



universität  
wien

# DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

**“The ideological framework of Elizabeth Hamilton’s  
novels”**

Verfasserin

Brigitte Petritsch, Bakk.Phil.

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

Wien, 2011

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:  
Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:  
Betreuerin:

A 343  
Anglistik und Amerikanistik  
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Margarete Rubik



---

### **Acknowledgements**

I should like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Margarete Rubik, for her patience, support and highly constructive feedback. Special thanks to Bob Irvine, whose fascinating seminar on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fiction sparked my interest in the novel of crisis. Finally, I am truly grateful to Julian, who bore with me and encouraged me during moments of crisis and frustration.

---

# Inhaltsverzeichnis

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Previous research</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Historical background</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1	The English and Scottish Enlightenment . . . . .	9
3.2	The cultural revolution . . . . .	12
3.3	The novel in the “long” eighteenth century . . . . .	14
3.4	The role of women in the eighteenth century . . . . .	16
3.5	Women in the revolutionary debate . . . . .	17
3.6	The French Revolution . . . . .	22
3.7	The anti-Jacobin novel . . . . .	25
3.8	The rise of Evangelicalism . . . . .	28
3.9	Conclusion . . . . .	32
<b>4</b>	<b>The ideological framework of Hamilton’s novels</b>	<b>33</b>
4.1	Introduction . . . . .	33
4.1.1	<i>Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah</i> . . . . .	34
4.1.2	<i>Memoirs of Modern Philosophers</i> . . . . .	35
4.2	Anti-Jacobin elements in Hamilton’s fiction . . . . .	36
4.3	Religious arguments in Hamilton’s fiction . . . . .	47
4.4	Narrative analysis . . . . .	76
4.4.1	Characters and characterization . . . . .	87
4.4.2	Plot . . . . .	92
4.4.3	Intertextual references, parody and plagiarism . . . . .	98
4.4.4	Conclusion . . . . .	102

<b>5 Conclusion</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>6 Bibliography</b>	<b>105</b>

# Kapitel 1

## Introduction

*In Hamilton radical and conservative consort together in an even more complex way than is customary for women of her period. (Thaddeus 1994:266)*

As Janice Farrar Thaddeus' statement above illustrates, novelist Elizabeth Hamilton still puzzles modern scholars who try to establish firm labels describing her ideological affiliations and origins: while her position in the conservative anti-Jacobin camp has early been established by Marilyn Butler (1975) and Gary Kelly (1989), literary scholars like Eleanor Ty (1993) and Claire Grogan (2000) frequently revisit her novels for traces of radical political thought and devise new designations and more discriminate descriptions of her legacy. Even Hamilton's geographical and religious affiliations are difficult to categorize. Often termed a "Scottish" writer, Elizabeth Hamilton, in fact, was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and raised in Scotland by her Presbyterian aunt and Episcopalian uncle. She then spent many years of her adult life in England before she finally returned to Edinburgh. Living in the first century after the Act of Union had joined the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland into the united kingdom of "Great Britain", her novels present to literary scholars a sometimes surprisingly untroubled affirmation of British identity, which only at second sight reveals minor complications and concerns about colonial rule or the future of Scotland. A still greater challenge, however, is posed by Hamilton's predilection as a writer to boldly defy the boundaries imposed on female writers, appropriating masculine genres, discourses and narrative strategies and speaking with an authority only granted to male authors. Her novels are set in England, India, Scotland and classical Rome, and include treatises on such topics as the literature, history and culture of Romans and Hindus, the proper role of women in society, and models of education. Hamilton demonstrates her remarkable literacy and profound cultural knowledge by inserting many epigraphs from authors such as Shakespeare, Milton, Cowper, Pope, Thomson and Butler. She also draws on Enlightenment discourse and thought in her endorsement of rational Christianity and her tolerant approach to different cultures. However, most scholarly interest in Hamilton's novels is informed by a simultaneous interest in the politically charged events of her times. In her novels Hamilton referred to

---

and positioned herself against major political events and movements, such as the French Revolution, the women's rights movement, the rise of Methodism, the Age of Enlightenment, and the growth of the British Empire. She contributed to the revolutionary debate of the late eighteenth century, when subversive ideas of human rights, meritocracy, social equality and democracy had found their way into Britain; when Mary Wollstonecraft and other revolutionary feminists pleaded for female rights, and when British imperialist policies in India raised a storm of controversy back home in Britain. In an attempt to prevent a revolution similar to that in France from occurring in Britain, notions of nation, gender and virtue were deconstructed and renegotiated, provoking an intense debate about the fundamental values which should constitute British identity. The turn of the century saw also a strong and pervasive religious revival which seized all layers of society and inspired its members with a new religious piety that may also be detected in Hamilton's novels. Elizabeth Hamilton thus wrote in a time of significant historical, political and social change, and to read her novels adequately requires some knowledge of this eventful and to some extent convoluted historical era. It could even be argued that the difficulties in doing justice to Hamilton's work in all its diversity may be due to the inherent complexity of the historical processes against which she positioned herself. After all, in order to be able to "localize" her contribution to the ideological debates of the late eighteenth century, it is necessary to understand the different and even contradictory forces which existed within political factions. This same complexity, however, also allows modern scholars to approach Hamilton's novels from a variety of perspectives, taking into account the wide range of issues raised by the author, as well as her specific contribution to the process of renegotiating concepts of, for example, gender, nation, identity, reason or virtue. By analysing the religious beliefs which inform Hamilton's arguments concerning political and social reform, the author has endeavoured to find a research focus which both does justice to the great diversity of topics in her novels and considers the many opposing ideological forces of the revolutionary debate. As Hamilton's religious piety determines most of her views on the political events of her times, a detailed study of the former will provide a new perspective for approaching her work, while simultaneously integrating previous studies on the author and her times.

# Chapter 2

## Previous research

Elizabeth Hamilton was “discovered” and became the subject of scholarly interest mostly due to the resurgence of feminist and historicist criticism, both attempting to bring non-canonical authors to critical attention. As early as 1932, J.M.S. Tompkins mentioned Hamilton in her study *The popular novel in England*, and in 1974, Gina Luria edited three of her works<sup>1</sup>. However, this early interest did not lead to much further consideration or critical studies, probably owing to the conservative ideology automatically imputed to her writings. Indeed, after Marilyn Butler’s disparaging portrayal of Hamilton in her influential study, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975), Hamilton was firmly located in the camp of anti-Jacobin writers. Marilyn Butler characterizes her condescendingly as “the most amusing of the anti-Jacobins” (108) and dismisses her together with the other anti-Jacobin novelists as unworthy of critical consideration: “No novelist on the conservative side who matured in the 1790s had a distinctive talent. Each of them wrote to a formula and adopted an apparently conscious stance of self-effacement and personal anonymity. [...] Novel after novel unashamedly used the same structure, the same incidents, the same caricatured figures” (88).

Not only did this censure hamper critical studies on Hamilton in general, it also prevented a more complex and thorough analysis of her novels, since as representatives of anti-Jacobin fiction these were not considered serious enough for proper investigation. While the feminist and historicist criticism introduced by Marilyn Butler and later Gary Kelly led to an increased interest in radical Jacobin writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays, conservative and above all anti-Jacobin novelists did not seem to present enough original doctrines or innovative literary techniques to become the object of critical analysis. Indeed, Hamilton is probably most often discussed and referred to in secondary literature about more well-known authors such as Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth or Mary Wollstonecraft<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup>These works are *The Cottagers of Glenburnie*, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, and *Letters Addressed to the Daughter of a Nobleman*

<sup>2</sup>e.g. Butler, Marilyn. *Maria Edgeworth*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972; —. *Jane Austen and*

---

This critical neglect was strongly denounced in 1994 by Thaddeus, who challenged views of Hamilton as a simply conservative writer. Even though in the 1790s the Anti-Jacobin Review had claimed Hamilton as one of their own by reading her novels as manifestos of the anti-Jacobin cause, Thaddeus argued that “in Hamilton radical and conservative consort[ed] together in an even more complex way than [was] customary for women of her period” (Thaddeus 1994:266). Emphasizing the liberal aspects of Hamilton’s writings, Thaddeus thus invited scholars to engage in more radical interpretations of her novels. At about the same time appeared Gary Kelly’s influential study *Women, Writing and Revolution* (1993), which valued Hamilton’s contribution to the revolutionary debate of the 1790s, showing an interest in the anti-Jacobin perspective and thus stressing indirectly the importance of regarding both sides of the debate. Both Thaddeus and Kelly contributed significantly in establishing Hamilton as a serious writer worthy of critical consideration. In the most general terms it should be mentioned that most critics have approached Hamilton’s novels from a historicist perspective, focusing primarily on the historical and ideological background which allegedly underlies her work: Hamilton’s novels and essays have been studied against their historical background and automatically interpreted as contributions to the debate triggered by what Kelly refers to as the eighteenth century “cultural revolution” (1993:3). In these critical studies, scholars thus examine and analyse her moral and political agenda, such as her feminist, political and imperialist attitudes; her opinions on female education, revolution and reform, and her notions of social rights and duties, the nation or the family.

In most analyses of Hamilton’s fiction, a concern for the dichotomy of Jacobinism versus anti-Jacobinism can be perceived, as most scholars try to locate her on a continuum from progressive to conservative or to categorize her as belonging to one of the two opposite camps. Interpretations vary widely, ranging from those who continue to allocate her to the conservative camp without making allowances for any potential ideological ambiguities<sup>3</sup>, to those identifying a moderate position<sup>4</sup> and to those even arguing for radical elements in her fiction<sup>5</sup>.

---

*the War of Ideas*. Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1975; Hunt, Linda C. "A Woman's Portion: Jane Austen and the Female Character". In Schofield, Mary Anne (ed.); Macheski, Cecilia (ed.); *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*. Athens; Ohio UP; 1986, pp. 8-28; Johnson, Claudia. *Jane Austen. Women, Politics and the Novel*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988; Know-Shaw, Peter. *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Taylor, Barbara. *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

<sup>3</sup>e.g. Grenby, M.O. *The Anti-Jacobin Novel. British Conservatism and the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. While Grenby discerns Evangelical elements in Hamilton’s fiction which set her apart from the majority of the anti-Jacobin novelists, he claims that the assumption of a liberal agenda served by but hidden underneath Hamilton’s conservative rhetoric is erroneous (cf. 2001:166). “Both Jane West and Elizabeth Hamilton, whom Claudia Johnson holds up as ideologically conflicted authors, acknowledged their novels’ similarity and indebtedness to earlier anti-Jacobin fictions” (2001, 3-4).

<sup>4</sup>e.g. Claire Grogan, who identifies Hamilton in her introduction to *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (2000) as “a liberal writer who sits midway between these two political extremes” (Grogan 2000:12).

<sup>5</sup>e.g. Mellor, Anne K. “Romantic Orientalism Begins at Home: Elizabeth Hamilton’s *Translations of*

Concerning this propensity for categorization, a significant observation has been made by Thaddeus, who argues that the dichotomy of conservatism and radicalism is too simplistic and cannot be consistently applied to women writers (cf. 1994:265). Katherine Binhammer similarly points out similarities in the concerns of the supposed antagonists Elizabeth Hamilton and Mary Hays and repeats Thaddeus' claim that the categorization of these writers into two opposite camps conceals their similarities and affinities (cf. 2003:3). Both observations point towards a more sophisticated approach regarding Hamilton as a writer. While most critics still assume that a generally traditionalist ideology pervades her fiction, they increasingly examine the concrete framework and patterns of this ideology to provide a more nuanced representation of it. Topics of interest which allow for liberal interpretations are, for example, Hamilton's narrative strategies, as well as her specific views on female education and parental authority. In more recent studies Hamilton's fiction has thus been often approached from a variety of perspectives, trying to account for seeming contradictions and to describe the nuances of what scholars perceive to be an elaborate system of thought.

For example, Gary Kelly (1993:126), who reaffirms Hamilton as an anti-Jacobin and "counterfeminist" novelist, applauds her contribution to women novelists' endeavours to feminize masculine discourse. Similarly, Claudia Johnson (9) concludes that her "novels are unmistakably conservative in their defense of established forms", but holds that they are "remarkable in their refusal to be inflexibly doctrinaire and in their readiness to recognize and give way to at least some progressive social criticism." In their introduction to *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, Pamela Ann Perkins and Shannon Lee Russell (13) also do not question Hamilton's anti-Jacobin affiliations, but identify her as moderate when it comes to education and feminist issues.

As can be seen, many seem to regard Hamilton's ideological orientation as more complex than previously assumed. Some go even further and try to identify specifically radical elements hidden beneath the anti-Jacobin surface. Claudia Johnson claims that Hamilton employs anti-Jacobin rhetoric and satire only to advance her own reformist agenda in favour of feminist issues (cf. 20). Eleanor Ty spots what she perceives to be disparities and inconsistencies in the text which reveal the author's uneasy and ambiguous attitude towards the ideology infusing her novels (cf. 1991:115). Similarly, Murray (678) interprets *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* as a "Whiggish history of female progress", which "presents a decided challenge [...] to certain understandings of conservative culture in the 1790s that implicitly align anti-Jacobin writers such as Hamilton with nostalgic defences of tradition".

What makes Murray's analysis significant is her accurate remark that the term "con-

---

*the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*. In *Studies in Romanticism*. Boston: Summer 2005, Vol.44 (2), pp.151-164. In her analysis of *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, Mellor comes to the conclusion that "Hamilton's epistolary format produces a multiplicity of standpoints which embraces a far more radical stance both towards British imperialist politics and towards the roles and rights of women than [...] critics have suggested" (2005:156-157).

---

servative” has been misleading in critics’ assessments of Hamilton’s contribution to the revolutionary debate. The difficulty arises both from changing interpretations of the term and its inherent complexity: as Wood (29) points out, “conservatism” has been used in the context of politics only since the 1840s and has thus always been applied anachronistically in references to earlier periods in history. As a result, critics may have used it indiscriminately without having properly defined and enquired into its meaning. According to Wood, the term “conservatism” is also often too vague to do justice to the many nuances of the values nowadays labelled conservative: what we now consider as the conservative ideologies of the late eighteenth century were far from being homogeneous, but instead encompassed a wide spectrum of different movements and theories: “1790s conservatism comprised a complex set of values, and women’s relationships to it were equally complex” (29). In order to underline the fundamental intricacy of political categories in the late eighteenth century, Wood provides the example of “the complicated political position of Burke” (58), who has been often regarded as the father of conservative thought and an important influence on women writers. However, Burke was not a Tory but a Whig and recent interpretations<sup>6</sup> have described him as a “conservative reformer” who regarded moderate change as a necessary means of maintaining social stability. Another important statement concerning the Jacobin/anti-Jacobin polarity has been made by Matthew Orville Grenby, who criticizes different scholars’ attempts to present conservative fiction as more ideologically ambiguous than it is. As he claims, these efforts serve only as an apologetic justification to analyse the texts in the first place. However, since conservative novels constituted the most dominant kind of literature, they should be studied in their own right without value judgement; not despite but because of their conservatism (cf. 3).

As can be seen, the question of ideology has dominated most research on Hamilton’s fiction, regardless whether it has been approached from a feminist<sup>7</sup>, post-colonial<sup>8</sup> or historicist<sup>9</sup> perspective, or been subjected to an analysis of its use of narrative technique. However, the many contradictory interpretations which her novels have engendered may be accounted for by yet another important research focus, the religious framework underlying Hamilton’s reformist agenda. As has been pointed out by Perkins and Russell, “Hamilton’s satire is generally what we might call progressive in the values it espouses. Yet

---

<sup>6</sup>e.g. Conniff, James. *The Useful Cobbler: Edmund Burke and the Politics of Progress*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1994; Watson, George. “Burke’s Conservative Revolution.” *Critical Quarterly* 26, no 1 (1984): 78-99; both are quoted in Wood, Lisa. *Modes of Discipline. Women, Conservatism, and the Novel after the French Revolution*. London: Associated University Press, 2003.

<sup>7</sup>e.g. Taylor, Susan B. “Feminism and Orientalism in Elizabeth Hamilton’s Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah.” *Women’s Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2000 Oct; 29 (5): 555-81.

<sup>8</sup>e.g. Grogan, Claire. “Identifying Foreign Bodies: New Philosophers and Hottentots in Elizabeth Hamilton’s *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*.” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 18.3 (Spring 2006): 305-27; Wallace, Tara Ghoshal. “Reading the Metropole: Elizabeth Hamilton’s *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*.” IN: Wallace, Miriam L. (ed. and introd.) *Enlightening Romanticism, Romancing the Enlightenment: British Novels from 1750 to 1832*. Surrey, England: Ashgate; 2009.

<sup>9</sup>e.g. Egenolf, Susan B. *The Art of Political Fiction in Hamilton, Edgeworth, and Owenson*. Surrey, England: Ashgate; 2009.

these attacks on social and political abuses and corruption arise mainly from the strongly Christian principles which simultaneously produce the book's social conservatism" (1718). Perkins and Russell draw attention to the explicitly religious nature of many of Hamilton's arguments, which they hold mainly responsible for the author's ambiguous ideological orientation, and link it specifically to her feminist agenda: "What Hamilton is attempting to do is to create a conservative, explicitly Christian justification for giving women a proper education and recognizing their contributions to society" (17). However, Perkins and Russell are not the only scholars having called to attention the religious motivation underlying Hamilton's reformist agenda. Similarly, Grogan convincingly argues that Hamilton's model of social reform is defined by what she identifies as a "framework of middle-class morality and Christian faith" (2000:12). Grenby perceives Hamilton's agenda to be similar and even indebted to the Evangelical campaign for spiritual reformation (cf. 166). What their studies have in common is that they aim to demonstrate that many of Hamilton's arguments concerning education, social and political reform as well as the rights and duties of the individual in society can be traced back to her religious convictions. However, while the Christian morality of her works has been acknowledged by the scholars mentioned above, there has not yet been a comprehensive study of the particular ideological framework underlying her novels. This paper is thus conceived as an attempt to reconcile previous studies of Hamilton's agenda by analysing Hamilton's religious beliefs and sense of morality as a common denominator of her moral and political agenda. One main objective of this study will be to describe these beliefs with specific regard for the role of Providence, the rights and duties of men and women in society, the causes of suffering and corruption, and models of both spiritual and institutional reform. A second aim will be to closely analyse the narrative technique used by Hamilton to translate her agenda into fiction. Due to the considerable diversity of thought prevalent during Hamilton's lifetime, the analysis will be prefaced by a short historical introduction, which allows consideration of Hamilton's ideas in context and analysis of them against the historical, philosophical and theological background of Britain at the end of the eighteenth century. While it may be possible to assume a variety of potential influences from fields as diverse as the Enlightenment, post-Enlightenment philosophers such as Edmund Burke, the religious revivals of the 1790s, or the anti-Jacobin novel, this study will be restricted to the description of Hamilton's ideological framework, without attempting to pin down any concrete sources or influences. Such a venture would exceed the boundaries of a simple master thesis; however, further research should be pursued taking more into account the intellectual and religious background of the late eighteenth century and thus placing Hamilton's work more firmly within the context of eighteenth-century thought.

---

# Chapter 3

## Historical background

As has been pointed out above, Elizabeth Hamilton's novels have been treated chiefly as contributions to the ideological debates revolving around the issues of the "cultural revolution" - a term coined by Gary Kelly (1993) to describe the massive changes in society Britain underwent in the second half of the eighteenth century. In order to better understand Hamilton's own contributions to the political and ideological debates of her times, a brief description of the main events and movements which have characterized the eighteenth century will be provided in the chapter below. This should allow reading Hamilton's novels against their historical and ideological background and comparing her ideas and arguments with those of her contemporaries.

### 3.1 The English and Scottish Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was an era in Western philosophy which developed throughout Europe, Russia and the American colonies in the eighteenth century. Inspired by the experimental method first introduced by Isaac Newton, intellectuals applied this methodology to the emerging social sciences and endorsed reason as the principal source of authority. Asserting these new sciences as fully-fledged disciplines in their own right, Enlightenment philosophers presented remarkable intellectual accomplishments in the fields of philosophy, economics, history, sociology and psychology. The Enlightenment, however, did not constitute a single and homogeneous movement of thought, and while it was inspired by similar values, its philosophers did not necessarily produce similar ideas. In general, its proponents have been characterized by a strong belief in reason and the possibilities of science, which led them to question traditional morals and institutions, such as the Church. The intellectual accomplishments of the Enlightenment have also been identified as major influences paving the way towards the American and French Revolutions (cf. Chtinis 4).

