, the Rajah's earlier letter, which praises the supposedly enlightened education of British women, also expresses sympathy for the fate of women in India: "Uncertain tenor! Precarious dependence! on which a poor woman commits herself to the flames! Wisely did our lawgivers ordain, that ignorance and submission should be the ornaments of women; seeing how

much the privilege of enquiry, might have disquieted their repose!" (Hamilton 88) The Rajah and Sheermaal comment on suttee in religious and moral terms, not treating the practice of widow-burning as a mere customary difference. This kind of moralization came to be implicated in the discussion of women's comparative status in different civilizations at Hamilton's time. Yet although Hamilton's female readers might have congratulated themselves on not having to resort to suttee for future happiness, Sheermaal's response to the Rajah's eulogy of English boarding schools and his outspoken criticism of English hypocrisy undercut this sense of complacency. Furthermore, Sheermaal's comparison of Hindu widows with English prostitutes underscores the moral failure of Englishmen, even as he betrays his own culture with what he says about the disposal of "old women."

When commenting on the general inability of Indian zemindars to perform their revenue collection duties, John Shore (the fourth Governor-General of India, 1793-97) in particular considers female zemindars to be "indisposed to undertake" such tasks because they are "by their own laws and customs, secluded from all immediate interference," and because their necessary reliance on their servants creates endless contention, as is apparently the case in the examples he cites of the dowager Ranny in Dinagepoor and the widow of the deceased zemindar in Bishenpore (Shore 45-50).[12] Shore's argument in support of excluding indigenous women from the right to hold and manage estates supplies a kind of parallel to the comments of Hamilton's Sheermaal about British women's pitiable dependence and imbecility.[13] Hamilton's three fictional Hindus acknowledge the illiteracy and subjection of Hindu women, while their comments on English boarding schools and prostitution inadvertently problematize the supposed superiority of Christians over Hindus. However, even though Hamilton's praise of Hindu tolerance and her rhetorical strategy of satirizing British practices via Hindu perspectives make her priority appear to be the reform of Britons rather than the conversion of Hindus, Shore's remarks and the growth of the anti-sati campaign around this time also seem to manifest India's diminishing cultural prestige in Britain. As Chinese

[12] For related discussions on the respective disputes of the Rani of Burdwan and the Rani Bhabhani of Rajshahi with the East India Company over their zemindarship, see chapter four of Betty Joseph, *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004).

[13] In implementing Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement Act of Bengal in 1793, most female zamindars were deprived of their right to manage the estate, and the responsibility was re-assigned to sons or male relatives in the case of widowhood (Joseph 146-48).

foot-binding and Hindu widow-burning came to be interpreted as examples of the subjection of Eastern women, and as what distinguished Britons from "Orientals" (Lewis 72-78; Ross 311-34), Hamilton's Hindus might for some readers have come across as the main targets of satire.

The Rajah in the Promised Land of Britain: Hamilton's Double Perspective on Womanhood

Despite the spirited arguments of Maandaara and Sheermaal, the Rajah is not convinced by what they have to say and only leaves off travelling abroad because of his marriage with Maandaara's sister Prymaveda. After the death of his wife, the Rajah finally executes his earlier plan of becoming more acquainted with Britons by travelling down to the Company's base at Bengal. On his way, he is impressed by the prosperity of the British-ruled lands which form an "amazing contrast" with those under "Mussulman Lords" (Hamilton 156). He meets Percy's friend Captain Grey, who becomes his friend and informant. Hamilton contrasts the Rajah's self-conscious caution concerning misinterpretations with the mistakes which inevitably arise from his identifying all Britons as devout Christians. At one point the Rajah is astonished to hear a group of English officers "introducing, in familiar conversation, the name of their *Almighty Creator*, upon the most trifling occasions." Not believing that these Englishmen can be so impious, the Rajah devises an explanation: "it is from a consciousness of their own superior piety, which they, doubtless, imagine, entitles them to this degree of familiarity with their Maker" (Hamilton 162).