In Britain, the Age of Enlightenment commenced after the Glorious Revolution in 1688, when both England and Scotland experienced a general cultural and social awakening.

Important improvements and accomplishments were achieved in fields as diverse as agriculture, economics, the arts, and literature. While nowadays England's most famous philosopher is usually identified to be John Locke and David Hume is regarded as his Scottish counterpart, both countries produced a remarkable range of thinkers such as Samuel Clarke, David Hartley, William Paley and Richard Price in England, and William Robertson, Adam Smith, Francis Hutcheson and Thomas Reid in Scotland.

For the purposes of this paper, it is essential to consider the effects of the Enlightenment on the Churches of England and Scotland, with respect to their institutions as well as their theology. It has already been pointed out above that the belief in reason provided a challenge to the absolute authority of the Church. However, this statement requires further elaboration and explanation. In contrast to the strongly atheistic tendencies of philosophers in countries such as France, most Enlightenment thinkers in England and Scotland continued within what Stewart Jay Brown (2006:5) calls a "broadly defined Christian orthodoxy". Particularly in Scotland, the Enlightenment is often considered "a profoundly Protestant phenomenon" (Rosenblatt 283) which developed within the institution of the church itself. However, despite the Kirk's importance as one of the main supporting institutions of the Scottish Enlightenment, the contribution it made was entirely secular: a significant number of Scottish intellectuals were churchmen, who – thanks to the financial security of their positions – were free to devote their leisure time to secular philosophy and literature. None of them made any significant achievements in theology and since their pastoral vigour was relatively low when compared to Victorian standards, they were often denounced by the following generations of churchmen (cf. Chitnis 44).

England, on the other hand, saw a prolific exchange in the elaboration and dissemination of Christian Enlightenment theology and philosophy. Instead of challenging religious faith on the grounds of reason and science, Enlightenment philosophers tried to demonstrate the inherently reasonable nature of the Christian religion and thus "reconcile their faith with the new sciences emerging in Europe" (Rosenblatt, 284). Interestingly, most seemed convinced that the bond between science and religion would strengthen the cause of religion rather than weaken it. A famous example is John Locke's treatise *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), which inspired Enlightened Protestants throughout Europe to fight atheism by proving the reasonable nature of their faith. In England, religious groups as diverse as the Cambridge Platonists, Latitudinarians and moderate Anglicans were amongst the chief defenders of Newton, firmly believing that the essentials of Christianity could be proven by science and the study of nature.

Apart from discounting the arguments of atheists, reason also served to counter fanaticism and religious 'enthusiasm'. This was significant since the seventeenth century had seen confessional warfare and religious persecution in both England and Scotland and the dangers of sectarianism and religious fanaticism still loomed in the collective consciousness. While the Age of Enlightenment was characterized by religious moderation and stability, confessional differences still remained and religious revivals and especially the

rise of Methodism produced new communities outside the established churches. Among those identified and derogatorily referred to as “Enthusiasts” were members of all unpopular religious groups such as Quakers, Methodists, or Catholics, as well as Puritans in England and Episcopalians in Scotland. They were denounced as zealots and religious fanatics who pretended to have divine inspirations but were too deluded to gain any real knowledge of God. Reason was considered a useful antidote to enthusiasm, since it would allow moderation of both the minds and the discourse of religious fanatics which threatened the moderate and rational tendencies of the established churches (cf. Stock 233).

By emphasizing the reasonable nature of Christianity, Enlightened Protestants came to advocate a more intelligent, comprehensible and morally effective form of Christianity. They no longer attached much importance to doctrinal subtleties and thus hoped to reunite Protestants by drawing attention away from inter-confessional differences. Already in the seventeenth century there had been an abundance of treatises on the subject of toleration by, for example, John Milton, John Locke, the Cambridge Platonists and the Anglican Latitudinarians, and the balance long tipped in favour of toleration, in print at least. However, practice lagged far behind theory; while the legal framework for more religious freedom and toleration was provided by the Act of Toleration in 1689, this Act only applied to Trinitarians, excluding Catholics and non-Trinitarians. It also maintained the existing social and political discrimination against Dissenters, who were still denied access to political offices and universities. In general it should also be noted that Enlightenment appeals for toleration often excluded atheists, non-Protestant confessions (such as Roman Catholics) and non-Christian religions (cf. Rosenblatt 285; Bradley 362).

Concerning Enlightenment theology, it should be said that while the English and Scottish Enlightenment did not question Christianity or the established churches as such, it strongly affected Christian theology: Enlightened Protestants endorsed a form of Christianity stripped of many of its distinctively Christian aspects, which resembled more a kind of natural religion. Given that reason was regarded as a sufficient source of authority and guide to truth, they deemed scriptural revelation as no longer necessary to gain knowledge of God. Instead, the nature of God should become evident to believers on the basis of reason alone. While this God was still acknowledged and worshipped as the Creator of the Universe, Enlightened Protestants became more sceptical as to His involvement in everyday life. They rather believed that God had endowed human beings with a natural and innate knowledge of both Himself and ethical life. This led to an emphasis of the moral aspects of religion; however, many essentially Christian tenets and doctrines, such as the Trinity, were discarded for not answering the imperatives of reason (cf. Rosenblatt 285).

Two important concepts in eighteenth century thinking were the *Great Chain of Being* and natural law. Representing a synthesis of Christian religion and classicism, they provided “interrelated explanations for nature, morality, social organization, and history”

(White 75). The concept of the *Great Chain of Being* is informed by the belief that the entire universe was created by God, that God assigned to everything in this universe a reason for existence, and that His creation is both complete and characterized by an inherent order and hierarchy. Closely connected to the *Great Chain of Being* is natural law, which was first introduced by Aristotle and later integrated into Christian thinking by Aquinas. According to natural law, everything in God's creation has both purpose and reason. For example, the purpose of humanity is to do good, abstain from evil and centre life around the knowledge and love of God. Reason was given to humanity to understand the nature of God and the universe. God is both inherently reasonable and accessible to reason, since nature, the Scripture and even human activity bear testimony to His reason (cf. White 75-80).

The eighteenth century, however, was not only the Age of Reason; from mid-century onwards it is generally referred to as the Age of Sentiment. This paradigm shift was partly based on the realization that social and moral progress could be achieved not only through every human being's rational faculties, but also the natural sentiments with which humanity was increasingly seen to be endowed. Described by the term "sensibility", these natural sentiments included, for example, a certain "human faculty of feeling, a capacity for refined emotion and an inherent ability to experience compassion for others" (Rosenblatt 293).

While "Enlightened Christian sentimentalism" was generally less pronounced in Britain than it was in other Protestant countries, the cult of feeling affected British philosophy and theology as well. Enlightened Protestants were increasingly facing criticism for their perhaps naïve belief in rationalism, which – while it did not curb atheism or Deism – had stripped the Christian faith of its most distinctive features. The sentimental philosophers strongly felt the need to adopt a new, more emotional language better suited to expressing their Christian faith. While the founder of sentimental philosophy in Britain – the third Earl of Shaftesbury – had deliberately abandoned the Christian tradition, his ideas and terms were adopted by the Christian philosophers Francis Hutcheson and Joseph Butler and thus found their way into Christian philosophical thought.

## 3.2 The cultural revolution

As a result of the political, cultural and social awakening which characterized eighteenth century Enlightenment England and Scotland, Britain's society also underwent important changes in its values and ideologies – changes described by Kelly by the term "cultural revolution". According to Kelly, this revolution marked the rise of specifically middle class values and ideals, challenging the hegemony of the aristocracy and gentry.

While the cultural revolution reached its high point in the years preceding and following the French Revolution, the ideological shift from the upper to the middle classes could

first be identified at the turn of the century with Collier's pamphlet attacking Restoration drama, which are seen to have marked the end of the Restoration period: as shown by the immediate popularity of his pamphlet, the aristocratic values upheld by these plays were no longer finding acceptance in public opinion and were dismissed in favour of a more outspoken religious piety. In the course of the Age of Enlightenment, journals like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* and works of both fiction and drama<sup>1</sup> promoted "values more closely connected to the concerns and material conditions of the middle class" (Wood 33). Kelly identifies four central themes which seem to have predominated in middle-class thought:

the nature and importance of the individual self; the changing nature and role of the family and the 'domestic affections' (including childhood and the role of women); relations between different social classes and ranks; and 'national' history, culture and identity, and language (including the relation of speech and writing and the nature and function of literature). (Kelly, 1989:10)

Structuring their ideology around these four themes, the rising middle classes were increasingly shaping public morality, infusing it with the ideals of their professional lives and constructing it in opposition to the older aristocratic values of 'chivalry', 'custom' and 'tradition'. Most important were 'virtue' and 'reason', which came to be seen as the defining parameters of the professionalized self. Kelly (1993:5) defined eighteenth-century virtue as "professionalized affectivity, or 'sensibility' disciplined into a moral self capable of deferring immediate gratification for future benefits, declining material gratification for moral and intellectual benefits, and thus acting ethically according to 'truth' and 'justice'" (Kelly 1993:5). 'Reason', on the other hand, "stood for the method and order necessary in 'learned' professions" (1993:5).

The term "cultural revolution" thus describes primarily the rise of the middle classes with their concomitant influence on attitudes and beliefs. In the course of this "revolution" they consolidated themselves as a class ideologically and culturally independent of the aristocracy. At the same time they pushed for actual reforms reflecting these shifts in attitudes, such as "reform of Parliament, expansion of the 'political nation', professionalization of institutions and society as a whole, reward for merit and abolition of 'privilege', encouragement of competition and an investment economy, and modernized and extended education for participation in such an economy" (Kelly 1993:5).

Since the proponents of such reforms counted on achieving their demands by addressing the individual consciousness rather than resorting to external pressure or constraints, the cultural revolution might also be seen as an intellectual debate conducted by means

---

<sup>1</sup>Famous examples are Richardson's remarkably successful novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-48) which present their readers with 'virtuous' heroines combining sexual chastity, piety, industriousness and reason to defend this 'virtue'; earlier, Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) and George Lillo's *The London Merchant* (1731) were popular plays that both showed tolerance towards a formerly common butt of seventeenth century satire, the merchant figure.

of the written word in educational treatises, newspaper articles, pamphlets, novels and philosophical writings. Eminent novelists campaigning for reform by means of fiction were, for example, Mary Wollstonecraft (*The Wrongs of Woman*), William Godwin (*Caleb Williams*), Mary Hays (*Emma Courtney*) and Thomas Holcroft (*Anna St. Ives*). Derogatorily called “Jacobins” by their ideological opponents, this group of intellectuals advocated a broad and rather diverse agenda of political and social reforms, attacking the rigidity of certain social conventions and Britain’s social structure. Points of criticism included, for example, the despotic hegemony of the landed elite and the church, the injustice and meaninglessness of class-based and gender-based distinctions, as well as the repressive power of social conventions on the emotional and intellectual capacities of women. The revolutionary debate triggered by their reform plans both resulted in and was facilitated by a simultaneous rise in cultural consumption of printed works of all kinds – including the novel. The role of the novel in the revolutionary debate, along with its literary and moral status in public opinion, will be discussed in the following chapter (cf. Kelly 1993:5-9; Perkins & Russell 13).

### 3.3 The novel in the “long” eighteenth century

As mentioned above, the end of the eighteenth century saw a sharp rise in print culture, with the novel as one of the eras’ chief cultural productions. However, since the novel itself was a relatively new genre, it still possessed “low moral, literary, and intellectual status” (Kelly 1993:13). The general suspicion among intellectuals was largely due to the genre’s close association with the older form of the romance, which according to McKeon (27) had acquired an “overwhelmingly trivialising or pejorative” meaning already in the seventeenth century. For example, in his preface to his novel *Incognita*, Congreve characterized romances as stories “where lofty language, miraculous contingencies and impossible performances elevate and surprise the reader into a giddy delight”, but which leave the reader with the conviction “that ‘tis all a lie” (474).

Despite numerous authors’ attempts to dissociate their works from the genre of the romance, the morally conscious writers remained sceptical of novels, which they believed to entrance readers into a fantastic reality disconnected from their own. As Grenby explains, in some readers’ eyes fiction was “guilty of conjuring up a chimerical vision of life, as full of heroes, heroines and easily acquired fortunes as it was empty of the harsh realities of life, a utopian no-place in which a naive reader might erroneously place his or her faith” (17-18). The danger of fiction thus lay in the creation of chimerical realities, in which the practices and values of everyday life no longer applied. Novels were believed to present their readers with an unrealistic system of values, which they would consequently apply to their own lives. As a result, avid readers of novels would lose touch with reality and neglect the customary values and practices of real life.

The conservative intellectuals' fear was increased by the further assumption that fiction appealed to the imagination rather than reason, which would leave readers unable to properly evaluate the work in terms of the ideologies underlying it. Readers of novels were regarded as indiscriminating, reading 'good' and 'bad' literature alike, and were said to be unable to draw the right moral conclusions about the stories they were reading. Moreover, because of the belief that the novel had originated from the court romance, it was closely associated with court culture and believed to disseminate moral decadence, corruption and erotic passions. This uneasiness about novels was also linked to another source of widespread cultural anxiety – the spread of literacy among the lower classes. As was pointed out by Grenby (13-14),

A rhetoric of opposition to the spread of reading, and to the educational and distributive processes that seemed to facilitate it, grew steadily throughout the eighteenth century. [...] Education of the poor, and the dissemination of reading materials to them, had consistently been condemned because they unfitted them for their station in life.

Many middle-class intellectuals were thus concerned about extending literacy into the poor and working classes, fearing that reading would present them with unrealistic expectations about life. According to them, these new and uneducated readers constituted a putative threat, since they had not yet learned to discriminate between 'good' and 'bad' literature; i.e. novels that were trustworthy and useful, and novels of a dubious moral content dangerous for possibly subverting social order. Furthermore, they were believed to be ill-qualified to properly comprehend and draw the right conclusions from what they were reading. Novels played an important role in this issue, since their fantastic unrealistic worlds were most thought to withdraw lower-class readers from the harsh realities of everyday life. They were also held responsible for propagating the reading habit and thus allowing more and more people access to putatively dangerous texts. And finally, given that novels were seen to fabricate a system of values different from that of real life, they were accused of creating a moral vacuum within readers which would make them particularly receptive to revolutionary theories and ideas. As a result, novels came to be regarded as the first step on a long path leading to moral downfall.

Yet, despite general fears of lower-class readers escaping all attempts at ideological control, novels became the chief medium in which the ideas of the cultural revolution were discussed. Addressing a middle-class readership, writers and intellectuals from all sides of the political spectrum wrote novels to promote their ideas and theories under the guise of 'mere' entertainment. Since they reached a wider readership than non-fictional philosophical or polemical treatises, they were "ideally suited for the role of ideological communication in an age of social change and conflict" (Kelly 1989:11). Nonetheless, the profound unease about the novel form remained, even though the practice of using it for didactic purposes had become established among conservatives and radicals alike. Many

writers professed their discomfort with the genre and thus used the preface of their books to dissociate their text from the putatively dangerous body of works by other writers. In order to gain authority as a writer of fiction, they had to devise different strategies which were to prove the moral and literary value of their works, such as, for example, an obvious didactic element or the use of certain ‘techniques of literariness’ (Kelly, 1989:17). These techniques included among others footnotes by the editor that guided the reading process, quotations from and allusions to prestigious classical texts, and parallels from history and literature to illustrate and underline their arguments<sup>2</sup>. In the long run, their endeavours to raise the prestige of the novel were successful, since in the course of the Romantic period it emerged from the depths of popular culture to gain full literary status (cf. Kelly 1989:17).

## 3.4 The role of women in the eighteenth century

As was discussed in the previous chapters, eighteenth-century society underwent important changes in terms of the dominant values and ideologies in society. However, even though these changes strongly affected the role and status of both men and women, the latter did not necessarily benefit from the middle-class values which gained dominance. Throughout the eighteenth century, Britain continued to be organized around rigid gender roles which defined and dictated the intellectual and social capabilities of men and women. In particular, women were seen as different from men both morally and mentally, the male being defined as “public, political, intellectual and rational while the female was defined as private, domestic, emotional and irrational” (Grogan 2000:14). Women were not only believed to be physically weaker than men, their allegedly frail bodies were thought to produce a certain intellectual inferiority as well. Instead, they were believed to excel at the sentimental talents. However, since women supposedly lacked all argumentative or intellectual faculties, they were consequently barred from expression in any of the domains in which such faculties were needed. They were denied representation in parliament or the legislature and were only allowed to practise a highly limited number of professions – and these only in certain circumstances. Public life was thus strictly reserved for men, whereas women were relegated to the domestic sphere. There they were exhorted to act as soft and complying companions of their husbands, a role which was believed to be for everyone’s benefit: the woman should be confined to her own sphere “for her own good, the good of her family, and the good of society and the nation” (Kelly 1993:7).

Alongside the different roles in private and public life, concepts such as ‘reason’ and ‘virtue’ were gendered as well: while women were denied the faculty of reason altogether,

---

<sup>2</sup>This unease can also be discovered in the novels by Elizabeth Hamilton, in which the term ‘novel’ is mostly used pejoratively and where her fictional editors are careful to differentiate their texts from the genre as such. The different techniques of literariness employed by Hamilton will be discussed in chapter 4.4

a conception of virtue was imposed on them that was limited to sexual chastity alone. Female virtue was considered to be private and denoted women's "restraint of the erotic 'passions' ensuring the stability and integrity of the family as a property trust continuing through the generations" (Kelly 1993:5). Male virtue, on the other hand, signified the ability to base all actions and decisions on the principles of truth and justice, and to prefer intellectual and moral rewards to material benefits. Eighteenth century assumptions about women's intellectual and physical capabilities also greatly affected female education. For example, many conduct books from the eighteenth century seem to agree that marriage constitutes the chief aim of every woman's life (whereas this was of much lesser importance for men) and delineate exemplary female accomplishments and virtues that would help women procure a husband and make their marriages agreeable. Women should foremost learn to please their husbands and render themselves soft, docile and alluring companions. Since marriage was an imperative for girls from the middle and higher classes, they followed these instructions in order to secure themselves a husband and thereby avoid the fate of dying an old maid. Female education thus centred more on women's superficial accomplishments, dress and manners, rather than their mental faculties (cf. Todd 1996:vii-xxiii).

### 3.5 Women in the revolutionary debate

Despite their alleged intellectual inferiority, women played an active role in the cultural revolution, producing novels, essays, religious and educational treatises and also didactic chapbooks for lowerclass readers. However, while they participated thus to a large extent in the rise of print culture, their role and status in the cultural revolution were in many ways ambiguous, and their contribution to it by no means simple. I will first outline the specific difficulties which women faced when compared to their male counterparts and then describe different strategies used to gain authority as a female writer. The last part of the chapter will be dedicated to common concerns and topics which can be detected in the works of female writers and in particular their struggle for female rights.

As discussed in the chapter above, women were considered as primarily domestic in nature and were thus automatically excluded from the public sphere and any debates on political or social issues. This applied also to print, which was as rigidly gendered as any other aspect of eighteenth century life. It was commonly assumed that women lacked "the rhetorical training, intellectual range, and even technical competence (correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation) necessary to be a professional writer" (Kelly 1993:10). As a result, women were granted authority only over those topics which were associated with their own domains of expertise: domestic and private life. They were thus allowed to write minor genres such as treatises on education and household economy, as well as certain types of fiction, such as children's literature. An additional complication presented itself here in the low literary status of the novel form. According to Kelly, the novel constituted

“the genre most closely identified with women as readers and writers” (Kelly 1993:12). However, since it suffered from a particularly low prestige, women writers could only with great difficulties establish themselves and gain a reputation as authors.

Yet even when restricting themselves to the genres mentioned above, women put themselves into a problematic position once it came to publishing their texts. Publishing, after all, was closely associated with the public sphere, implying that the female author had deserted the domestic sphere and transgressed gender boundaries. Women were thus in a certain “double bind”: if they hoped to wield moral authority outside their own domestic circle, they automatically compromised themselves and lost credibility as to the moral authority which they had claimed. As Kelly (1993:10) points out, “publication continued to be considered ‘unfeminine’ and many women published anonymously, especially if they wrote on themes or in forms considered more appropriate for men.” In order to avoid damaging their reputation for this allegedly manly behaviour, women writers had to find and devise strategies which would allow them to remain immaculately feminine despite their public voice. They mostly did so by adapting their writings to and exploiting the rhetoric and discourse of their male counterparts. One such opportunity was presented to them in the figure of ‘domestic woman’ which was constructed in the rhetoric of the cultural revolution, another in the so-called Burkean trope of the family and the nation.

As outlined in the last chapter above, the middle classes successfully imposed their professional values of ‘subjectivity’, ‘reason’ and ‘virtue’ on public consciousness, challenging the cultural hegemony of the gentry. An important construct of their rhetoric and thought was ‘domestic woman’; an image which symbolized a number of middle-class values, such as subjectivity and virtue, and helped distinguish the middle classes from the moral codex of courtly life. For example, ‘domestic woman’ both challenged and replaced the upper-class image of ‘courtly woman’ – a highly negative construct representing aristocratic women as dangerously cunning and immoral, using their sexual graces to spin intrigues and gain power. ‘Domestic woman’ thus stood for the values and virtues which courtly women apparently lacked. It represented

professional middle-class discourse of subjectivity as opposed to communal or courtly sociability, ‘nature’ rather than decadent ‘civilization’, domesticity as opposed to the public and political spheres, and the ‘national’ culture, identity, and destiny rather than local, temporary, narrow interests of rank or region. (Kelly 1993:4).

As Kelly’s analysis shows, the strong importance of women in the cultural revolution was due to a general shift in focus towards the domestic sphere together with the values and virtues that were associated with it. Since women were regarded to be entirely ‘domestic’ in nature, they were soon recognized as the guardians of these values. As a result, they came to represent some of the most important middle class values and concepts of the cultural revolution, such as “the subjective self, the private and domestic

sphere, and the class's social and cultural reproduction over time" (1993:8). An important element of middle-class discourse around 'domestic woman' was 'sensibility', which – as mentioned above – denoted the individual being's ability for refined sentiments, acting as a guarantee for social relations and personal strength to withstand the excesses of individualism. Another concept associated with the image was 'charity', which allowed women access to and assigned them roles beyond the domestic sphere.

Even though this image was largely restricting, it soon was used and exploited by women writers since it allowed them to assume authority over moral issues and access to the public sphere. For example, by incorporating the attributes associated with 'domestic woman' into their fiction, women writers were not only able to claim these attributes indirectly for themselves, they also endowed their texts with authority and respectability. This was particularly useful in the politically conservative and intolerant times of the 1790s, when women writers adopted the image of 'domestic woman' to present themselves and their works as guardians of both the 'national' conscience and culture (cf. Kelly 1993:21).

Another solution to the danger of women's "double bind" was presented to them by a trope already existing in eighteenth century political thought, but which was popularized by Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. As many critics such as Mellor (cf. 84), Ty (cf. 1993:4) and Wood (56) have observed, Burke drew "an analogical link between the family and the nation, and thus between the domestic and the political"<sup>3</sup>. Using this trope, women authors were able to indirectly comment on political and social issues while never officially transgressing the bounds of the domestic sphere: even though on a superficial level their novels were concerned with the moral well-being of individual families only, they pertained just as much to that of the nation and society in general.

However, while critics agree on the significant influence of the Burkean analogy between family and nation on women writers, they vary in their interpretations of it, both with reference to his social model and the female authors' use of the trope. This has been pointed out by Wood, who compares different readings of Burke's legacy by critics such as Mellor, Johnson and Ty to draw attention to "the essential complexity of political categories during this period" (Wood 58). For example, Mellor largely understands the trope as having empowered women to speak out on public issues and to rise in social dignity, whereas Johnson and Ty interpret it in a less favourable manner. Even though Johnson does recognize the possibilities which the Burkean trope offered to women writers, she also acknowledges the ambiguous images which women had to embrace when using it: "The reactionary ideology which evolved in England during the 1790s left a rich and paradoxical legacy: even as it required women to be amiably weak, retiring, and docile [...] it not only stimulated but also empowered women's commentary on political affairs"

---

<sup>3</sup>Burke describes the nation as a family, with the king as its head as a benevolent but sovereign father figure, to whom his subjects – his dependent wife, sons and daughters – feel an in-born reverence and loyalty. The king owes his power and authority not to the support of his people, but to God himself, and therefore cannot be called into question. By analogy, the father wields supreme authority over his family, his sovereignty being conferred to him by God.

(Johnson 2). According to both Johnson and Ty, the Burkean trope was also constricting since it stigmatized disruptions within the family unit by drawing a parallel between domestic misconduct and social anarchy.

Indeed, many women novelists influenced by Burke voiced the view that national security depended on individual morality and harmony within the family unit. They were thus often reluctant to allow for any renegotiation of the roles and power structure in the family and further propagated Burke's patriarchal model of society. For example, they warned of the fateful consequences which would ensue from calling the sovereignty of the husband and father into question and endorsed the "superiority of 'prejudices' favoring established modes of behavior to 'rational principles' dictating innovative social conduct as their basic starting points; feminine desire and illicit sex constitute their basic crises" (Johnson 6). The conservative establishment in return quickly identified the trope as a means to legitimize close surveillance of the domestic sphere and to subjugate women by controlling their conduct.

These conflicting interpretations show how difficult it is to properly assess the ideological affiliations of eighteenth-century women writers due to the symbolic complexity of the political discourse of the time. Both interpretations can be regarded as legitimate, since "the practical effect of this Burkean social model on women writers of the period was, often simultaneously, both enabling and constricting, depending upon their, and others', interpretation of its meaning" (Wood 58). However, it should be noted that for the reasons outlined above, the Burkean trope was most used in anti-revolutionary fiction, in which a general conflation of ideologies can be detected: since the concept of the 'domestic' came to represent myriad middle-class values and concepts, personal and religious virtues were blended and merged with bourgeois ethics. This has been convincingly pointed out by Wood, who argues that in anti-revolutionary fiction, "ideologies of class, gender, religion, and nation are closely intertwined" (Wood 35). As mentioned above, conservative women writers presented religious and virtuous femininity as a necessary preventative against revolutionary ideas and philosophies. For example, if a novel's heroine is seduced and falls prey to the advances of the Jacobin villain, social and national harmony are threatened by her downfall. Wood thus concludes that "femininity is [...] intimately tied to the preservation of the state, the family, and the national church" (Wood 36).

However, even though this inter-articulation of originally separate discourses was most obviously used in conservative fiction by women writers, the distinction between revolutionary and antirevolutionary writers was far from being evident. Both radical and conservative writers fought for female rights, and while they often differed largely in their opinions on gender relations, they shared a number of concerns. Even their claims were often strikingly similar: for example, they were both generally concerned with the status of women's social roles in public opinion. Conservatives and radicals alike emphasized the social importance of such roles – among them motherhood and charity – and endeavoured to invest them with increased significance and dignity. Another issue uniting

writers from the entire political spectrum was educational reform: women writers harshly criticized the then current model of female education which focused only on superficial accomplishments; instead, they stressed the significance of allowing women to expand their mental faculties. This, they argued, would better prepare them for useful activity in the household and the community. Their arguments for improved education were manifold and included among others “women’s spiritual equality, their role as maternal educators, wifely companions, and domestic economists, as well as their developing influence within the local community through philanthropic activity” (Wood 38). Most famous in her critique of female education was perhaps Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in which the author based her main argument for female rights and improved education on the spiritual equality between men and women. Hoping to achieve equality at least when it came to the concepts of ‘virtue’ and ‘reason’, Wollstonecraft argued that these two concepts were given by God to both men and women and should thus not be interpreted differently according to the sexes:

To account for, and excuse the tyranny of man, many ingenious arguments have been brought forward to prove, that the two sexes, in the acquirement of virtue, ought to aim at attaining a very different character: or, to speak explicitly, women are not allowed to have sufficient strength of mind to acquire what really deserves the name of virtue. Yet, it should seem, allowing them to have souls, that there is but one way appointed by Providence to lead mankind to either virtue or happiness (Wollstonecraft 126).

If women are by nature inferior to men, their virtues must be the same in quality, if not in degree, or virtue is a relative idea; consequently, their conduct should be founded on the same principles, and have the same aim (Wollstonecraft 134).

While Wollstonecraft was joined by many female writers demanding an appropriate education to unfold their ‘reason’ and ‘virtue’, many others did not intend to challenge traditional gender roles and merely intended to improve women’s situation within their prescribed sphere: since women carried out important social functions – they were, after all, responsible for the household and the successful socialization of their children – they also needed an appropriate education to prepare them for these duties.

It was thus only on the subject of female equality that conservative women writers disagreed with radicals such as Mary Wollstonecraft<sup>4</sup>. Their opposition can be attributed

---

<sup>4</sup>As will be pointed out in the following analysis of Elizabeth Hamilton’s novels, Hamilton dedicates a lengthy section in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* to Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, highlighting the reasonableness of Wollstonecraft’s critique and of many of her demands. While Hamilton agrees with Wollstonecraft that women are equal to men on a spiritual level and require instruction enabling them to exercise their virtue, she does not take Wollstonecraft seriously on the topic of political equality. Indeed, she considers this “unwise” claim responsible for the generally negative reception of the treatise and the ensuing disadvantages to the cause of women’s education: “Pity that the very sensible authoress has sometimes permitted her zeal to hurry her into expressions which have raised a prejudice against the whole. To superficial readers it appears to be her intention to unsex women entirely” (101). A more detailed analysis of Hamilton’s feminist agenda, however, will be found in chapter 4.3.

to the conflation of ideologies and discourses described above. As was shown, many conservative writers drew parallels between discourses of gender, the nation, and religion in their writings, creating analogies between different hierarchical relationships in society. For example, they saw parallels in the relationship between God and humanity, King and subjects, father and children, as well as men and women. An appeal for equality in any of these groupings would have endangered the stability of the social system in its entirety. Conservative women writers thus strove to raise women's dignity within these hierarchical relationships, but did not question the hierarchies themselves.

Similar to other concerns of the revolutionary debate, the struggle for female rights was waged in fiction. This was due to several reasons: in the first place, novels were traditionally regarded as a feminine genre, both in terms of their authors and readers. For example, readers of fiction were often automatically associated with the female sex, since novels did not exceed women's allegedly limited intellectual abilities. The novel form also seemed generally more accessible than other forms of political writing, not only because of women's mental capabilities, but in terms of the wide distribution and easy dissemination of fiction as well. However, as mentioned before, fiction had a specifically low literary and moral status, which produced widespread concern among women writers to dissociate their texts from the genre and prove their literary and moral value. For example, they included lengthy discussions on the dangers of indiscriminate novel-reading into their own fiction, and repeatedly pointed out the manipulative power of such texts. They also provided a detailed account of their own reasons for choosing such a problematic genre, which they asserted they did only out of expediency in the face of a national emergency: conservative women writers felt that it was their duty to counter the revolutionary threat from both abroad and from radical writers within the country, and that this could be best achieved by using the same weapons as their political enemies. If radical writers overwhelmed the country with their dangerous and manipulative fictions, conservative writers would use fiction to oppose them.

In conclusion women authors faced a series of difficulties when trying to make their writings accessible to the public. Not only did they run the danger of compromising their female gender identity and consequently their authority on moral issues, but the only means available to them to avoid this danger located them firmly within patriarchal discourses and ideology. Both conservative and radical writers, however, dedicated their writings to improving women's education and emphasizing the importance of female involvement in society.

## 3.6 The French Revolution

The French Revolution constitutes "one of the defining events of modern world civilization" (Newman 1997:272) and European history; it radically altered the political landscape not

only in France, but also in Britain. For the purposes of this paper it is important to analyse some of the ideas brought forward in the course of the Revolution, since they influenced the intellectual climate at the end of the eighteenth century and elicited a considerable response from intellectuals on both sides of the Channel. The author will then turn to the impact of the French Revolution on the political scene and climate in Britain, considering that it was, after all, in these turbulent times that Elizabeth Hamilton's novels were written and published.

As mentioned before, the French Revolution owed some of its ideas to the principles and philosophies of the Enlightenment. Even though historians have identified a range of causes contributing to the outbreak of the French Revolution, some of the early events may be traced back to the ideas of notable French philosophers such as Voltaire and Montesquieu, who had both questioned the structure of the French monarchy and advocated political and social reform. Their principles and ideas thus might be said to have influenced at least the early events of the revolution, when in August 1789, the French National Assembly announced the abolition of the feudal regime and the tithe, and promulgated the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. In contrast to the English Bill of Rights, which pertains only to the liberties and duties of Englishmen as subjects of their king, this Declaration pronounced the rights of the individual to be universal and pertaining to human nature itself. The National Assembly further endorsed revolutionary principles such as liberty, equality, religious toleration, the inviolability of property, the advent of popular selfgovernment, and the right to resist oppression (cf. Newman 1997:272).

The French Revolution had a pervasive impact on British society. According to Newman (1997:272), the French Revolution affected "British civilization at home and in the Empire", while Kelly (1993:13) points out that "the French Revolution had a catalysing and divisive effect on every aspect of the cultural revolution in Britain". In its early phase, the Revolution received a favourable response throughout Britain. Those in favour of reform celebrated France for having achieved what they aspired to themselves – namely the overthrow of court politics, the rigid hierarchical social structure with its hereditary honours and wealth, and the system of patronage. Among the British intelligentsia, those most welcoming the Revolution were the intellectuals and writers Thomas Paine, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, as well as the radical Dissenters Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, who took the opportunity to point out their own lack of civic rights. Idealistic young writers, for example, William Wordsworth, travelled to France to witness the revolution in person and became enthralled with the Republican movement and democratic ideas. As the revolutionary enthusiasm gathered momentum, societies – such as the "Society of Friends of the People" or the "London Corresponding Society" – were founded to educate the working classes and press for more political rights and electoral reform (cf. Newman 1997:272-273; Kelly, 1993:14).

While the balance of British public opinion would later tip against the Revolution in

France, the advent of so many new philosophical and political concepts and ideas sparked off an intense debate over the need for reforms in Britain as well – a debate which Kelly (1993) considered as an important driving force of the so-called “cultural revolution” and which Butler (1975) even called a “war of ideas”. Intellectuals from both the pro- and counter-revolutionary camps acknowledged that reforms were necessary: while the former hoped to achieve the civic liberties and rights which had been instituted in France, the latter advocated moderate change in order to counteract more radical movements and prevent a similar revolution in Britain.

A famous spokesperson against the Revolution and its underlying philosophies was Edmund Burke, whose deprecating account of the events across the Channel, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, can indeed be considered an exception to the otherwise favourable reception in Britain. Published in November 1790, even before the regicide and the Reign of Terror, it warned against the destructive powers of the mob, which would spread violence and anarchy over the country. Burke’s view was that those spearheading the general unrest – the wild mob of the lower classes, politically active women and professionals – had no right to participate in the “political nation”, since they were by nature excluded from this sphere. Violating the fundamental principles which guarantee stability and order, their uprising would not bring liberty, but instead throw their country into anarchy and chaos. Burke thus regarded the Revolution as a “denial not only of intellectual, moral, and political virtues but of civilization itself” (Newman 1997:273).

As history has shown, Burke’s patriotic warning against revolutionary enthusiasm turned out to be a rather uncanny prediction of the bloodshed which would ensue in the later phases of the Revolution. Following a series of defeats in the French war against Austria and Prussia, levels of violence rose as people in France felt increasingly betrayed by their king and aristocrats, whom they believed to be in league with other ruling dynasties of Europe. At the same time, tensions between the revolutionary parties increased, and both developments culminated in the execution of King Louis XVI and the royal family, and the Reign of Terror of 1793 and 1794.

With the onset of the Reign of Terror and the declaration of war against Britain in 1793, the initial excitement in Britain subsided quickly to be superseded by professions of horror, disgust and open hostility towards France. Continuous fears of a French invasion, consternation over the ruthless slaughtering of so-called “traitors”, and growing apprehension that a similar Revolution might occur in Britain were enough to tip the balance in favour of the more traditional gallophobia of “British mentality”. British anti-French discourse soon solidified into what might be described as a “Gallic stereotype” - “an unprecedentedly negative and widely held popular image of France” (Newman 1975:386). This Gallic stereotype soon came to serve as a powerful icon in the debate about Britain’s own domestic policies; it was thus used less to criticize France and more to appeal to feelings of national pride in debates about political, moral and social issues. According to Newman (1975:387), it “served as a bond of consciousness and instrument of change in

the pre-Victorian era” (cf. Newman 1975:386-387).

This use of anti-French rhetoric in Britain exemplifies to what extent the French Revolution acted as a catalyst for events not directly related to it. For example, the widespread fear of a similar revolution in Britain produced a conservative backlash, as the government tightened its control in order to crush all pro-revolutionary sentiment. Local magistrates endeavoured to restrict and closely supervise meetings, publishers were arrested, Anglican magistrates fostered hostility against dissenters, and Paine and others were denounced for sedition. The authors of the “Anti-Jacobin Review” started their famous witch-hunt against the “Jacobin threat” and celebrated the production of numerous conservative anti-Jacobin novels. The Tory party significantly increased its influence and membership as the propertied classes reverted to their traditional conservatism. However, the extremity with which conservative forces responded to what they perceived as the revolutionary threat sparked a wave of social unrest: riots erupted in which crowds comprising as many as 100,000 people gathered to demonstrate against the war, the King, Pitt’s government, and the then current famine. Anticlerical freethinking again found its way into radical literature and gained a wider readership. As both sides hardened their positions, the country became increasingly polarized (cf. Newman 1997:273).

These protests were ultimately silenced when the government passed a series of autocratic acts intended to repress and gag its critics. For instance, it established the right to censure newspapers and declared it unlawful to criticize the constitution. Furthermore, large gatherings were prohibited and societies campaigning for better working conditions criminalized. Intimidated and outmanoeuvred by the sheer force of the conservative backlash, the supporters of reform had to either move their operations underground or give up their claims. In general, the country returned to a well-established conservatism:

The ‘Revolution debate’, the ‘war of ideas’, withered away, not because every champion of radical doctrine had been utterly converted by the logic of the conservatives, but because few of them, with just one or two exceptions, could be found who wished to defy a near unanimous and highly militant anti-Jacobinism to put forward what had suddenly become dangerously unorthodox opinions (Grenby 5).

### 3.7 The anti-Jacobin novel

This anti-reformist government campaign went hand in hand with the publication of numerous so-called “anti-Jacobin novels”. Published in order to combat what their authors branded as the dangerous principles of the French Revolution, anti-Jacobin novels contributed largely to the outpouring of anti-French propaganda and helped bring about the revival of conservatism at the turn of the century. More than fifty anti-Jacobin novels were published between 1791 and 1805. These substantially outnumbered examples of

Jacobin fiction – of which not even half as many were produced in a much shorter period – and outlived them as well.

Authors who wrote anti-Jacobin novels – among them Elizabeth Hamilton – were conscious of contributing to a moral crusade which united them against the “Jacobin threat”. What they had in common was not only a set of a stock rhetoric, themes and plot patterns, but also the self-declared task to exhibit what they regarded as the inherent perils of the Jacobin or revolutionary principles, which they viewed as pertaining not only to the social prosperity and stability of the country, but also to the moral well-being of its subjects. Because the revolutionary ideas would thus undermine the foundation allowing Britain to flourish and thrive, the events in France were presented “as a catastrophe of quasi-biblical proportions, not as a series of political incidents but as a great moral offence against virtue, nature and God” (Grenby 7).