As I have suggested, Hamilton's work may appear in Saidian terms to be an "Orientalist" text which appropriates the voice of a Hindu in support of the Company. Especially in the letters of the fictional Rajah, however, Hamilton's work also reflects on the act of representation and the process of getting to know the other (as well as oneself) through travel and cultural encounter. Even before leaving his homeland, the Rajah's naïve praise of Britons has unwittingly betrayed contradictions in British overseas enterprises. He notes that, according to the injunction of their Scriptures that "do to others as they would have others do to them," the "benevolent people of England […] sent forth colonies, to enlighten and instruct, the vast regions of America. To disseminate the love of virtue and freedom, they cultivated the trans-Atlantic isles: and to rescue *our* nation from the hands of the oppressor, did this brave,

and generous people visit the shores of Hindostan!" (Hamilton 84) The letter's fictional date of 1775 and its juxtaposition of India with North America and the Caribbean Islands inevitably problematize the Rajah's picture of the British "love of liberty," considering the contexts of the subsequent disastrous war with America and the ongoing practice of slavery in the West Indies. Additionally, even though Hamilton's "Dissertation" and annotations assume a scholarly authority in manipulating representations of India and Hindus, her position as a "double-outsider" (Taylor 563), as a woman writing India, complicates any straightforward racial dichotomy.

The distinctiveness of Hamilton's position appears particularly salient in comparison with earlier examples of pseudo-Oriental traveler's narrative. Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* deals with the intersection of domestic and national politics, presenting women's domination by men in Persian harems as political allegory for the despotism in the East as well as the oppressive court and Catholic authorities in France. Goldsmith's fictional Chinese say little about English or Chinese women, apart from the folly of fashionable English ladies who are shown to be infatuated with the more trifling aspects of Chinese culture epitomized in *chinoiserie* furniture and chinaware and the similarly fashion-driven practices of Chinese foot-binding and the "train" attached to English ladies' gowns.[14] Hamilton's predecessors mention the predicament of women's enslavement to the caprice of their husband or fashion, but stop short at discussing how women's condition might be improved. In contrast, Hamilton's work remedies this deficiency by addressing the questions of women's education and vocation.

As Hamilton's fictional Hindu Rajah is supposedly ignorant of British values, Rajah's remarks therefore appear more impartial and arguably less biased than many British men. Before the Rajah embarks on his journey, Hamilton has already enlisted the help of the virtuous Percy to rid the Rajah of any remaining "Oriental" condescension to the womenfolk with handsome doses of Bible reading. Hence Hamilton appropriates the critical convention of earlier pseudo-Oriental travel narratives by male authors to expose men's assumptions about ideal womanhood and some women's participation in perpetuating this limiting ideal. To have her views heard without being censured into silence outright, Hamilton gives her story the conventional ending of a marriage uniting a virtuous couple and hails loving motherhood as

[14] See Letters 14, 33, and 81 in Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*.

the epitome of feminine accomplishment. Yet, even without attempting to overturn the entire system of patriarchy, Hamilton's deployment of a Hindu Rajah's perspective illustrates the prevalence of gender and racial stereotypes, and the successful publication of her work testifies to the alternative possibilities of female authorship.

During his stay in Britain, the Rajah meets Dr. Severan, who is a friend of Captain Grey's. While one of the Rajah's letters recording the charitable deed of Dr. Severan, whose decision of paying off an imprisoned friend's debts with the money intended for scientific experiments, indeed proves him to be a true Christian, Hamilton nevertheless satirizes men's obsession with women's appearance, something which is demonstrated even by Dr. Severan and other respectable British characters such as Captain Grey in Calcutta. At one point the Rajah remarks that Dr. Severan "needs say little to persuade [him] of [Lady Grey's] beauty; the accomplishments and virtues of an ugly woman, can make little impression even on the mind of a philosopher" (Hamilton 222-23). Earlier on, the Rajah records Captain Grey's infatuation with "the young lady in the blue and silver" they meet during a ball; in the "vehemence" of his description of the lady, Grey neglects "the management of the reins," and the carriage in which he and the Rajah are travelling breaks into pieces (Hamilton 168). Shortly afterwards, Grey's courtship of the lady fails because he is not in possession of a large fortune; commenting on Grey's indiscriminate censure of the whole sex after this disappointment, the Rajah recalls: "He knew not the character of this damsel—but she was beautiful; and he assured himself it must be excellent! He knew not from whom her mind had received the light of instruction—but she danced gracefully; and he gave her credit for every accomplishment" (Hamilton 177-79). On his sea voyage from India to Britain, the Rajah is puzzled at the odd match of a "Dewan" and his wife, both of whom are his fellow passengers, with the former having "a deep-thinking, well-informed mind, and a humane and benevolent heart," while the latter is said to be a woman of vanity who cares more about her pets than the wellbeing of the people on board the ship. A surgeon—the Rajah's informant during the voyage—informs him that, before the marriage, "the Dewan was too much charmed with her beauty, to observe any deficiency in her merit […], or, if he did, she was so young" that the Dewan imagined him being able to change her by "the instructions of a husband." If so, it appears that the Dewan has failed in re-educating his wife, leaving the Rajah "very