Interestingly, anti-Jacobin authors differed considerably in whom or what exactly they identified as the “Jacobin threat”. As Grenby (7-8) puts it, Jacobinism “was a gestalt with no set definition” and could thus be used as “a label for all that conservatives found detestable within society”. For example, among those “diagnosed” as living and spreading Jacobin beliefs were Methodists, atheists, Catholics, Evangelicals, levellers, nabobs, social upstarts, philosophers, and lascivious rakes<sup>5</sup>. Jacobinism, as it was presented in anti-Jacobin fiction, was largely a construct of terrifying myths, which had little to do with the philosophies of those intellectuals currently regarded as Jacobins. Instead, conservative writers felt free to invent Jacobin philosophies which were calculated to intimidate readers into remaining faithful to orthodox values.

Anti-Jacobin novels rely on a number of stock patterns and techniques and are thus highly similar in their themes and characteristics<sup>6</sup>. Their typical features have been analysed and described by Kelly (1989:63) as well as by Grenby (2001) in more detail. As they point out, anti-Jacobin writers drew on earlier traditions of satire, such as the novels of Fielding and Smollett, the stories around Don Quixote and Gil Blas, and even the classical Lucianic satire directed against various forms of enthusiasm. Highly didactic in nature, their novels employ the authoritative voice of a heterodiegetic narrator rather than the subjective narratives often found in Jacobin fiction. In terms of plot, they often follow the typical patterns of the novel of education, presenting the opinions and adventures of a young hero or heroine who has to withstand the manipulative powers of a Jacobin villain. The protagonists are either saved by a virtuous lover or sagacious mentor, or are ruined in the course of the experience. In both cases, they have a moment of epiphany in the end, in which they come to see the truth and draw the right conclusions about Jacobin philosophies.

---

<sup>5</sup>According to Grenby (14-15), even Hannah More was accused of propagating Jacobinism in her Sunday schools by teaching poor people to read and thus turning them into potential readers of seditious political texts.

<sup>6</sup>For an analysis of the typically anti-Jacobin elements in Hamilton’s fiction, see Chapter 4.2.

When it comes to characters, anti-Jacobin novels often feature a similar set of character types, such as the foolish philosopher, the ruthless Machiavellian Jacobin villain, the sexually promiscuous feminist, and the innocent who is destroyed by his or her encounter with the new philosophy. Interestingly, none of the Jacobin characters are genuine supporters of the Jacobin cause. The Jacobin villain, on the one hand, does not believe in Jacobinism as such, but has long realised its manipulative potential: motivated by self-interest, lust and personal ambition, he mouths his own version of Jacobin ideas only because they suit his needs, allowing him to gain power over his fellow beings. Revealed as a cunning hypocrite, he becomes further associated with the courtly practices of intrigue and seduction. The foolish philosophers, on the other hand, are shown to be too simpleminded to understand Jacobin philosophy with all its implications. They are merely manipulated by the ruthless Machiavel and easily fall prey to his cunning. Since neither the Jacobin villain nor the philosophers engage with Jacobin ideas in any serious manner, it is possible to conclude that anti-Jacobin novelists do not examine Jacobin ideas as such; instead they present their own construct of Jacobinism which they represent as mere fantasy, deception and illusion.

Anti-Jacobin fiction also shares a number of common themes and motifs. For example, most anti-Jacobin novelists incorporate horrific accounts of the Reign of Terror in France which aim to reveal the dangers inherent in any kind of social reform: anarchy and chaos. According to them, the Jacobin threat further includes atheism, economic levelling, sexual promiscuity, as well as the overthrow of all norms and traditions which society holds dear. They also show a pronounced mistrust of the manipulative potential of the novel form, warn of the dangers of novel reading, and strongly endeavour to distinguish their own writing from common novels. In addition to their biting satire on certain stock characters, they also launch direct attacks against Jacobin authors such as William Godwin and Mary Hays and frequently include long quotations of their works in order to disparage them. However, even when quoting their literary opponents they never enter into a genuine discussion of the ideas presented by the Jacobin authors mentioned above. Taken out of context and mouthed by ridiculous characters, these quotations merely serve to expose them to ridicule. This suggests again that anti-Jacobin authors prudently avoid direct confrontation with all ideas having revolutionary potential, and simply present their own interpretation of Jacobin philosophy<sup>7</sup>.

Anti-Jacobin novels continued to be published and consumed by an avid reading public far into the nineteenth century, when the Jacobin and revolutionary threat had long subsided. The years seeing the sharpest increase in publication were those between 1798 to 1805 – years in which an invasion by French forces still constituted a scenario widely feared in Britain, but when radicalism no longer played any significant role in

---

<sup>7</sup>This point was advanced by Grenby (70) against earlier interpretations of Hamilton's work by Ty (1991:113), who argues that "in quoting at length from the texts of the authors being parodied, Hamilton also inadvertently reproduces these arguments in her own work."

Britain's political landscape. According to Grenby (10), the relatively late popularity of anti-Jacobin novels suggests that they represented "a phenomenon only tangentially linked to the Revolution itself or to any actual manifestation of radicalism in Britain." Indeed, anti-Jacobinism seems to have "picked up speed as the 1790s wore on, almost in an inverse proportion to the threat actually posed by Jacobinism." This allows us to conceive of the novels more as a product building on the ideological consensus of the reading public, than as a means to actually combat radical forces. Although anti-Jacobin fiction may have started as a few novelists' attempts at political propaganda, it quickly developed into a highly remunerative product which existed independently of Britain's political reality. The power of the market together with such financial considerations might have been so strong that some politically neutral authors even turned to militant anti-Jacobinism to speed up their writing career, acknowledging that militancy as a prerequisite for literary success (cf. Grenby 10-12).

### 3.8 The rise of Evangelicalism

The turn of the century did not only bring a return to more conservative values, but also a revival of Evangelicalism both within and without the established churches of England and Scotland. Criticising the religiously lax clergy of the eighteenth century, whom they accused of alleged indifference and superficiality, the Evangelicals returned the focus to strong personal piety and the role of affections in religious practice. Their so-called "religion of the heart" was characterized by a strong belief in the need for personal conversion which would guide the individual believer towards moral earnestness, religious piety and fervour. Since they considered charitable work as an expression of faith, Evangelical groups were also noted for their activism and concern for social welfare.

From a theological point of view, the Evangelicals regarded the Bible, which they believed to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit, as their supreme authority. In their view the Bible was therefore normative for the lives and doctrines of both church and individuals. Its main theme was the eternal grace and saving work of God, which manifested itself in the atoning death and resurrection of Christ: God – who in His mercy had sacrificed his Son to bear the sins of the world – offered salvation to all those willing to believe in Christ's atonement. However, since this offer was gratuitous and left individuals free to choose whether or not to accept it, the acts of becoming and then actively being a Christian were given great importance. Sacraments and good works – even though the latter were encouraged as proofs of religious conversion – were not deemed necessary for salvation. Nonetheless, religious activism still played an important part in Evangelical movements.

The first Evangelical revivals in Britain had already occurred in the first half of the eighteenth century. While the rise of Methodism under John Wesley and George White-

field is often identified as the most significant among these revivalist movements, it was by no means the only one. Scotland experienced the so-called Cambuslang Revival in 1742, as well as several secessions from its national church. Initially, these revivals did not altogether contradict the principles and ideas of the Enlightenment and recognized the potentials of scientific investigation for the benefit of society. However, they arduously strove to counter the scepticism and deism prevalent from mid-century onwards, and started to object to all tendencies of the moderate and reasonable Christianity promoted by the Enlightenment Protestants. As a result, they increasingly emphasized the importance of Christian doctrines such as human sinfulness and Christ's atonement on the cross and slowly transformed their former distrust into strong and outright opposition (cf. Brown & Tackett 8).

While the earlier revivals took place mostly outside the established churches, the turn of the century witnessed a widespread religious awakening which – next to the national Churches of England and Scotland – stirred society. Even though this reawakening was partly a reaction to the anti-Christian tendencies of the French Revolution, its origins can be traced back to the massive transformations of society in general. The 1790s experienced, after all, not only an intense debate around the revolutionary ideas from across the Channel, but also the rise of the Industrial Revolution. Along with the spread of mechanized production, this Revolution generated large-scale demographic movements, the ensuing growth of the industrial cities, as well as the first occurrences of social unrest. In this heated political and social climate, evangelical groups rose to wield remarkable influence both within and without the established churches as British society grew more and more religious. An overwhelming majority of people considered themselves Christian and embraced a fervent religious faith, making – as several critics<sup>8</sup> have pointed out – Evangelicalism the dominant discourse of Britain's politics and economic and imperialist policies in the nineteenth century (cf. Brown 2008:2).

Evangelicalism, however, was also a significant force in raising the status of women and providing them access to the public sphere. As has been remarked by Wood, “Evangelicalism's emphasis on conversion valued female and male experience equally. The movement foregrounded characteristics that were traditionally ascribed to women; invoking a Christ-like model of human behavior, it privileged meekness and submission” (41). As these female qualities were given exemplary status, women were allowed to assume moral and spiritual authority within the Evangelical community. Evangelicalism, however, also presented many opportunities for women's active involvement in society, and thus endowed them with social authority as well: “The focus on conversion justified female activity in the community, since women became spiritually authorized to engage in the type of charitable education of the poor which was intended to lead to conversion” (42). For example,

---

<sup>8</sup>For a detailed discussion of the influence of Evangelicalism of British society, see: Hilton, Boyd. *The Age of Atonement. The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

evangelical women like Hannah More ran schools in which they taught the poor to read, enabling them to read the Bible and fulfil the duties of their position in society. Another opportunity for involvement and activism was in religious publishing, which saw a sharp rise in the number of religious tracts produced by women. Many of their authors did not only win public respect for their publications, but also earned a substantial living from them. Evangelicalism expanded women's role in the community and conferred on them considerable influence and power beyond the domestic sphere.

However, despite the high prestige of female activism within the Evangelical movement, Evangelicalism has invited different and even contradictory interpretations by modern scholars. On the one hand, it has been regarded as a conservative movement which strove to preserve the status quo by upholding social institutions and exercising control over the lower classes. On the other hand, however, Evangelicalism has also been regarded as a faction subversive of civil order which played an active part in the middle-class cultural revolution discussed in the chapters above. This historical interpretation has been advanced by Gerald Newman in *The Rise of English Nationalism* (1997), in which he emphasizes the role of Evangelicalism in the middles classes' striving for cultural hegemony and endeavour to impose their values on and thus morally reform the upper classes. Newman suggests that Evangelicals participated in the cultural revolution by criticising aristocratic morals and manners, thereby initiating a general commentary on and criticism of the aristocracy itself<sup>9</sup>. In short, Newman argues that when it comes to Evangelicalism, “*an extremely radical process was [...] working under cover of an extremely conservative one*” (234-235; Newman's emphasis).

Similarly, Evangelicalism has been noted for its important role and achievements in empowering women both in the church and in society<sup>10</sup>. Since middle-class women's active involvement in the community was not only countenanced but even encouraged by Evangelical doctrine and practice, their social status and functions rose in both dignity and importance. Moreover, as Ann Braude has argued, the opportunities for women's activities which the early Evangelical movement afforded might have even laid the foundation for later feminist movements, such as the battle for suffrage. And finally, Evangelicalism played an important role in promoting literacy in the lower classes. This was particularly significant given that “education of the poor, and the dissemination of reading materials to them, had consistently been condemned because they unfitted them for their station in life” (Grenby 14). Writers and intellectuals were highly aware that by teaching the poor and working classes to read, Evangelicalism opened the doors for the working classes to peruse not only religious and didactic texts, but revolutionary texts as well (cf. Wood

---

<sup>9</sup>Similar to radical interpretations of the Evangelicals' critique of the aristocracy, Elizabeth Hamilton's critical comments on the aristocracy and representatives of the Church have been the reason for some radical interpretations of her novels as well.

<sup>10</sup>See for example Ann Braude's analysis of women's roles in the course of the Great Awakenings in North America in Braude, Ann. “Women's History Is American Religious History.” In Tweed, Thomas A. *Retelling US Religious History*. Berkeley, Calif. [u.a.]: Univ. of California Press, 1997, 87-107.

42-43).

Yet at the same time, as many critics argue, Evangelicalism should also be “understood in terms of its potential for conservative social control” (Wood 43). For example, in both its doctrines and practices, Evangelicalism laboured to maintain the current state of affairs in society by upholding its institutions and opposing radical change. This conservative interpretation applies most to Establishment or Anglican Evangelicalism, which took on innovative practices associated with the nonconformists in order to compete with subversive religious groups outside establishment religion. For example, Anglican Evangelicals espoused and promoted values such as tradition, civil order and personal restraint; they also encouraged passive submission and an awareness of one’s duties, which were conditioned by the sex, social class and age group to which the person belonged. In their religious and didactic tracts, writers like William Wilberforce and Hannah More accepted the current social order as intelligently arranged by God and thus admonished their fellow Christians to employ their religious piety for its preservation. Their insistence on class-related rights and duties is important, since it shows that while the Evangelicals might have endorsed spiritual equality, they strictly rejected social equality.

Similarly, women’s active engagement in charitable projects and schools – otherwise praised for its empowering role in the history of female rights – only aimed to contain the inherent revolutionary threat of the uneducated mob: due to their illiteracy and poor understanding, the lower classes were believed to be particularly responsive to tracts or sermons inciting to strikes, riot and revolt. In order to pre-empt any such uprisings, didactic projects like Hannah More’s Sunday schools aimed to instruct them in the principles of Christianity and its precepts of hierarchy and order. Any kind of philanthropic activity undertaken by the Evangelicals was thus at the same time a means of social control and containment, contrived to secure social inequality against revolutionary ideas of democracy (cf. Wood 43-44). As Todd argues:

The tendency of this philanthropic activity was by no means radical. It shored up the status quo, preaching a mixture of self-help and resignation to the poor, and benevolence and individual charity to the rich. The poor were given education but it should be insufficient for them to grow restive; they should not necessarily write and they should confine their reading to such literature as Hannah More’s Cheap Repository tracts, which urged duties on all ranks of society while keeping hierarchy intact (1989:206).

As can be seen, the Evangelical movement in Britain allows different interpretations and can be seen as both progressive and conservative; on the one hand, it encouraged female activity beyond the domestic sphere and promoted literacy among the lower classes; on the other hand, however, most activities in the name of Evangelicalism were aimed at preserving social institutions and asserting civil control.

## 3.9 Conclusion

It was in these ideologically complex and turbulent times that Elizabeth Hamilton produced her two novels *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796) and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800). The historical overview provided in the preceding chapter serves to illuminate the different movements and ideological tendencies current in her times alongside with or against which she positioned her novels. While it might not be possible to identify Hamilton's exact ideological affiliations, the accounts of the Enlightenment, the cultural revolution and Evangelicalism, with their different ideologies and respective implications for the role of women in society, will provide the background information necessary to interpret her arguments within their historical and ideological contexts.

## Chapter 4

# The ideological framework of Hamilton's novels

### 4.1 Introduction

The two novels analysed in this paper, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, are not Elizabeth Hamilton's only published works. Born in 1758 in Belfast, she launched her literary career relatively late at the age of 38, when *Translations* was published in 1796. Its immediate success established her as a writer and she increased her reputation with every new publication: Elizabeth Hamilton soon achieved a significant degree of celebrity and was a well-known figure in Edinburgh's highest literary scene, counting among her friends Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, Maria Edgeworth and Hector McNeil. Her literary prestige accorded with a not inconsiderable rate of publication: all in all she published nine works, despite her frequent social engagements and travels in the early years and failing health in the later years of her literary career. Hamilton wrote in a variety of genres and sub-genres, such as several educational and religious treatises (including, among others *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* and *Exercises in Religious Knowledge*), the orientalist epistolary novel *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796), the anti-Jacobin novel *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), the historical biography *Memoirs of Agrippina, the Wife of Germanicus* (1804), and a tale in the style of Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts – The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808). Hamilton's works thus do not only cover a considerable number of different subjects, they also exhibit a significant range in tone. At the same time, however, they are all infused with Hamilton's profound religious piety and moral zeal.

In order to provide a detailed description of Hamilton's religious views and ideological affiliations, any of these texts could therefore be used as evidence, and a comprehensive analysis would have to be based on her collected works. The main reason why her first two novels have been chosen for this analysis is that they present a fictional adaptation of her

religious and moral agenda and thus allow an investigation of the former in conjunction with a literary analysis of the narrative modes employed to communicate this agenda. The following study thus will not only focus on the ideological framework underlying her works, but also on Hamilton's techniques used to translate it into the mode of fiction. However, although the study is meant to provide an analysis of Hamilton's works of fiction, her third novel, *The Cottagers of Glenburnie*, will not be considered for several reasons: as mentioned above, the motivation behind Hamilton's last work of fiction is similar to Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*, addressing a less educated readership and thus featuring a more limited scope in terms of themes and narrative technique. Its style is simpler than that of her other novels and also more direct: while both *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* already privilege "telling" over "showing", this bias and the overt didacticism are even more pronounced in *The Cottagers of Glenburnie*, given the expected low degree of learning of the implied readership. The former also cover a wider range of themes and thus allow one to investigate Hamilton's religious views as these inform her opinions on such issues as the British Empire, the French Revolution, and the monarchy as an institution. And finally, a third primary source text would not have permitted a description within the scope of this thesis as detailed as was possible with only two primary texts.

Before engaging in a description of the ideological framework underlying her fiction, however, a brief description of each novel will be provided, so as to enable a better understanding of the ensuing analysis.

### 4.1.1 *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*

Published in 1796, Hamilton's first novel is both an anti-Jacobin and a fictionalized Oriental satire. After the unexpected death of her brother Charles Hamilton, an Oriental scholar, Hamilton sought a means to commemorate and continue her brother's work, and thus incorporated <the knowledge of Orientalism which she learned from her brother into the novel. Hamilton's own striking familiarity with India can be observed throughout the novel; for example, she introduces the novel with a Preliminary Dissertation on Hindu history, culture, religion and society. The novel itself belongs to the rich tradition of fictional Oriental travel accounts, which employ the naïve commentary of an inexperienced observer to defamiliarize the author's own culture. Similar to other representatives of this sub-genre, it is a novel of letters, relying mostly on the voice of one main correspondent, although some of the letters in the first part are written by a friend and include accounts of yet a third correspondent. *Translations* also shows many features of the anti-Jacobin novel, such as, for example, the satirical description of the foolish philosophers<sup>1</sup>.

In terms of plot, the novel follows the form of the so-called footnote novel, "which gave the author opportunity for commentary on a wide range of subjects, as characters roam

---

<sup>1</sup>A more thorough account of the novel's anti-Jacobin elements will be provided in the next chapter.

through a book which is only loosely anchored by a plot" (Perkins & Russell 14). It is divided into two volumes, of which the first takes place in India and the second in England. Other than the change of location, this structural division also manifests itself in terms of the respective focuses of each volume and allows an examination of a range of contrasts, most importantly those between institutions and manners: while Volume One represents the fictional correspondence between three Rajahs hypothetically discussing the state of British society, Volume Two relates one Rajah's real experiences on his journey through England, the idealised portrait provided in the first part being revised by his actual encounters of the degenerate morals and manners of the British people. This two-fold structure and contrast is also pointed out by Grenby, who argues that

*Translation* [sic] of the *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796) constitutes probably the fullest and most sophisticated treatment of the divide between institutions and manners [...]. Hamilton's novel is in two parts, and although its engaging prose seldom gives the impression of being rigidly schematised, it is not an over-simplification to distinguish between the first volume as a survey of the theoretically perfect institutions of Britain, and the second, as an investigation into the manners which are, in reality, found there. (164)

The plot consists of loosely connected descriptions of British culture as well as some alleged stock characters of British society.

The novel was well received by critics and readers alike and established Hamilton as a writer.

#### 4.1.2 *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*

After the success of *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, Hamilton's second novel, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* appeared in 1800. Unlike her literary debut novel, she decided to publish her second work anonymously and concealed herself entirely behind two fictional male characters: a deceased lodger – the author of the manuscript, but who due to his poverty burned the first fifty pages in order to heat his flat during his fatal illness; and the editor Geoffrey Jarvis, who comes by the manuscript accidentally and decides to publish it with some editorial notes. In these notes he hopes to guide the readers – whom he assumes to be predominantly female – in their understanding of the story, directs their attention to Jacobin theories responsible for the characters' misbehaviour and passes critical comments. The narrative is told by a heterodiegetic and highly overt narrator, who exercises complete authority over both the story and the characters.

The story itself revolves around four families in a village in England: the Orwells, Sydneys, Delmonds and Botherims. The Orwell family is strictly but lovingly looked after by the widower Dr. Orwell, the Anglican rector of the village, as well as the old

maid Mrs. Martha Goodwin. His daughter Harriet – one of the story's three heroines – can be described as the essence of female virtue and modesty. Dr. Orwell's best friend is the Dissenting minister Mr. Sydney, whose excellent son Henry is secretly in love with Harriet, while his daughter Maria is a good friend of hers. The love story between Henry and Harriet – characterized by self-abnegation, repressed longing and moderate hopes for a common future – forms one of the main plots of the story. A second plot is introduced by the atheist family of the Delmonds and describes the downfall of the fair and virtuous Miss Julia Delmond. Having been indulged by her parents and condoned in her taste for novels, Julia falls prey to the ruthless Jacobin villain Vallaton, who persuades her to elope with him but abandons her later. When she dies of a failed abortion, both her father and mother die of grief. The third main plot revolves around Miss Botherim and “her” new philosophers. Miss Bridgetina Botherim is the daughter of the late rector, whose simple-minded wife had encouraged her in the study of philosophy so that she might attain a higher position in life. Stupid and ugly, Bridgetina has gained access to a group of philosophers with whom she discusses the advent of the Age of Reason and plans to emigrate to the Hottentots. She fancies herself in love with Henry and believes he reciprocates her feelings, causing a number of comical misunderstandings. The end of the story sees a reunification of all three plots with a double marriage between Henry and Harriet, and Maria and Mr. Churchill – the man who was intended to marry Julia. Julia is assured forgiveness before her friends and God and dies in peace, whereas Bridgetina is sufficiently chastened by Julia's death to return to her mother.

## 4.2 Anti-Jacobin elements in Hamilton's fiction

*Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* have been identified as typical anti-Jacobin novels<sup>2</sup>. and even though critics like Ty (1991, 1993) and Mellor (2005) have advanced more radical interpretations of Hamilton's fiction, this designation seems justified: both novels share a number of plot elements, character types, motifs, and rhetorical and argumentative patterns with other representatives of the genre, and especially *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* reads as if it had provided the main basis for Grenby's analysis of anti-Jacobin fiction. Since many of these features are narrowly interwoven with the religious views underlying Hamilton's novels, this strong affiliation obviously questions the originality of many of Hamilton's reformist ideas and arguments as well as the possibility of defining Hamilton's ideological framework solely in terms of religious arguments. As will be shown in the following chapter, Hamilton's novels are in many ways stereotypical representatives of anti-Jacobin fiction, featuring many of its stock patterns and characters and drawing on other anti-Jacobin texts for many of its ideas and arguments. The following chapter will thus provide an analysis of

---

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Kelly (1993), Perkins & Russell (1999), Grenby (2001) and Wood (2003)

the anti-Jacobin ideology underlying the novels, focusing mainly on traditional arguments against Jacobin or new philosophies and examining the use of stock techniques to contest these. To what extent anti-Jacobin arguments are merged with Hamilton's religious views, on the other hand, will be one of the objects of investigation in chapter 4.3, whereas a more detailed analysis of the novels' use of anti-Jacobin plot and character types will be provided in chapter 4.4.

As was pointed out by Grenby (2001:11), anti-Jacobin fiction had in common three main strategies: it presents "the Revolution in France in all its horror"; "caricature[s] the 'new philosophy' of the British radicals, to show their utopian schemes as, first, chimerical, and second, productive only of evil"; and it discloses "Jacobinism as a ruthless assault on hierarchy, status and wealth" (11-12). While the first technique features only as a minor aspect in Hamilton's fiction, the other two can be detected as forming the very basis of Hamilton's argumentation.

In this sense, both *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* represent stereotypical attacks against the new philosophy, which Hamilton cruelly derides by means of satire, farce and open criticism bordering on slander. Zaarmilla, the Hindu Rajah, for example, describes the new philosophy as "a philosophy which disdains the slow process of experiment, and chiefly glorifies in contradicting common sense. Its main object is, to shew [sic] that *the things which are, are not, and the things which are not, are*; and this is called Metaphysics" (1999:248-249). Later Zaarmilla points out that "those who usually call themselves [philosophers], are men, who, without much knowledge, either moral or natural, entertain a high idea of their own superiority, from having the temerity to reject whatever has the sanction of experience, and common sense" (257). Hamilton uses farce in order to expose the foolishness of the new philosophers: for instance, in *Translations* these philosophers engage in an experiment attempting to train sparrows to behave like bees, so as to prove Godwin's theory of 'existing circumstances' and demonstrate that "by a proper course of education, a monkey may not be a Minister of State, or a goose, Lord Chancellor of England" (1999:266). In *Memoirs*, they plan to emigrate to the Hottentots, whom they consider to have attained civilization at its most perfect and advanced state. Following the tradition of farce, the physiognomies of the foolish philosophers also act both as "a hint as to what their opinions will be, and a physical manifestation of those ideas" (Grenby 96). Bridgetina Botherim, for example, is described as being ugly, short and fat; she squints, dresses slovenly, is bald underneath her wig and talks with a shrill voice.

However, similar to other anti-Jacobin novels, the philosophers' theories and experiments do not only defy reason and common sense; Hamilton also shows that they serve as pretexts for the philosophers to do whatever pleases them, exposing them to be hypocritical and selfish. The new philosophers deem themselves above the laws of the country and morality, and as a consequence produce human suffering, chaos and anarchy. Their stubborn disregard for the laws makes peaceful cohabitation in society impossible. This is

most evident in *Memoirs*, in which the philosophers hope to eradicate all constraints, such as moral principles, the authority of the law, the Church and parents. The theories enabling them to do so are Godwin's doctrines of 'Necessity' and of 'General Utility', which are frequently invoked and manipulated for their own selfish purposes by the hypocritical characters. For instance, Bridgetina can easily impose her will against that of her mother by arguing that she is "'under the necessity of preferring the motive that is most preferable"' (2000:46). 'General Utility', on the other hand, empowers Vallaton to admonish Julia for the feeling of duty which she naturally experiences for her parents: "'Do you not know, that duty is an expression merely implying the mode in which any being may be best employed for the general good? And how, I pray you, does your humouring these old people conduce to that great purpose?'" (2000:50). The philosophers further deny the existence of all fixed principles, such as truth, vice and virtue, and thus move in a moral limbo in which even criminal behaviour may be easily justified through reason and philosophical argumentation. For example, in *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, Mr. Axiom refuses to acknowledge the existence of crime by asking: "'For what is right? what is wrong? what is vice? what is virtue? but terms merely relative, and which are to be applied by the standard of a man's own reason'" (1999:254). Similarly, in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, Mr. Myope laughingly dismisses the notions of conscience, crime and guilt as ridiculous: "'And what, pray, is this bugbear of a guilty conscience? [...] What is it, I say, but one of the creatures of priestcraft? Have I not already proved that there is no such thing as crime? How, then, can there be any guilt?'" (2000:65). As can be seen, philosophical argumentation and the doctrines of 'Necessitarianism' and 'General Utility' serve as pretexts for the philosophers to do whatever they like, causing them to gradually undermine the stability of society by their refusal to accept any fixed moral standards and principles. In her novels, Hamilton thus degrades the new philosophy to a form of ultimate nihilism which deprives "mankind of both secular and spiritual statutes, so that each individual might be free to follow nothing but his or her own volition and interest" (Grenby 75).

As may have been observed in the examples above, Hamilton restricts her choice of Jacobin doctrines entirely to the theories of Godwin, even though she does not always identify him explicitly as the author of those theories. Godwin was indeed a common target of vilification and satire in anti-Jacobin fiction, as the theories propounded in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* were considered particularly dangerous because they allegedly spread atheism and social unrest among the middle classes (cf. Kelly 1993:141). The representation of Godwin as the embodiment of manipulative philosophical thought can also be observed in Hamilton's novels, where the philosophers use catch-words from *Political Justice* to countenance their selfish ventures and even recite lengthy passages in their dialogues. Through the characters' frequent invocation of Godwin's theories to justify and condone their immoral and corrupt behaviour, he is exposed as the author of all evil and anarchy under which society was believed to suffer. In order to caution

her readers against perusing his political pamphlets, Hamilton continuously endeavours to highlight the pernicious consequences which arise if Godwinian theories are put into practice. For example, she makes use of the so-called 'Fantom motif', a common motif in anti-Jacobin novels, which was first fictionalized by Hannah More in her *Cheap Repository Tract* "The History of Mr. Fantom, the NewFashioned Philosopher, and his Man William." In More's story, Mr. Fantom repeatedly preaches Godwin's philosophies to his valet, but condemns him when the latter naïvely attempts to put them into practice, committing crimes and even murder. Hamilton borrows this motif in *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, where the innocent but naïve servant Timothy Trundle is introduced to the new philosophy by his master and turns to crime as a result. Even though he has been true to the theories constantly invoked by his master, the latter feels no compunction in committing Timothy Trundle to the gallows, since he obviously does not consider the new philosophy to be meant for practical application (cf. Grenby 99). Godwin also features predominantly in Hamilton's novels as the primary butt of her satire, as his theories are travestied and reduced to farce through their misapplication by foolish characters. This can be best observed in the case of Bridgetina Botherim, who often quotes verbatim lengthy passages from his works, but exposes both herself and the theories to ridicule for citing them out of context and with no understanding of their content. In her novels, Elizabeth Hamilton thus joins other anti-Jacobin novelists in their endeavour to brand Jacobin philosophies as dangerous, nihilistic and incompatible with real life, and to hold them up to general ridicule.

However, despite the frequent invocation of Godwinian theories in Hamilton's novels, the philosophy depicted there represents chiefly a construct serving Hamilton's own interests. This has been convincingly demonstrated by Grenby (76), who argues that "conservative novelists principally aimed to forge an alloy of new philosophy which they then contorted to fit their own purposes." As he sees it, conservative novelists constructed "a putative new philosophy as they wished to see it, as nihilistic, selfish, conventionally wicked and therefore vulnerable to attack" (92). His analysis contradicts the more liberal interpretation of Hamilton's novels by Ty (1991), who argues that the parody of Jacobin philosophies serves to reinforce rather than ridicule them. As she sees it, "parody was a particularly appropriate mode of expressing the ambivalence female novelists such as Opie, Hamilton, and Maria Edgeworth felt towards patriarchy and its abuses" (1991:113); furthermore, Hamilton's attitude towards Godwin was not as negative as the novels' anti-Jacobin propaganda seems to indicate, since "there are a number of gaps and inconsistencies within the text which show the author's uneasiness with the doctrines she espouses" (1991:115). However, as will be shown in the following paragraphs, Hamilton follows the anti-Jacobin tradition of misrepresenting the new philosophy and does not engage in any serious discussion of Jacobin theories: like most other anti-Jacobin novelists, she avoids actually engaging with the theories propounded by Godwin and other Jacobin intellectuals, and reproduces common anti-Jacobin interpretations of the new philosophy

instead. The philosophies denigrated in her novels have thus little to do with the actual theories of Jacobin intellectuals, but represent a strongly travestied version against which Hamilton is able to define her own reformist programme and emphasize its superior value. The following paragraphs will provide a brief outline of those anti-Jacobin patterns in constructing Jacobinism, which can be also detected in Hamilton's novels.

Firstly, a common feature in conservative depictions of the new philosophy is the philosophers' alleged endorsement of social and economic equality. This claim can be found in *Memoirs*, where Bridgetina proudly declares her profound admiration for "the beautiful system of perfect and compleat equality" (207), but refuses to treat her subordinates as equals due to her view of the corrupt state of society, arguing that this prevents her from putting the system of equality into practice. Vallaton and Mr. Glib similarly strive to climb the social ladder and gain financial advantages by referring to the new philosophy's endorsement of equality, but decline to make any concessions to those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. They are thus revealed to be even more prejudiced than other members of society and hypocritical in their claim to improve the world. Since their supposed enthusiasm for equality does not make them give assistance to the poor and needy, it becomes obvious to the readers that their defence of levelling serves as a pretext for seeking personal enrichment at the expense of the hard-working middle classes.

In order to dispute all claims for social equality, many anti-Jacobins praise the benefits of social hierarchy in their novels and base their open endorsement of "inequality on an almost scientific, or at least reasoned, foundation" (Grenby 129). As demonstrated by Grenby, their argumentats range from the economic and political theories of William Paley<sup>3</sup> and Adam Ferguson<sup>4</sup> to more traditional religious explanations. Hamilton follows this pattern in her attempt to illustrate both the Providential nature<sup>5</sup> of social hierarchy as well as the numerous beneficial effects which it brings. For example, she depicts the members of the lower classes as much happier than those of the aristocracy:

'Were you to follow that lord and lady to their banquet, you would soon be sensible that it was at their luxuriant feast, and not at the cottager's supper the spirit of repining and discontent was to be found. At night, when tossing on their separate beds of down, they might probably be heard to envy the sound sleep of the peasant; while the contented cottager in the arms of his faithful wife, and surrounded by his little babes, enjoyed the sweets of sound and uninterrupted repose.' (2000:107)

As is illustrated in the novels, the upper classes have degraded themselves into slaves of the dictates of fashion and materialist interests, whereas the lower classes are free to enjoy the simplicity of their rural existence. Since they have not become corrupted by greed and

---

<sup>3</sup>*Reasons for Contentment* (1793), *Natural Theology* (1802)

<sup>4</sup>*Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792)

<sup>5</sup>See the analysis in the next chapter.

avarice, they value mutual affection, the company of their true friends and family, and the simple enjoyments which their lives have to offer. This makes them oblivious to the lower social position which they actually occupy. As a result, when Bridgetina Botherim pathetically bemoans the wretched condition of the poor, a peasant to whom her harangue is addressed does not understand at all why he should complain about his life: “‘what has I done to deserve to be wretched? I works as hardly, and I gets as good wages, as any man in the parish; my wife has good health, and we never lost a child. What should make me wretched?’” (2000:105)<sup>6</sup>. Even though he is poor, he does not wish to rise to a higher social position, knowing that this would only bring an accumulation of responsibilities, anxieties, and the ills of an artificial life. This view is also shared by Martha Goodwin, who explains to Bridgetina that “‘these poor people see the equipage of my lord and lady with the same indifference that they behold the flight of a bird; and would as soon think of grieving at the want of wings as at the want of a carriage’” (2000:107). According to her, the burden of material wealth is constantly annihilating all possibilities for simple happiness, so that the poor – instead of considering themselves socially disadvantaged – are usually much more content with their lives than members of the aristocracy. As a result, she declares that she frequently admire “the order of Providence, in distributing the portion of happiness with a much more equal hand than on a slight view we could possibly imagine” (2000:106). As the exchange between Bridgetina and Martha Goodwin illustrates, Hamilton repeatedly praises the blessings of poverty and stresses to what extent material wealth may present a burden to the individual being’s soul. This, however, does not cause her to question the legitimacy of either material possessions or social hierarchy, or to call for their abolition: even though members of the upper classes are often shown to have become corrupt and degenerate because of their wealth, their immorality does not invalidate the existence of social hierarchy as such. Furthermore, the quotation above also indicates that Hamilton considers the order of society to have been ordained by Providence and thus to be beyond the power of human intervention. This makes it possible for her to assume that each of the classes in society has been invested by Providence with their own particular duties and responsibilities, all acting for the benefit of the whole. The aristocracy and gentry, for example, would then as landlords be responsible for the well-being of their tenants and social inferiors and thus contribute most significantly to the maintenance of social stability and order. Moreover, since they usually have an ample supply of material possessions, it is in their power and may be considered their duty to spend these on charitable activities

---

<sup>6</sup>A better (but longer) example of the blessings of poverty can be found in *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, where Shermaal relates with respect to the simple life of a rural couple: “The little fortune he had brought from India was lost by the villainy of the agent into whose hands he had entrusted it. But in the endearments of mutual affection, this honest couple had a fund of felicity, which the malice of fortune could not destroy. Both the good man and his son found employment for their industry in cutting down the trees of a neighbouring wood: a work which had been committed to their care, and amply recompensed their diligence. When they returned from their labour, the cheerful appearance of the well-ordered family at home, the smiling welcome of the little innocents, and the affectionate tenderness of the worthy matron, presented to them a reward which went farther than the gifts of fortune have power to penetrate: - it reached the heart” (118).

for the relief and support of the poor. A positive example of a landlord using his socially privileged position to support those in need can be found in the character of Mr. Darnley in *Translations*, who generously renounces the inheritance of one of his tenants for the benefit of the deceased person's relatives and even pays out of his own pockets in order to satisfy everybody's needs. This shows that both social hierarchy and material wealth fulfil an important function in society – that of assuring the well-being of the whole by means of responsible administration of the tenantry and charity – and thus must not be abolished. Those who argue for social and economic equality are exposed as criminal hypocrites, who hope to enrich themselves by the redistribution of property, but refuse to be generous towards their social inferiors. While their attempts at economic levelling do not alleviate the miseries of the poor, they endanger the stability and order of society and only increase the suffering of those in need.

Another prominent feature which anti-Jacobin authors presented as being intrinsically part of Jacobinism is the philosophers' atheism, an aspect which also informs Hamilton's attack against the new philosophy. In both novels, Jacobinism and the new philosophy are presented as being virtually interchangeable with atheism. In *Memoirs*, for example, the philosophers proudly define themselves as "men without a God" (160), and in *Translations*, the philosopher Dr. Sceptic is said to scorn all religions but to show utmost contempt for Christianity: never missing an occasion to deride the practices and beliefs of the Christian religion, he acts as a zealous missionary for the atheist cause and even prides himself on having successfully estranged a young adult from his pious father by having instructed him to disdain the prejudices of his parent. As was the case with the new philosophy, Hamilton and other anti-Jacobin novelists declared atheism to be inconsistent with reason and the laws of Nature, whereas they described Christianity as inherently reasonable and believed nature to prove the glory of God<sup>7</sup>. This view is made explicit by Zaarmilla, who describes atheism in terms of a fanatical religious sect which turns its adherents blind to the laws of nature and common sense:

Atheism is an infernal deity, who demands of his votaries, such cruel sacrifices - that every one initiated into the mysteries of this faith, must make a solemn and absolute renunciation of the use of his senses - shut his eyes upon the fair volume of Nature - and deny to his heart, the pleasurable emotions of admiration and gratitude! (1999:259)

As this quotation and the example of Dr. Sceptic show, atheism and the new philosophy also present a danger to institutions like the family and marriage. Atheist villains like Vallaton and Dr. Sceptic are strangers to natural feelings such as filial devotion, parental duty, familial affection, chastity, loyalty and friendship, and therefore direct their malignity against their fellow beings. For example, in the case of Dr. Sceptic the reader learns that "it seems to have been the endeavour of his life, to eradicate from his bosom,

---

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Chapter 3.1.

those social feelings and affections, which form so great a part of the felicity of common mortals. - A stranger to the animating glow of friendship, and the tender confidence of esteem; he considers all attachments, as a proof of weakness” (1999:259). Furthermore, atheists direct their attack specifically against women – in their function as guardians of the family, virtuous wives and daughters – as females are an easy prey to their manipulative advances, readily dismissing notions like virtue and chastity as empty phrases. For instance, *Zaarmilla* (259) points out that “female converts seldom fail to make an offering to Atheism of their peace, purity, and good fame.” Both novels provide ample examples of the actual menace posed by atheism to innocent women and institutions such as the family, as well as to virtue and social affections; Miss Ardent runs off with Mr. Axiom to the continent to engage in “an experiment of abstract principle” (1999:305), assessing whether she may defy the rules and censure of society. Julia Delmond is enticed by Vallaton to follow him to London, while the young disciple of Dr. Sceptic seduces his long-time love to abandon her virtue and leaves her shortly afterwards when he decides to join the philosophers. Both lovers grow bitter and desperate for having lost their self-respect, and commit suicide. As can be seen, atheism and the new philosophy are presented as serious dangers to all social relations held sacred by the anti-Jacobin camp. If atheism gains the upper hand in society – so Hamilton seems to be convinced – chaos and anarchy will be the order of the day, as notions such as virtue, duty and mutual responsibility will have been discarded:

Benevolence will not be heard of; gratitude will be considered as a crime, and punished with the contempt it deserves. Filial affection would, no doubt, be treated as a crime of a still deeper dye, but that, to prevent the possibility of such a breach of virtue, no man, in the age of reason, shall be able to guess who his father is; nor any woman to say to her husband, behold your son. Chastity shall then be considered as a weakness, and the virtue of a female estimated according as she has had sufficient energy to break its mean restraints. (1999:260)

One of the main dangers of atheism is that it finds its adherents not only among those harbouring religious doubts but also among religious enthusiasts. As many anti-Jacobin novelists saw it, a close link existed between atheism, the new philosophy and religious enthusiasm, as their respective followers were believed to switch easily from one to the next. The similarity between the three is highlighted in Hamilton's novels when *Zaarmilla* mistakes both atheism and the new philosophy for religious creeds and describes them using the terms of religious discourse.