much astonished, at the picture he [has] drawn of an English woman, and a Christian" (Hamilton 195). Comparing Hamilton's apparently more enlightened characters with Maandaara and Sheermaal, it appears that Hamilton's satire does not always subscribe to rigid dichotomies between the British and the Oriental.

Of the five letters the Rajah writes from England, four concern his stay in Ardent Hall, the country estate of Sir Caprice, who is Lady Grey's elder brother. Before he leaves London for Ardent Hall, the Rajah became acquainted with Miss Ardent, Sir Caprice's elder sister, through Dr. Severan. Being partial in his criteria for ideal womanhood and perhaps a bit too "severe" concerning female learning, Dr. Severan calls Miss Ardent a female pedant who takes pride in her "*masculine understanding*" while treating "the domestic virtues of her own sex […] with the utmost contempt" (Hamilton 220). Dr. Severan also refers to Lady Grey as a counter example, who exemplifies "the pure standard of Christian excellence," and whose wisdom and modesty stem from "the purity of the heart" (Hamilton 222). Later, when the Rajah meets these two women in person, his high esteem for Lady Grey is not disappointed, whereas he finds Miss Ardent more amiable than he has expected. The Rajah relates to Maandaara that, Dr. Severan has "said enough to frighten [him], at the idea of holding any communication with *a learned Lady*," but Miss Ardent turns out to be "not quite so formidable as [he has] at first apprehended" (Hamilton 226). The Rajah informs her about "the present political state" of India, which he tells her is "a subject upon which, since I have been in England, I have seldom had any opportunity, and still seldomer any satisfaction in conversing." He is delighted to note that Miss Ardent has "paid particular attention to everything connected with the history or literature of India," about which the Rajah finds "these western lovers of science" to be "most deplorably ignorant" (Hamilton 227).

At Ardent Hall, the Rajah meets Sir Caprice's fashionable guests, the self-proclaimed metaphysicians Puzzledorf, Sceptic, Vapour, and Axiom.[15] There the Rajah finds Miss Ardent "too fond of disputing with the philosophers, and too much engaged by them to attend to [him]," Lady Ardent too "entirely engrossed by her darling boy" to care for "any other object," and Sir Caprice's daughter Miss Julia Ardent too much a "mixture of insipidity

[15] The folly of these materialist "philosophers" was later more vehemently ridiculed in Hamilton's anti-jacobin *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800).

and haughtiness" to converse with. The Rajah yet again admits to Maandaara his previous misconception about English boarding schools, but wonders why "fashion should lead [Christian women] to relinquish so glorious a privilege," that of "cultivat[ing] their understandings" (Hamilton 274). Nevertheless, when the Rajah finally meets Lady Grey and her daughters, he comes to the conclusion: "though I confess my error, and acknowledge, that I deceived myself in extending my notions of Christianity to every Christian, and of excellence to every female, of England, I still see some who amply justify the expectations that were formed by my sanguine mind" (Hamilton 275).

The incident where Miss Olivia and Miss Caroline cooperate to rescue an old man after his cart has crashed shows that the fortitude of Olivia, Miss Ardent's ward, and the tenderness of Caroline, the pupil of Lady Grey, are alike the requisites of feminine virtue (Perkins and Russell 15). While Miss Ardent in the end appears to be an unthinking follower of Godwinism, and elopes with Mr. Axiom, the superficial Lady Ardent and Miss Julia turn out to be the most unworthy of Christian women. In contrast to Hamilton's scathing caricature of Mary Hays as Bridgetina Botherim in *Memoirs of Modern* Philosophers, Miss Ardent appears to be a more complex combination of a woman scholar admirably knowledgeable about India, frankly contemptuous towards the idea of frivolous female accomplishments, and yet naively susceptible to the promise of materialist philosophy. Though Hamilton's more sympathetic delineation of Miss Ardent may have to do with the different political climates of 1796 and 1800, and her sharing with Mary Wollstonecraft a distaste for the Rousseauian doctrine of sweetly ineffectual women, the ambiguity in her characterisation of the woman scholar in her *Hindoo Rajah* might also have an autobiographical dimension. While the *Critical Review*, the *Analytical Review*, and the *British Critic* complimented Hamilton on her "knowledge of modern life" and her "intimate acquaintance with the history, religion, and manners of the Hindoos," the conservative *Monthly Review* picked on Hamilton's "ungrammatical" errors, concluding that "Miss H. is less happy in her descriptions of Hindoo manners, than in her delineations of scenes at home, where she is better acquainted" (Hamilton, *Appendix A* 310-15).