According to Hamilton, the similarity between these three “systems of belief” inheres in their association with wild passions and an unrestrained imagination. Echoing her discourse against the new philosophy and atheism, Hamilton thus disparagingly describes enthusiasm as “the produce of an inflammable imagination, [which] is blinded by the glare of its own bewildering light, expends itself on any object that chance puts in its reach,

and is usually unsteady as it is abortive" (2000:145). Similar to atheism and the new philosophy, enthusiasm is shown to be both sustained by and to cultivate the passions, and therefore to stand in absolute contrast to the rational serenity of anti-Jacobin heroes and heroines. This understanding of 'enthusiasm' informs also the anti-Jacobin attack against atheism and the new philosophy, which – as previously mentioned – equally defy the use of both reason and the senses: since new philosophers and atheists never appeal to their reason or scientific methods when engaging in metaphysical enquiry, they worship their "systems" only in states of passionate enthusiasm. Not built on any fixed or solid scientific and moral principles, their systems may easily lose their allure and be replaced by some new object of passion.

As has been illustrated, atheism, the new philosophy and religious enthusiasm are thus merely different realizations of the same state of heated frenzy; how closely they are connected is illustrated by the cases of Mr. Myope in *Memoirs* and Sir Caprice Ardent in *Translations*. Mr. Myope is revealed to have had a long career as an itinerant preacher and "zealous leader of different sects of religionists" (2000:364) before he abdicates religion and converts to the new philosophy, only to embrace Methodism at the end of the novel. Similarly, Sir Caprice Ardent wilfully substitutes one personal interest for another until he arrives at the new philosophy, after which he becomes a devout votary of Methodism as well. By showing how readily these philosophers dismiss one object of worship for another, Hamilton underlines the inherent affinities between political, intellectual or religious enthusiasm. The smooth transition between the philosophers' various interests also suggests that their engagement with the matter itself is highly superficial and characterized by empty fanaticism, delusion and mania.

Another common feature of anti-Jacobin novels is their profound distrust of intellectual women; a distrust which stemmed partly from the notoriously unorthodox sexuality of female intellectuals like Wollstonecraft and Hays. As Ty points out: "Wollstonecraft and her followers had acquired an unfavourable reputation for being lascivious. Their pleas for freedom were equated with desires for sexual license" (1991:114). This hostility increased even more after Godwin posthumously published Wollstonecraft's memoir, which opportunely furnished conservative writers with evidence for the allegedly immoral effects of female education and emancipation. Even though Hamilton can justifiably be seen as an outspoken advocate for female education, she cautiously echoes this suspicion both in *Translations* and *Memoirs* via the characters of Miss Ardent and Bridgetina Botherim respectively. In *Translations*, the highly intelligent and outspoken Miss Ardent runs off with one of the philosophers to escape her spinsterish existence. Her ultimate disgrace is foreshadowed by the morally exemplary and authoritative Dr. Severan, who laments her "*masculine intelligence*", her vanity, as well as "her intrepid singularity of conduct" (1999:220). The profile which he presents of Miss Ardent is so intimidating and negative that Zaarmilla exclaims "Good heaven, [...] and is *this* the consequence of female learning? Is the mind of woman, really formed of such weak materials, that as soon as it

emerges from ignorance, it must necessarily become intoxicated with the fumes of vanity and conceit?" (1999:221). Interestingly, Hamilton answers this question in the negative only a few pages later, when Zaarmilla – upon finally meeting Miss Ardent – is surprised to find her company “quite charming” (1999:226). He approves of her moral integrity, her keen interest in his culture and her openness to new impressions. In terms of morality and judgement, Miss Ardent is also shown to be highly superior to the other young ladies present at the party, who – Zaarmilla is terrified to perceive – have made a sacrifice of “every faculty of the soul, that distinguishes the rational from the brute creation” to the “Goddess of Fashion” (1999:224). This makes it possible to infer that Miss Ardent’s moral status in the novel is more ambiguous than it might appear at first sight. This point has been made by several critics, such as, for example, Perkins & Russell (1999), Mellor (2005) and Narain (2006), who all stress Miss Ardent’s positive impression on Zaarmilla as well as the lively intelligence of the young girl under Miss Ardent’s care. Generally, this ambiguity may be seen as chiefly responsible for the more liberal interpretations of Hamilton’s novels. For example, according to Perkins & Russell (14-15), even though her elopement “fits comfortably with the anti-jacobin [sic] assumption that intellectual women are all, at heart, sex maniacs just waiting to be picked up by the first smooth-talking seducer who crosses their drearily spinsterish paths (an idea which it is difficult to imagine Hamilton taking seriously)”, Hamilton’s “treatment of women’s education and role in society, one of the main issues being argued in the political fiction of the day, is rather more complex than one might think”. The reason why Miss Ardent ultimately does fall prey to the evil snares of the new philosophy is that her education did not include any domestic or religious virtues: while she was instructed in historical facts, she did not learn to exercise her judgement in applying her learning to useful purposes.

A case more typical of anti-Jacobin rhetoric is Bridgetina Botherim. Even though it might not seem obvious to consider her as a female intellectual (she is, after all, presented as being highly stupid and foolish), Bridgetina does show all the negative consequences of ill-conceived female learning. She was encouraged from her earliest age to indulge in excessive reading but never offered guidance to help her select her reading materials with consideration and taste. Although her father had been the former rector of the village, he is revealed as a narrow-minded man entirely lacking Christian virtues: he could neither esteem his wife, nor instil his daughter with principles of moral conduct. Neglected by her parents, Bridgetina had to tend to her own education and chose novels and metaphysics as suitable subjects. She easily trained her memory to excel at rote-learning, but never acquired an understanding of the texts she read or any judgement to put her knowledge to a useful purpose. Furthermore, she is shown to be totally deficient in moral, religious and domestic virtues; she scorns her mother, only sees her own selfish interests, and should very much like to breach the laws of female propriety, if only a man were willing to have her. The history of Bridgetina’s education is chronicled by her mother after her daughter’s elopement when Mrs. Botherim has to finally acknowledge her utter helplessness in the

duties of a mother:

‘little did I think what all her learning was to come to! Seeing my late dear Mr. Botherim consider me as nobody, because I was not book-read, I thought I would take care to prevent my daughter’s meeting with such disrespect from her husband; and so I encouraged her in doing nothing but reading from morning till night. Proud was I when they told me she was a philosopher; for few women, you know, are philosophers; and so I thought she must be surely be wiser than all her sex, and that all men of sense would be so fond of her!’  
(2000:226-227)

However, Mrs. Botherim’s account reveals a subtle but sad irony: all things considered, the fault of Bridgetina’s ill-conceived and misdirected education can be traced back to Mrs. Botherim’s lack of the same. Had Mrs. Botherim enjoyed a proper schooling of her intellect, she could have acted as a valuable partner in marriage, instead of an object of first passion and then scorn for the husband. Mr. Botherim would probably not have lost his interest in her soon after their marriage and might have respected her even after their mutual passion had subsided. As a result, Mrs. Botherim may not have turned her unhappiness in marriage into the guiding principle for educating her daughter, and would not have harboured inappropriate ambitions for Bridgetina. Most importantly, if her parents had shown respect for each other, Bridgetina would have learned from their example to treat them with reverence and devotion as well, and might not have come to scorn her mother as she does in the novel. Bridgetina’s case illustrates the high significance of female education, which, however, needs to be provided with strict guidance by morally congruous parents or mentors<sup>8</sup>.

As can be seen from the two examples of Miss Ardent and Bridgetina, Hamilton proves a keen and outspoken advocate of female education intended to train women’s intellectual faculties rather than to focus on superficial accomplishments. In her novels she sharply criticizes the strong focus in girls’ instruction on appearances, fashion, accomplishments and sentiments and repeatedly directs her satire against the silliness of boarding-school girls. Her commitment to the feminist cause has been noted by many critics and has earned Hamilton the status of a writer sitting in-between the two opposed camps. However, Hamilton also clearly opposes the secularization of learning and expresses a deep-seated distrust of both men and women whose mentors omitted to instruct their charges in religious principles and virtues:

minds destitute of the solid principles of religion no sooner get a smattering of knowledge than they renounce the respectable duties of their sex; flying from

---

<sup>8</sup>The character and story of Mrs. Botherim is reminiscent of Wollstonecraft’s arguments in relation to both silly women and the unhappy marriages which Wollstonecraft considers a direct consequence of women’s undignified behaviour. Wollstonecraft’s depiction of women appears surprisingly harsh, as she expresses her full sympathy for husbands losing their interests in wives who have not been trained to fulfil their domestic and marital duties properly.

the post assigned them by nature and Providence, they vainly attempt to seize the command of that which it is impossible they can ever reach. (2000:103)

According to Hamilton, parents, teachers and mentors should focus on children's morality, instead of just training their intellects and gorging them with facts. As Dr. Severan points out: "genius is less valuable than virtue" (1999:221). The "education of the heart" thus forms the main aspect of education in general, since it enables learners to properly process the information and facts which they are taught, and teaches them how to make intelligent use of them. At the same time, proper Christian education requires virtuous and morally consistent teachers, as well as functioning families in which the children can develop their moral character. Their learning does not only occur in the classroom or during lessons, but every moment in which children are presented with morally virtuous behaviour in their surroundings.

To conclude, it can be seen that apart from female education, Hamilton reproduces many typically anti-Jacobin arguments against the new philosophy in her novels: like many other anti-Jacobin authors, she constructs her own version of Jacobinism which serves to expose her political opponents as fools, atheists, levellers, social climbers and libertines. Since both her argumentation and rhetoric clearly follow the pattern of many other Jacobin novels, they do reaffirm Hamilton's clear affiliation to the anti-Jacobin camp and put her ideas within a strictly conservative and anti-Jacobin context. In many regards Hamilton's novels are thus typical representatives of anti-Jacobin fiction and do not hold many surprises for readers of that particular sub-genre.

### 4.3 Religious arguments in Hamilton's fiction

As was shown in the preceding chapter, Hamilton's novels *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* are written in the tradition of the anti-Jacobin novel. They can thus be understood as a conservative warning against the dangers of revolution, as well as the pernicious consequences of new philosophical thoughts, above all in the minds of uneducated readers. Yet Hamilton also delineated in these novels her own reformist programme, which partly distinguishes her works from other specimens of anti-Jacobin fiction. While her novels thus strongly defend the status quo, they also show an intense awareness of social injustice and the many existing ills in society, such as debauchery, corruption, illiteracy and ignorance – for which Hamilton endeavours to present an explicit remedy: she presses the need for reforms and demonstrates how any such improvements might be successfully implemented. Even though many of the disorders addressed in the novels are generally connected with the prominence of Jacobinism in British society and might thus be interpreted as arising from the injurious influence of intellectuals like William Godwin on uneducated readers, Hamilton also provides her own explanation for social injustice and suffering. As a result, Hamilton's novels should

not be considered as merely anti-Jacobin propaganda literature. Instead, as will be shown in the following chapter, the project of reform delineated in the novels is based on more far-reaching claims than the temporary threat posed by the Jacobin revolutionaries or the Revolution in France, providing an explicitly Christian justification for the necessity of social improvements. As Grenby argues, “Hamilton’s campaign ran parallel with that of the Evangelical reform of manners movement” (166). In a manner similar to female Evangelical authors, Hamilton thus used the patterns of anti-Jacobin fiction to invite her readers to inspect their own spiritual and moral health and adjust their conduct if necessary. However, this should not be taken to mean that Hamilton only reproduced the conventions of anti-Jacobin novels in order to guarantee for her own reformist ideas a wide reading public as well as financial success. Both Evangelical and anti-Jacobin influences are clearly present in the novels and should thus both be considered part of the ideological framework underlying her novels. In many instances, moreover, “anti-Jacobin and Evangelical aims were inextricably bound up together” (Grenby 166), as the two camps shared a number of political and ideological views. While in the following chapter the author will thus focus on the religious views underlying Hamilton’s arguments, it should be noted that these stand often in direct relation to and echo her anti-Jacobin agenda. This makes it possible to assume that both Hamilton’s anti-Jacobin propaganda and her reformist campaign are informed by a profoundly religious worldview, which will be described in detail in the chapter below.

As mentioned above, human suffering, social injustice and chaos are only partly linked with the influence of Jacobinism on society. Instead, as Hamilton sees it, these ills result directly from individual human beings’ violations of Christian principles, as well as deviations from the order of Providence. According to her, every station in society has been designed by God for a reason and been endowed with its own particular function and duties: “‘each sex, in every situation in life, has its peculiar duties assigned to them by that good Providence which governs all things, and which seems to delight in order’” (2000:102). While the order of society as instituted by Providence would thus have represented perfect harmony and stability and assured universal happiness, people’s dissatisfaction with the situation intended for them by God has generated unhappiness and suffering, as they pursue aims – such as the accumulation of riches or a life of material pleasures – inconsistent with God’s will. Despite England’s and Scotland’s long tradition as Christian countries, according to Hamilton, the British merely pay lip-service to the principles and practices of their religion, disregard Christian rules such as the Ten Commandments and have banished all religious sentiments – for example, charity, tolerance and compassion – from their souls. She firmly believes that their disregard has created a dangerous imbalance in society resulting in injustice and personal ill-conduct: for instance, women are prevented by ill-conceived education from unfolding their dignity and virtue<sup>9</sup>,

---

<sup>9</sup>“A creature instructed but in the art of pleasing, and taught that the sole end of her creation was to attract the attention of the men, could not be expected to tread firmly in the paths of virtue.” (2000:101)

aristocrats indulge in luxuries by bleeding their hard-working tenants<sup>10</sup>, human beings are sold and exploited as slaves<sup>11</sup>, wars are waged against other Christian countries<sup>12</sup>, judges punish petty offences by starving working-class men more severely than immoral actions or violations against the Ten Commandments<sup>13</sup>, and the dictates of fashion eclipse the principles of religion<sup>14</sup>.

The gross discrepancy between the tenets and morals which society superficially endorses and actual practice is made most explicit in *Translations*, in which the Rajah Zaarmilla studies the Bible and naively imagines British society to be built solely on its principles<sup>15</sup>. From his interpretation of the Scriptures, he pictures Britons as enlightened, charitable, and benevolent, “do[ing] to others as they would others have do to them”, treating their women with respect and loving their neighbours. Only when he travels to Britain does he realise that Britons have moved away from the principles which they still proclaim to uphold:

Every thing I have seen, every thing I have heard, since I have been in this place, has tended to create doubt, and aggravate curiosity. My opinion of the morals and manners of Christians, formed upon the precepts contained in their Shaster [i.e. the Bible], has been frequently staggered by the observation of practices, inconsistent with its simplicity; and the knowledge of actions, irreconcilable to the tenor of its precepts. (1999:180)

In the course of his travels, he frequently encounters practices which he finds inconsistent with the tenets of the Bible, such as, for example, selfishness, materialism, violence and war, as well as the foolish behaviour of women, which contradicts the dignity accorded to them by God<sup>16</sup>. Confused by his experiences and incapable of conceiving of Britons as

---

<sup>10</sup>“‘And yet, would you believe it,’ addressing herself to Lady Page, ‘the poor people are so saucy as not to like it.’ ‘I am sure, then, they deserve to starve,’ returned her Ladyship, sending her plate for some jelly-sauce to the nice slice of venison; ‘I never ate any thing better in my life; but the poor are really now become so insolent they are quite insufferable.’” (2000:129)

<sup>11</sup>“These miserable beings, were huddled together in the squalid cells of a moving dungeon. Their uncouth screams, their dismal groans, their countenances, on which were alternately depicted the images of fury, terror, and despair, the clanking of their chains, and the savage looks of the white barbarians, who commanded them, exhibited such a scene, as mocks description.” (1999:111)

<sup>12</sup>“these Christians do not always as I have hitherto supposed, carry arms only to redress the wrongs of the injured, to assert the cause of the oppressed, or to defend themselves from the invaders of their country; - they actually make war upon one another!” (1999:169)

<sup>13</sup>“the cause in which they were then hearing evidence was instantly dismissed: it was, indeed, only concerning a man who was said to have beaten his wife to death: a trifling crime, in the eyes of these Magistrates, when compared to the murder of seven partridges!” (1999:120)

<sup>14</sup>“The smallest breach of the rules by authority of fashion established, was in her opinion an offence far more heinous than the breach of every commandment in the decalogue.” (2000:125)

<sup>15</sup>Grenby praises *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* as “the fullest and most sophisticated treatment of the divide between morals and manners” in anti-Jacobin fiction.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. “I had read the Christian Shaster, and was it not natural for me to suppose, that all who called themselves Christians, were guided by its precepts? From what I learned, that Christian women were not

not adhering to their professed religion, he comes to the conclusion that a new volume of the Scriptures has been introduced, which has supplanted most of its former tenets:

How then, comes War? [...] How comes it to be practised by the professors of a religion, which proclaimed 'peace on earth, and good-will towards men?' I confess that this question has greatly puzzled me; and I can solve it in no other way, than by supposing, that the Christian Shaster, presented me by Percy, is not complete: and that an additional revelation hath, in after times, been afforded to these Christians. (1999:169-170)

Only at the end of his travels does he admit his mistake in supposing Britons true to the religious principles which they hypocritically endorse, and acknowledge Christianity to be "fast journeying into oblivion" (256)<sup>17</sup>. As his increasingly disillusioned account of British society illustrates, all social ills which he encounters are due to the receding influence of Christianity.