The condescension of the *Monthly Review* illustrates the difficulties faced by a woman writer attempting to engage with contemporary scholarly or political debate. Women writers at the time had to skilfully exploit the flexibility of the supposedly more feminine genre of the novel and to be

constantly on the defensive to justify their work in keeping with the pedagogical role increasingly assigned to women towards the end of the century. To pre-empt criticism of herself as a scholar, Hamilton carefully attributes the cause of her publication to the private reson of alleviating her brother's premature death in 1792, and to her delight in "reverting to subjects which were interwoven with the ideas of past felicity" when she learned about India from her brother (Hamilton 73). She also describes the process of her becoming acquainted with India as deriving naturally from domestic conversation and from casual discussion with her brother's colleagues, rather than the more masculine manner of systematic research. Two of the reviews informed their readers that Hamilton was "the sister of the late Mr. Charles Hamilton, the learned translator of the Arabic code of Mussulman laws" but while the *Monthly Review* meticulously endeavored to save its readers from being misled by Hamilton's supposedly inaccurate information on India, most reviews focused on the entertaining quality and the aspect of general satire in Hamilton's work (Hamilton, *Appendix A* 309-19). Similarly, in 1818 Hamilton's biographer Elizabeth Benger also assured the reader that Hamilton compiled *Hindoo Rajah* "without affecting to be a Persian scholar" (Benger 1: 109).[16]

The Rajah quits Ardent Hall upon the sad incident of a young "philosopher" committing suicide after having discovered the delusion of the Godwinian "Age of Reason." He joins the Denbeighs at Violet Dale and eventually meets Percy's sister Charlotte in the neighbouring Morley-farm. Emma Denbeigh and the Rajah find Charlotte in all tears, mourning over the deaths of her brother and uncle. In contrast to other sentimental novels which usually allow the heroines and readers to indulge in the delicious sensations of self-pitying sorrow, Charlotte is admonished by the patriarchal Mr. Denbeigh, the father of Dr. Denbeigh, for her "selfish and sinful" mawkishness (Hamilton 302). When Charlotte complains about the "circumscribed […] limits of those duties" assigned to women, Mr. Denbeigh encourages her to exert her mental powers "not only for [her] own entertainment, but for the instruction, or innocent amusement of others," and to disregard the sneers directed at women writers by "the mere mob, who receive every prejudice upon trust" (Hamilton 302-303). Like Charlotte, Hamilton took to authorship when her spinsterhood and the deaths of her uncle and brother left her without

[16] Grogan argues that the account of the Rajah's having already translated his own letters for the perusal of his English friends is Hamilton's strategy to disavow her pretension to scholarly learning by presenting her role as more that of an editor (Benger 35).

any domestic duties to attend to.

As a provincial woman writes on India and the effects of radical philosophy, Hamilton would have been acutely aware of the marginality of her "black baby," the *Hindoo Rajah* (Benger 1: 126-27).[17] Hamilton has her Rajah conclude his final epistle rather modestly, apologizing for his errors, which he hopes can be "put in balance" with "the goodness of his intention" (Hamilton 308). This sense of modesty corresponds with Hamilton's own concluding remarks in her "Dissertation," that "the letters of the Rajah" are "presented to the world, whose decision upon their merit, is looked forward to with timid hope, and determined resignation" (Hamilton 73). Hamilton's self-conscious apology for her intrusion into the masculine domains of Orientalist disquisition and the politics of empire, with her fictional Rajah's repeated comments on the precariousness of coming to a fuller understanding of Britons, demonstrate that the marginal status of the Rajah and of Hamilton as a woman writer make the *Hindoo Rajah* less straightforwardly didactic in its treatment of the failings of Britons and Indians.