An important consequence of Hamilton's belief in a providentially ordained society is her endorsement of the then current order of society, which she makes exempt from all criticism or attempts at institutional reform: if suffering or injustice occur, these represent merely temporal transgressions by individual human beings of the God-given order. As a result, they can only be remedied by returning to this order, while the social framework or structure within which they take place is not questioned. Since only God has the right and power to interfere within His own creation, human beings should not attempt to change the institution or framework which they deem responsible for their affliction, but accept fate and trust in God to take care of them. This applies also to the miseries of the poor and working classes, which according to Hamilton must not be contravened by a total revolution of society. Even though their sad situation may call for concern and compassion and should be relieved by deeds of charity, those actually suffering from poverty may only trust in God to assist them in their needs. As to those responsible for their plight – people having abandoned themselves to the vices of luxury who starve their inferiors and ignore their pleas for assistance – it is incumbent upon them to renounce their selfishness and live up to the duties connected with their station in society. This is made explicit by Dr. Orwell, who summarizes his view of the only adequate response to the miseries of the poor in the following manner:

'Far be it from me, however, to speak of [their] sufferings of [...] with levity or indifference. I too well know the daily increasing misery of their situation,

---

prohibited from the cultivation of their understandings; and how could I conceive, that fashion should lead them to relinquish so glorious a privilege?" (1999:274)

<sup>17</sup>"Wise and learned Bramin [sic]! - May thy meek and generous spirit, pardon the presumption of my ignorance, which refusing to confide in thy experience, persisted in cherishing the ill-founded notion, that all the people of England were Christians! - With all humility, I now retract my error: and confess – that of the many religions prevalent in this country, Christianity (as it is set forth in the Shaster) has the smallest number of votaries: and, according to the accounts of my new friend, is fast journeying to oblivion." (1999:256)

and too sincerely deprecate the causes which have produced it. These we may, without difficulty, trace to the accelerated progress of luxury and its concomitant vices. But can the feeble voice of declamation stem the mighty torrent? As well might it arrest the career of the winds, or stop the fury of the raging elements. He alone who governs the elemental strife, and from 'seeming evil still educes good,' can, by some great national calamity, chastise the haughty pride of luxury, and open the eyes of the ignorant and misguided croud [sic], who estimate national prosperity by the superfluous riches heaped upon thousands at the expense of the accumulated wretchedness of millions of their fellow-creatures. All we have to do as individuals, is to exert our utmost efforts to ameliorate the condition of all within our reach.' (2000:108)

On the other hand, many of the ills under which society allegedly suffers do not represent problems at all, but are – according to Hamilton – merely the fantasies of individuals seeing only their own selfish interests. Even though they may complain about their lack of money or inability to marry the person they love, they fail to see that these temporary disappointments or setbacks do not carry much weight in the greater scheme of things. Instead of lamenting their alleged misfortunes, they should rather trust in God, who “from ‘seeming evil still educes good’” (2000:108) and passively accept whatever fate He has in store for them:

Since the events of life are placed beyond our reach, since it is so seldom in our power to regulate them to our wishes, it is the wisest part we can pursue, to regulate our desires in such a manner as may prevent our becoming the prey of discontent, and losing the enjoyment of the blessings that are left us, in perverse and abortive murmurs at inevitable destiny. (2000:192)

Hamilton's belief in the providential order of society causes her also to endorse all social institutions, such as the monarchy, the Church, marriage, and the family unit. While she acknowledges many of these to be currently corrupted, she does not locate the disorder in the institutions themselves, but attributes them to singular offences committed by individual representatives. This has also been remarked by Johnson, who argues that “abuses which reformers would argue as intrinsic to existing power structures themselves are dismissed as adventitious, as genuine but purely personal failures of individuals” (9). An illustrative example can be found in *Memoirs*, where the Anglican church finds a worthy representative in the character of Dr. Orwell, but is less well-served by the intolerant and narrow-minded Mr. Botherim. The latter's unchristian prejudices and contempt for his wife, however, do not reflect on the institution of the Church itself, but merely serve to show that even the Church suffers from the unchristian behaviour of some of its representatives. It can thus be inferred that Hamilton does not propose to abolish or change any social institutions; instead, she hopes to morally improve the individual persons holding these offices by reminding them of the duties connected with their situation, as well as the values and the teachings of the Bible.

Despite Hamilton's affirmation of all social institutions and the status quo, she does acknowledge the urgent need to reform British society. However, since all suffering and injustice proceeds from the receding influence of Christianity, they can only be remedied by a collective return to its values and principles, as set down in the Bible. This requires every member of society to undergo a process of spiritual reform, allowing his or her soul to become animated by Christian brotherly love and benevolence. All attempts at reform should therefore occur within the framework of Christian faith: "not an evil complained of could have existed in a society, where the spirit of christianity [sic] was the ruling principle of every heart" (2000:366). For example, if human beings based their actions and decisions on their hopes for a blissful afterlife in Heaven, selfishness would no longer dictate their behaviour and material concerns would entirely lose significance in society. "What are riches, or honours, or even the less equivocal blessings of liberty and independence, compared with the glorious certainty of the favour of GOD, and the enjoyment of immortal happiness?" (2000:365). Furthermore, if all persons of authority followed the precepts which a religious conscience imposes, tyranny and oppression from despotic landlords, aristocrats, fathers, husbands and even the king would be banned from the world: "It is impossible that a real Christian should ever be a tyrant. To gratify the passion for dominion, or to exercise the pride of power, can never be the object with him who has imbibed the spirit which pervades the philosophy of JESUS" (104). And finally, people's constant orientation towards Heaven would also prevent discontent about temporary setbacks, since personal fulfilment during their lives on earth would be deemed less important than accumulating riches for their afterlives:

'Were this life intended for our ultimate scene of enjoyment, we may [...] be convinced that our innocent inclinations should not be thwarted in their course. But can we who believe it only a probationary state, in which we are to be fitted and prepared for the enjoyment of a superior one, can we be surprised, if here we do not meet the fruition of our wishes? If resignation were not a necessary trial of our virtue, can we believe that we should be so frequently called on to resign?' (2000:189)

As these examples illustrate, Hamilton hopes to improve society by inviting its individual members to undergo a process of spiritual reform and to rediscover for themselves the principles and values of Christianity. This is a view commonly expressed not only by many Evangelical but also by anti-Jacobin writers, as is pointed out by Grenby, who argues that "anti-Jacobinism shared with Evangelicalism the certainty that any attempt to amend society must rely on individual and private reformation rather than any general and public programme" (166-167). The authority on which all attempts at reform should be based is the Bible, which, however, fulfils different functions. On the one hand, as was shown in the examples from *Translations*, it reveals the order of society as it was willed by God. From his study of the Scriptures, Zaamilla draws inferences about the essence and rights of human nature, the spiritual equality of all human beings before God, the

role and position of women in society<sup>18</sup>, and the principles and maxims governing policies of the government, the Church, the judicature and the country's educational institutions. On the other hand, however, the Bible also explains to Christians the meaning of life, as it sets out the principles and values which should guide all human interaction, conduct and decisions: "The precepts it contains, are simple, pure, and powerful, all addressed to the heart; and calculated for restoring the universal peace and happiness which has been banished from the earth" (1999:83). According to Hamilton, these principles and values represent the very essence both of the Scriptures and of the Christian religion, as they express directly the teachings of Jesus Christ without any distortion from later reformers. Among them Hamilton identifies humility, meekness, charity, brotherly love, benevolence, modesty, filial devotion and forgiveness. She thus highlights the moral aspects of religion, as she represents religion mostly in terms of its potential to provide believers with a comprehensive moral code, regulating their entire conduct and opinions. At the same time, however, this causes her to reduce the Christian faith to a set of simple principles, limiting the role and status of the Bible to that of a simple conduct book.

Yet, Hamilton does not want the Bible to be understood simply as a reference book prescribing rules of conduct. Mere observation of religious duties, such as Church attendance on Sunday and perfect knowledge of the catechism and psalms, does not make any person a good Christian, as the example of Mrs. Delmond illustrates very well: even though she knows a certain part of the catechism and some sermons by heart, and never misses Church service on Sunday, she is devoid of religious sentiments and dies without having forgiven Julia her fall from grace. She is equally incapable of applying her "religious" education to the mental improvement of her daughter, as she forces Julia to memorize the same passages which she was made to learn, for no other reason than keeping up the tradition. Uneducated in the strong guiding force of religious principles, Julia is unprepared to face the vicissitudes of society and is destroyed. As the cases of Mrs. Delmond and Julia show, the blind observation of religious duties does not necessarily produce Christian behaviour; instead, it is often an indication of religious indifference and even betrays weakness of intellect and personality. This explains why characters mindlessly performing their religious duties are more obvious targets of Hamilton's satirical attacks than professed atheists, since the latter are at least sincere about their ungodly state of existence. A telling example of Hamilton's unflattering depiction of hypocritical and indifferent believers can be found in *Translations*, where Sheermaal describes a church service in the following manner:

The ceremonies of this day were concluded by an elderly priest, [...] who read, in a languid and monotonous tone, from a small book, [...], a sort of exhortation; the truths contained in which, seemed equally indifferent to himself and

---

<sup>18</sup>"Throughout the Christian Shaster, they are exalted to perfect equality with man. They are considered as occupying a station of equal dignity, in the intelligent creation; and as being equally accountable, for the use they make of the gift of reason, and the monitions of conscience." (1999:88)

to his audience. Nor did the little attention that was paid to his discourse seem to give him any offence, [...]; though it probably hastened his conclusion; at which he had no sooner arrived, than the countenances of his auditors brightened, and they congratulated one another on their being emancipated from the fatigue of this tiresome ceremony. (1999:113)

Instead of expecting spiritual reform from blind observation of the religious customs outlined above, Hamilton regards religion as presenting fundamental principles rather than dictating rules. The “principles of the Bible” should appeal directly to the heart and guide human beings in their daily behaviour. If animated by these principles, people cannot but contribute to the well-being of society. In her presentation of such good and useful members of society, Hamilton provides her readers with a thorough description of the character traits which result from the religious conversion which she has in mind. These exemplary Christians, as Hamilton depicts them, orient their entire lives towards God, being “convinced of the necessity of a higher standard of excellence than can be found in human nature” (2000:164). Being conscious of their own remoteness from this higher standard of excellence, they are humble and modest, but since they also know of God’s infinite mercy, they never give up hope when being confronted with their own iniquity. In contrast to Jacobin writers, Hamilton thus considers human beings to be inherently flawed and therefore to depend on God’s forgiveness to attain salvation<sup>19</sup>. As a result, she shows her Christian heroes and heroines to be “in the constant habit of referring [their] actions to the judgment of a Being whose moral attributes are unchangeable” (2000:164), so that they are able to resist the temptation to stray from the path of virtue. Since they consider life on earth as a temporary condition preparing them for the afterlife, they accept without resentment setbacks and hardships and regard these as an opportunity offered by Providence to morally improve their lives. Martha Goodwin, for example, exhorts Harriet to always trust in God to bring happiness, even if her own private wishes might not come true:

‘But is then, your Heavenly Father less benevolent and kind? No: his goodness is infinite; but his wisdom is infinite also! What to my weak and limited apprehension might appear the means of happiness, Divine Wisdom may perceive to be the very reverse. Before Him lies the whole succession of events, which are to fill up your existence. It is in his power to arrange and model them at his pleasure; and so to adapt one thing to another, as to fulfil the promise of making all work together for good to those who love him.’ (2000:189)

Hamilton’s heroes and heroines also constantly strive to cultivate their minds – although being aware of the limitations of reason – and trust the eternal principles of their faith to dispel passion and prejudice as reason’s main opponents. And finally, they take pleasure in exerting their benevolence for the benefit of others, engaging in charitable activities to

---

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Grenby, who argues that “only Jacobins, French and British, believed in the perfectability of man and the possibility of achieving, as a species, a new and better society” (167).

help those in need<sup>20</sup>. Examples of such honourable Christians can be found in both novels, for example, in the character of Lady Grey, who is said “to compare her actions, not with the trifles around her, but with the pure standard of Christian excellence” (1999:222), or in the enlightened characters of Dr. Severan, Dr. Orwell, and Mr. Sydney, who all engage in the scientific study of nature not because they hope to challenge religion, but because they believe nature to reveal the glory of God. Dr. Severan readily offers to renounce his philosophical experiments in order to rush to the assistance of a friend in distress, and Mr. Sydney sacrifices his love so as not to have to abjure his faith. The good friends Dr. Orwell and Mr. Sydney, both churchmen but from different denominations, show religious tolerance in the most exemplary manner, and Dr. Orwell’s daughter Harriet is the epitome of modesty and self-restraint, continuously putting her own interests behind those of her fellow beings.

In the novels, the achievement of this state of Christian excellence can always be attributed to the competent education in religious principles bestowed by the character’s parents<sup>21</sup>. Hamilton repeatedly stresses the importance of education, which – if it consists of a judicious balance between religious principles and common sense – might be seen as a guarantee of future salvation. For example, as Grogan points out; “Harriet’s self-control and dutiful nature are firmly attributed to her education in religious principles, something Bridgetina and Julia lack. Harriet exhibits great selfrestraint in all her actions, none so clearly as over her love for Henry Sydney” (2000:18). Lady Grey, on the other hand, a true instance of female modesty, is said to have been taught early in her youth that “*genius is less valuable than virtue*, and that the knowledge of every science, and the attainment of every accomplishment, sinks into insignificance, when compared to the uniform performance of any known duty” (1999:221). As these two examples show, the different characters’ early education generally provides an explanation for their respective virtues and vices. This is even explicitly stated by Dr. Severan in *Translations*, who argues that “[i]n the *early education* we will commonly find an explanation of the manner in which the peculiar combination of ideas that ultimately forms character, has been produced; to it, therefore, we must always recur in our analization [sic] of the propensities and conduct of any individual” (1999:214).

Importantly, Hamilton considers religious education to be the only means by which true virtue can be attained, as her characters lacking such an instruction in religious principles do not succeed in warding off the constant dangers of an unrestrained passion and can

---

<sup>20</sup>For Hamilton’s own description of what she considers Christian excellence, consider the following quotation: “The contemplation of the immutability of the ALL-PERFECT, has a tendency to fix as well as to exult our notions of virtue; while a consciousness of the infinite space between us and this Perfection annihilates the swellings of pride, and allays the ferment of imagination. Our reason, far from shining with unvaried lustre, is perpetually liable to be obscured by passion and prejudice, we cannot, therefore, always trust its decision; but when we are in the constant habit of referring our actions to the judgment of a Being whose moral attributes are unchangeable, the clouds of passion and prejudice are dispelled, and reason again shines forth with steadiness and vigour.” (2000:164)

<sup>21</sup>See also the discussion of education in the previous chapter.

never attain perfection. Miss Ardent and Julia Delmond, for instance, are shown to suffer in later life from their faulty early education, as they lack the fixed principles necessary to guide them through life: the highly accomplished Miss Ardent, for example, has never been taught the judgement necessary “to apply [her knowledge] to useful purposes” (1999:220). Julia Delmond, on the other hand, has been encouraged by her father to indulge in unrestrained and indiscriminate reading to broaden her knowledge, without, however, having benefited from any instruction in religious principles. On the contrary, Captain Delmond is even said to have deliberately biased her against religion, wishing “the mind of his daughter to soar above the vulgar prejudice” (2000:87). He taught her that virtue should not be motivated by religious considerations but be always sought in its own right:

Virtue, he told her, required no incentive to its performance, but its own innate loveliness. The doctrine of rewards and punishments was only adapted to weak and slavish minds. Honour, he said, was the inspiring motive of the great and noble. As to the notion of revelation, it was involved in absurdities which all truly-enlightened men treated with a proper degree of contempt; it was only the tool of knaves and priests, which they made use of to excite the reverence of fools, the more easily to impose upon them. (1999:87)

This disregard for religion leaves Miss Ardent, Julia Delmond and Captain Delmond unprepared to withstand the vicissitudes of social life. Even though in the beginning of the novels their characters are described in more positive than negative terms and are shown to be by no means entirely flawed, their lack of religious principles causes them to stray from the path of virtue. Miss Ardent, and Julia and Captain Delmond all convey a favourable impression on the reader and the other characters; Captain Delmond as a devoted father, Miss Ardent as a moral authority at a party, and Julia Delmond as a virtuous young woman and loving daughter. For example, Julia Delmond is described by the narrator in the most promising terms:

Her temper, which had never been spoiled by the alternate application of indiscreet indulgence and unnecessary severity, was open, ardent, and affectionate. To every species of cunning and deceit she was quite a stranger. The happiness which glowed in her own bosom, she wished to communicate to every thing around her. (2000:85)

Their moral deficiencies surface only when they find themselves in situations requiring personal and virtuous fortitude, or have to take difficult decisions. While both Miss Ardent and Julia are shown to cherish virtue as a guiding principle of their lives, they lack the strength provided by religious conviction and the fixed principles of a religious moral code to withstand the temptations of liberty, knowledge and love. Their ultimate fall from grace does not only confirm a moral weakness already hinted at before but also serves to establish all atheist characters as morally suspect. From the examples of Julia and Miss Ardent, it is thus possible to infer that, according to Hamilton, true virtue

and morality can only be motivated by religious piety, and piety can only stem from an early education in religious principles. Virtue is not possible without religion, and religion will only speak to the heart if being embraced in the earliest youth, as the young learner internalizes such Christian virtues as brotherly love, charity, filial reverence, and modesty.

Hamilton's belief in the importance of early religious education makes her to some extent suspicious of religious conversions which occur at later stages in life. Her characters are either religiously pious and virtuous from the beginning of the novels, or can never attain what Hamilton considers a higher state of existence. However, "conversions" do occur as both religious and political fanatics switch from one form of enthusiasm to another without, however, understanding the universal principles of religion. Mr. Myope, for instance, fervently embraces one Christian confession after the other: he arbitrarily exchanges Quakerism for Anabaptism and later Calvinism before finding in the new philosophy a new object of his ecstasy:

While he was a religionist, it inflamed his zeal for the minutiae of every dogma of the sect to which he then happened to belong. As a Quaker, it made him tenacious of the broad-trimmed hat, and all the peculiarities of dress and manner which distinguish that apparently plain and simple people. He then groaned at the sight of a coloured ribbon, and was moved by the spirit to denounce the most dreadful judgments against the crying sin of long trains and hair powder. As an Anabaptist, in his eagerness for dipping all that came in his way, he narrowly escaped being drowned with a poor woman, of whom he had unfortunately made a convert in the time of a great flood. And when his energies were directed to Calvinism, the state of the reprobate engrossed every faculty of his mind, and his whole soul was poured out in describing the nature of the dreadful tortures, which assuredly awaited all who did not embrace every article of his then faith, all whose intellectual optics happened to view things in a different light. (2000:145)

These different sects, however, alienate him from God rather than inspire him with the Christian principles of charity, benevolence, and brotherly love. Since they hold their own specific doctrines as more important than these principles, they distract their members from the true essence of Christianity and thus act as an obstacle to religious knowledge. However, Hamilton does not only seek to dissociate herself from minor dissenting communities but also rejects the legitimacy of any peculiar doctrines and of theological dispute. Hamilton's view is that the Bible is formed of "great and fundamental truths" (2000:365) which cannot be subject to divergent interpretations; similarly, the teachings of Jesus Christ represent unchangeable principles and should thus be the same for all Christians. For instance, Mrs. Martha confesses in *Memoirs* that she has "'often thought it a great pity that the heads of our church had not, instead of prescribing confessions of faith with regard to abstruse and speculative points of doctrine, confined themselves to those which are chiefly insisted upon in the discourses of our Saviour'" (2000:104). The different Christian denominations which focus strongly on their individual interpretation

of the Scriptures are therefore contemptuously dismissed as sects; detracting from the true essence of Christianity, they lack all justification. In the novels, this is the case of all communities outside the established churches, such as Methodist and Anabaptist and Calvinist communities, even though Hamilton's satirical attack on the latter ignores the fact that Scotland's Presbyterian Church (to which Hamilton herself belonged) has a deep connection to the Calvinist reformer John Knox. Her particular treatment of Calvinism in the novels deserves attention for yet another reason, namely the link drawn by Kelly (1993:149) between the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination and Godwin's 'Doctrine of Necessity'. According to Kelly, Godwin's theory, which argues that "Man is in no case, strictly speaking, the beginner of any event or series of events that takes place in the universe, but only the vehicle through which certain antecedents operate" (2000:392-393), constitutes a secular version of the doctrine of double predestination in its most strict understanding, since they both locate the responsibility for human actions in external circumstances, and thus beyond the power of individual human beings themselves. Whether Hamilton or her contemporaries were aware of the connection is a moot point; similarly, it should also be considered to what extent the doctrine of double predestination was at the time considered a defining feature of Calvinism in order to justify the association. Both Calvinism and "Godwinism" are critically and satirically attacked in Hamilton's novels, even though she lays different charges against them: in the case of Godwin, Hamilton criticizes his 'Doctrine of Necessity' indeed precisely for the alleged opportunity which it affords to its adherents to disclaim responsibility for their actions: whenever Bridgetina, Vallaton or Mr. Myope are in need of a pretext to justify their behaviour or decisions, they appeal to external circumstances as their driving force. An extreme example can be found in Vallaton's refusal to consider himself guilty after having caused an innocent man to die by the guillotine:

he [...] recalled to his recollection every dogma of the philosophy that was most eminently calculated to reassure his mind. What he had just done would, it is true, probably be the means of making an old man lose his head. What then? he was but the passive instrument: no more to blame than the guillotine which should behead him. (2000:64)

In the case of Calvinism, on the other hand, Hamilton "only" criticizes its adherents for scorning those they regarded as reprobates, as well as for sometimes exaggerating their devotion to some particular church doctrines:

'It is not improbable that zeal for the favourite dogmas they have embraced, may sometimes lead them too far; and that it would be still better for the people, if, instead of being taught a profound veneration for speculative opinions, they were more fully instructed in the unchangeable principles of morality.' (2000:111)

As can be seen, the only similarity linking “Godwinism” and Calvinism which Hamilton acknowledges to exist is the state of enthusiasm, blinding the senses of both philosophers and Calvinists so that neither can claim a rationally enlightened approach to their “creed”. Also interesting is Hamilton’s own view of salvation, which is not so different from Calvinist doctrine, as the latter stresses the importance for the elect to “prove” their standing in God’s favour by means of good deeds. In a similar manner, Hamilton treats her religious heroes and heroines as if they had been “elected” as well. They believe in the wisely guiding hand of God, and therefore limit their own agency within the narrow bounds of obeying God’s will. On the other hand, however, they firmly believe that being Christian is inherently accompanied by a number of duties and responsibilities, such as charity, familial devotion and reverence. As a result, although they may live with the certainty of being elect, their lives are still characterized by continuous exertion for the benefit of others, which also requires them to assume full responsibility for their actions. This view of salvation is generally in conformity with both Scottish Presbyterian and Calvinist doctrine, since both are associated with the need for the elect to represent the glory of God by means of righteous behaviour and good deeds. However, Hamilton still distances herself from Calvinism, depicting it as one of the many sects whose doctrines distract from the true and unchanging principles of Christianity.