Hamilton's work engages with the conventions of travel writing, sentimental literature, and anti-jacobin novels, and is critical of the dominant construction of femininity, as well as of the materialistic "systems" of Godwinian philosophy. By concluding with the marriage of the virtuous exemplars Emma and Mr. Darnley, Hamilton's work seems to rehearse a formulaic happy ending, keeping with what the Rajah notes earlier when he reads the novels borrowed from a young woman, stating that "with these islanders, marriage is a certain passport to never failing, and never fading bliss!" (Hamilton 190) Nevertheless, the dignified independence of Charlotte as a female author shows that women can be useful to society even if they are not wives or mothers.

Coda: Universal Folly and Hindu Vices

Like her predecessors, Hamilton's work is concerned with the peculiarities of Britons, but more than those previous works, as I have suggested, it engages with the twin objectives of getting to know both Britain and India. The juxtaposition of the three Hindus' letters, of the Rajah's earlier remarks and his later observations, and of the fictional letters and the scholarly

[17] This reference appeared in Hamilton's letter to her friend Mrs. Gregory.

"Dissertation," serves to complicate Hamilton's presentation of Hindus and Britons and at times make her satire rather slippery.

The Rajah comes to a better understanding of Britons through his acquaintance with Percy and Captain Grey, whom he meets in India, and Dr. Severan, the Ardents, and the Denbeighs in England. In particular, by putting together Sheermaal's information about English boarding schools, Dr. Severan's explanation of women's education, and his own conversations with Miss Ardent and Lady Grey, the Rajah acknowledges the excellence of Christian precepts as well as the universal potential for both vice and virtue. Before leaving England, the Rajah writes to Maandaara, remarking that "to extend our knowledge of the world, is but to become acquainted with new modes of pride, vanity, and folly," and that "in Europe, as in Asia, an affected singularity often passes for superior wisdom; bold assertion for truth; and sickly fastidiousness for true delicacy of sentiment." His journey makes him realize that "the passions of men are everywhere the same." In addition, he notes that "notwithstanding the progress of [radical] philosophy, and the report of Sheermaal, […] Christianity is not yet entirely extinct; but that, like Virtue and Wisdom, it has still some adherents, in the retired scenes of life" (Hamilton 306-07).

As the Rajah concludes his trip, he remains optimistic about the value of cross-cultural communication. Nevertheless, he also mentions to Maandaara "the complaisance of the people of England" who put "such faith […] in the assertions of philosophers!" (Hamilton 307). Hamilton's work implies that Britons have to reform themselves before they criticize Hindus, for in comparison with the notable moral apathy in Britain, Hindu society at least appears to be "true to its own values" (Perkins and Russell 22). While her work takes British dominion over India for granted, it subscribes to what Perkins and Russell refer as a particular "version of colonialism which will work only if the English practice the Christian tolerance and mercy they preach, something which the novel implies is not by any means certain to happen" (Perkins and Russell 29). Furthermore, Hamilton's discussion of womanhood via a multitude of British and Hindu viewpoints appears to suggest that the current defects in women's "decorative" education and the limited as well as limiting outlook on women's vocation are in more urgent need of remedy, whether in Britain or India.

Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah* is unique in its inclusion of a scholarly

"Dissertation" and footnotes, the pairing of the Rajah with other Hindu informants, and the specific double contexts of Britain and India. As the reviews of her work showed, ethnographic details were increasingly seen as a requisite for literature dealing with the Orient, and the apparent fictionality of the Oriental traveler appeared increasingly outmoded. Although the Rajah appears to be an open-minded albeit naïve traveler, and although even Maandaara and Sheermaal sometimes get things right, Hamilton's work also at times illustrates the cultural stagnation of contemporary India and the defects of Hinduism concerning women's education. As "Anglicist" and utilitarian approaches to colonial administration gained momentum in the early nineteenth century (Macfie 50-58), the idea of an intelligent Hindu's enlightened vision of "the passions of men [being] everywhere the same" gradually lost any critical purchase it might once have offered. By remodelling the antiquated mechanism of the pseudo-Oriental letters in imagining India and Britain via the inflecting lens of fictional Hindus, Hamilton's work offers a vision of intercultural understanding and transnational universality while it embodies and contributes to the shifting tides of British Orientalism.

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