Another religious community which deserves more in-depth investigation is that of the Evangelicals, even though Evangelicalism is denied explicit representation in the novels. However, as mentioned in Chapter 3.8, Evangelical communities were most associated with conversionism and enthusiasm, which Hamilton both consistently attacks in her novels. As a result, it may be assumed that her criticism against “religious sects” was also extended to the Evangelical community. This is, of course, noteworthy since, as argued above, Hamilton’s reformist programme also shows many similarities with that of her Evangelical contemporaries; among the many parallels are, for example, her belief in inner spiritual reformation instead of general programmes for institutional reform, the strong focus on religious activism in the form of charity, the central role played by the Scriptures, as well as the critique of the aristocracy’s degenerate morals and manners. Despite these affinities, however, Hamilton is not generally identified as an Evangelical writer (unlike, for example, Hannah More or Mary Brunton), which might be due to the fact that Britain at that time experienced a general religious reawakening. As a result, religious views now associated with Evangelicalism then circulated also outside the communities narrowly defined as Evangelical and even became part of what may be regarded as the national consciousness in the nineteenth century. For example, as mentioned above, the endorsement of private over public reform had been appropriated by anti-Jacobinism and became part of many conservative writers’ political agendas. Furthermore, similar to the Evangelical reform of manners movement, anti-Jacobin writers also launched an attack against the corruption of the aristocracy, even though they voiced their criticism for slightly different reasons than the Evangelicals. While Evangelical writers showed a

general concern over the degeneracy of morals in Britain, the anti-Jacobins also linked this degeneracy to the danger of Revolution, arguing that it undermined the stability of the nation and therefore annihilated the justification for social hierarchy. However, while religious reawakenings became a dominant force in society and Evangelical ideas found their way into conservative writing, a too obvious affiliation with the Evangelical camp also involved the risk of tarnishing a writer's reputation within political orthodoxy: as is argued by Grenby (161), "writers [...] were not unaware of the tightrope they were walking, and took care to avoid any imputation that they were compromising their political orthodoxy, and propelling the nation into jeopardy, by pursuing too vigorously their Evangelical agenda." Since institutions such as social hierarchy and the aristocracy were considered sacrosanct in the conservative camp, criticising the immorality of the elite involved the risk of being branded as a political subversive. Hamilton, whose "attacks on the behaviour of the aristocracy" have been characterized by Grenby (161) as the most "scathing" in conservative fiction, may have been aware of this tightrope walk and therefore actively sought to dissociate herself from the Evangelical camp by treating all religious groups disparagingly as sects and making religious enthusiasts the targets of her satire. Even though her own campaign shows some parallels to the Evangelical reform of manners movement, her anti-Jacobin rhetoric and campaign against enthusiasm locates her firmly within the standard conservative religious tradition.

Only the Anglican and Presbyterian churches are to some extent exempt from Hamilton's critique levelled against different confessions<sup>22</sup>, since they apparently present less danger of distracting from the fundamental truths of Christianity. A possible reason why they are not consistently depicted as "sects" is that they represent the established churches in England and Scotland respectively and are thus closest to what Hamilton may have considered the true teachings of Christ. However, even they are denounced for not focusing enough on God's universal principles. Especially the peasantry in Scotland, as the example provided in the discussion of Calvinism above has shown, run the danger of cherishing their own particular doctrines more than Christian moral principles. Anglicans in England, on the other hand – instead of being easily consumed by religious enthusiasm – are depicted as being guilty of religious indifference and hypocrisy. Moreover, both the members of the Presbyterian and Anglican churches may turn out to be as ignorant of and indifferent towards the universal teachings of Christ as the members of Hamilton's so-called "sects". As a result, none of the religious confessions can guarantee salvation to its adherents, as long as those adherents are oblivious to Christian teachings and principles. In other words, whether Christian believers are inspired by the true principles of their religion depends solely on their own individual faith rather than on the particular denomination to which they adhere. In the same manner, Hamilton locates the necessity for reform more in the individual believers than in the institution of the

---

<sup>22</sup>No firm evidence, however, can be found concerning Hamilton's attitude towards Catholicism, given that the Roman Catholic Church does not feature at all in her novels.

Church itself. The established churches will achieve reform if their representatives learn to refocus on the essential principles of Christianity instead of particular doctrines and different interpretations of the Bible.

Hamilton's belief in universal principles of religion and simultaneous rejection of theological dispute makes her to some extent an advocate for religious toleration. Even though her derogatory designation of denominations as "sects" might be interpreted as an indication that she preferred all Christian confessions to reunite rather than cohabit peacefully, she is also careful to show that mutual understanding and ecumenical Christianity are possible: for example, in *Memoirs*, the interconfessional marriage between Henry and Harriet can be interpreted as symbolising the agreement between Dissenters and Anglicans. Similarly, she introduces a husband and wife of different confessions as a minor sub-plot in *Translations*, who are said to have agreed "that the religion taught their children should not be indebted for its support to the peculiar dogmas of either; but should chiefly rest on the authority of that Shaster" (1999:289). Another argument for toleration in the novels is Hamilton's view on the limitations of human judgement and reason, which makes it impossible that any human being may acquire complete knowledge about life on earth and destiny: if people are conscious of their own imperfect condition, it follows that they cannot be justified in regarding their own understanding of the Scriptures as more truthful than that of other denominations. Furthermore, even though Hamilton dismisses varying Church doctrines as illegitimate, she is also found to argue in *Translations* that "the Supreme Being delighteth in variety, and that He who hath not formed any two objects in his vast creation exactly similar, took doubtless no less care upon the formation of the human mind, perceiveth with delight the contrarieties among men" (1999:86). This view is repeatedly stated by Zaarmilla, who is fascinated that Jesus Christ allegedly allowed his followers to choose the mode of worship which they deemed most suitable for expressing their religious feelings, and expected them to grant the same liberty to others<sup>23</sup>. He equally expresses his delight that "all sects, equal in the eye of Heaven, must needs, be admitted into an equal enjoyment of every right, and every privilege" (1999:86). Since Zaarmilla's innocuous description of British society from his study of the Bible might be interpreted as Hamilton's own views on how society should be, it is possible to assume that at least in principle she accepts a variety of Christian confessions and staunchly defends toleration between them. As shown above, however, exceptions to Hamilton's plea for toleration can be found in religious groups outside the established churches, which she mockingly dismisses as hotbeds for fanaticism and religious enthusiasm.

When it comes to non-Christian religions it should be noted that Hamilton extends her endorsement of religious toleration only to some of them, leaving important room for ex-

---

<sup>23</sup>"The great Founder of their religion having left every man at liberty, to choose the form of worship which he finds best calculated to excite, and to express sentiments of devotion, they each attach themselves to the form most agreeable to their own minds, allowing them the same liberty to others, and convinced that all are equally acceptable to the Deity, who acquiesce in his laws, and obey his commandments." (1999:86)

ceptions. This is most apparent in *Translations of a Hindoo Rajah*, where both Hinduism and Islam feature to a large extent and could not receive a more dissimilar treatment by the author. Whereas Hamilton's depiction of Hindu religion and culture is a generally positive one, her discourse on Islam reveals deep-rooted prejudices and is characterized by a fierce Islamophobia. For example, Hamilton describes Mohammed as "the impostor of Mecca" (1999:67), criticizes Muslims for their "resistless fury of Fanatic zeal" (1999:67), and denounces the extreme cruelty with which they treated the conquered Hindus and destroyed their culture: "Multitudes were sacrificed by the cruel hand of religious persecution, and whole countries were deluged in blood, in the vain hope, that by the destruction of a part, the remainder might be persuaded, or terrified into the profession of Mahomadenism [sic]" (1999:68). Hamilton accuses the Muslim conquerors of having imposed their own – allegedly arbitrary and despotic – system of jurisdiction, taxation and administration, concluding that "the whole system of Mogul government toward their conquered Provinces was such, as could never fail to shock an [sic] European mind" (1999:69). As these arguments illustrate, Hamilton considers Islam to be unworthy of toleration, since Muslims themselves are highly intolerant and thus present a danger to other religions. Indeed, as Hamilton sees it, the cruelty and intolerance of the Muslim rulers fully justified British intervention, as the colonial venture of the latter primarily served to liberate an oppressed country: "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" (1999:84; Hamilton's emphasis). It is therefore possible to link Hamilton's views on religious toleration directly with her attitude towards imperialism, the latter being justified by the British crusade against intolerant cultures. On the other hand, since the British allegedly respect Hindu culture and religion, their rule over India is even beneficial to the people living there:

In those provinces which, by a train of circumstances, totally foreign to our purpose to relate, have fallen under the dominion of Great Britain, it is to be hoped that the long-suffering Hindoos have experienced a happy change. Nor can we doubt of this, when we consider, that in those provinces, the horrid modes of punishment, inflicted by the Mahommedans [sic], have been abolished; the fetters, which restrained their commerce, have been taken off; the taxes are no longer collected by the arbitrary authority of a military chieftain, but are put upon a footing that at once secures the revenue, and protects the subject from oppression. (1999:70)

Hamilton does not only make toleration dependent on the relative degree of toleration demonstrated by the respective other, she even takes for granted a generally Islamophobic attitude on the part of her readers which she tactically uses to discredit both the new philosophy and Islam itself. For example, Hamilton charges the new philosophers with a putative attempt to establish Islam in Britain, imputing that they endeavour to impose the Muslim doctrine of polygamy and view of Paradise on British society. Hamilton thus uses Islam as a terrifying spectre which she can easily invoke to illustrate the wide-ranging

dangers of the new philosophy. The specific nature of these dangers is left unexpressed; however, it could be argued that by invoking the Muslim doctrine of polygamy, she tries to demonstrate both Muslim and the new philosophers' sexual inconstancy and immorality. By linking the new philosophy with Islam, Hamilton therefore plays on and endeavours to increase British fears of both "creeds", exploiting the negative connotations which they evoke in order to augment the negative image of the respective other.

On the other hand, however, Hamilton's depiction of Islam is not altogether negative, as she sometimes cites Muslim and Hindu practices as positive examples against Christian hypocrisy, religious indifference and immorality. This can again be observed in *Translations*, where Zaarmilla finds himself increasingly disillusioned about the stark contrast between the teachings of the Bible and actual religious practice: "The Mussulman fasts, and the Hindoo performs Poojah, according to their respective laws, and can we believe that the Christian alone treats with contempt the authority of his God?" (1999:140-141). Hamilton also repeatedly reminds her readers that slaves receive a comparatively benign and dignified treatment by Muslim slave-traders, whereas they suffer from the merciless cruelty of the Christians (it should be noted, though, that the following account is provided by a Rajah outspokenly biased against Christianity):

By the mild laws of our Shaster, and even by the less benevolent institutions of Mohammed, slaves are considered as people, who, having bartered their liberty for protection, are entitled to the strictest justice, lenity, and indulgence. They are always treated with kindness, and are most frequently the friends and confidants of their masters. But with these white savages, these merciless Christians, they are doomed to suffer all that cruelty, instigated by avarice, and intoxicated by power, can inflict. (1999:112)

All things considered, however, Hamilton seems to exclude Islam from her plea for toleration, presenting it as a cruel and totalitarian *weltanschauung* which had been invented by a charlatan, and which as a result does not merit any tolerance and respect by Christian people. Hamilton asserts that Muslims are not tolerant towards other religions and mercilessly fight to spread their faith by means of the sword. She argues that unlike the English, they oppress the peoples whom they have conquered by imposing their own administrative, economic and legal systems, and do not show any interest in the survival of these cultures. Finally, the common Muslim practice of having more than one wife reveals their sexual inconstancy and depravity, as well as the regressive state of their culture, which continues to subjugate women.

In the case of Hinduism, on the other hand, Hamilton's depiction is far more favourable, revealing her far-reaching knowledge about Hindu culture and religion, as well as her profound interest in the subject. Both manifest themselves in a primarily positive attitude towards India and might therefore be interpreted as a general plea for religious toleration of Hinduism on the part of the author. This plea – if it can be regarded as such – is

expressed on a variety of levels. For example, the novel is opened by a “Preliminary Dissertation”, which aims to acquaint Hamilton’s female readers with India’s history, culture and religion in an attempt both to combat prejudices and establish Hindu culture, religion and literature as subjects worthy of scholarly attention. In the spirit of an oriental scholar, Hamilton sets out to instruct her readers in the cultural practices of the Hindu people, bemoaning “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 aspect highly cultivated, and accurately informed” (1999:56). As mentioned above, the image presented in the “Preliminary Dissertation” is a largely positive one, as Hamilton draws attention to those aspects of Hindu culture and religion which she regards as laudable. For example, she invokes the extraordinary longevity of this civilization by European standards, which she takes as proof of the salutary nature of their government, religion, legal system and morality: “The magnificent proofs of ancient grandeur, however, [...], give the most irrefragable testimony of the antiquity of their empire, and seem to confirm the assertion of its Historians, ‘that its duration is not to be paralleled by the history of any other portion of the human race’” (1999:59). Considering different aspects of Hindu culture in terms of their stabilising influence and power, Hamilton thus focuses primarily on these allegedly beneficial qualities. For example, she describes the Hindus’ acceptance of a providentially imposed social hierarchy in Hindu civilization<sup>24</sup>, their enlightened notion of Deity<sup>25</sup>, and the close relationship between Hindu rajahs and their people<sup>26</sup>, all acting as sources of stability and order which ensure the survival and prosperity of the Hindu civilization. Furthermore, in contrast to Hamilton’s depiction of many English Christians, she presents Hindus as true to the values of their religion, so that they may be understood to serve as examples for her readers.

However, Hamilton does not only promote toleration by describing Hinduism in a very positive manner, she also invokes what she considers the praiseworthy spirit of toleration shown by Hindus for other religions:

---

<sup>24</sup>Cf. “The division of the Hindoos into four Casts, or tribes, to each of which a particular station was allotted, and peculiar duties assigned, might doubtless be another cause, which lent its aid toward the preservation of general harmony. This division must have been made at a period too remote for investigation; and which seems to set conjecture at defiance. It is by the Hindoo writers wrapt in the veil of allegory; they say, that Brahma, the first person in their Triad of Deity, having received the power from the Supreme for the creation of mankind, created the Hindoos” (1999:58).

<sup>25</sup>“That Being whom they distinguish by the different appellations of the Principle of Truth, the Spirit of Wisdom! the Supreme! by whom the Universe was spread abroad, whose perfections none can grasp within the limited circle of human views, they say, with equal complacency, all who are studious to perform his will throughout the immense family of creation. They deem it derogatory to the character of this Being, to say that he prefers one religion to another” (1999:60-61).

<sup>26</sup>Cf. “There the right of sovereignty bore the mild aspect of parental authority. The Prince considered the people in the light of children, whom he was appointed by Heaven to protect and cherish; and the affection of the subject for the Prince, under whose auspices he enjoyed the blessings of freedom, and tranquility [sic], was heightened by esteem for his virtues, into the most inviolable attachment” (1999:57-58).

Though tenacious of their own doctrines, in a degree that is unexampled in the history of any other religion, the most fervent zeal in the most pious Hindoos, leads them neither to hate, nor despise, nor pity such as are of a different belief, nor does it suffer them to consider others as less favoured by the Almighty than themselves. (1999:60)

Since Hindus consider all Gods revered by human beings as different representations of the one and only Deity, they readily accept other religions, which – as readers are told – they regard simply as different forms of worship of the one true Deity. According to Hamilton, Hindus “deem it derogatory to the character of this Being, to say that he prefers one religion to another” (1999:61) and therefore do not feel superior in their religious practices towards the adherents of other religions. By quoting a translation of Hindu scripture by a fellow orientalist, Hamilton also highlights the reasonableness of toleration and sets up Hindu practice as a laudable example to be emulated by her readers:

‘the truly intelligent, [say they] well know that the difference and varieties of created things are a ray of his glorious essence, and that the contrarities of constitutions are types of his wonderful attributes. He appointed to each Tribe his own faith, and to every Sect its own religion. Sometimes he is employed, with the attendants upon the Mosque, in counting the sacred beads; sometimes he is in the Temple at the adoration of Idols, the intimate of the Mussulman, and the friend of the Hindoo, the companion of the Christian, and the confidant of the Jew’. (1999:61)

Hamilton’s “Preliminary Dissertation” thus advertises toleration towards Hinduism in a variety of ways: on the one hand, by presenting Hindu culture and religion in a mainly positive manner, Hamilton depicts Hinduism as deserving both scholarly attention and the respect of her readers. She informs her readers about cultural practices of the Hindu people in order to broaden their understanding of this alien culture as well as to combat stereotypes. Hamilton also praises the remarkable mildness and toleration shown by Hindus for other religions, which can of course be interpreted as a general plea for toleration levelled at her Christian readers.

At the same time, however, it should be noted that Hamilton’s perspective on the East is still that of a Western Enlightened oriental scholar, which – as Kelly convincingly argues – places “the culture that the text embodies within an Enlightened order of values and plot of history” (1993:133)<sup>27</sup>. As a result, Hamilton’s novel represents a “textual colonization of the Orient” (Kelly, 1993:133) which implicitly assumes the superiority of the West by “reinforcing ideas of western advancement, religious authority, and moral superiority” (Taylor, 2000:557) and contains the foreign culture within a Western framework of values<sup>28</sup>. This Enlightened oriental perspective on Hindu culture is again rooted

---

<sup>27</sup>See Kelly (1993) for an analysis of Enlightenment rhetoric in the novel.

<sup>28</sup>For more detailed discussions of Orientalism in *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, see Kelly (1993), Perkins & Russell (1999), Taylor (2000), Narain (2006) and Mellor (2005).

in Hamilton's religious convictions and staunch belief in the religious and moral superiority of Christianity, which ultimately results in her definitive endorsement of British supremacy over Hindu culture. Despite her very favourable depiction of Hinduism in the novel, Hamilton still declares that the "perfection of virtue was unknown to the world, till taught by the religion of Christ" (1999:83), considering Christianity to be the only religion which enables its followers to overcome the imperfections of human nature. Her view is that this inherent superiority of Christian morals places Western civilizations above all other civilizations of the world, since they alone have achieved freedom and liberty for their peoples, and embraced "universal benevolence", "Liberty" and "virtue" (1999:83) as the fundamental principles underlying their historical development and present state of existence. By contrast, all ancient civilizations which existed before the advent of Christianity were – according to Hamilton – characterized by human suffering, despotic rulers, war and oppression. In Hamilton's view Christianity thus figures as the only perfect religion, ranking higher than both Islam and Hinduism.

Hamilton is not only convinced of Christian superiority, however well the religion of Hinduism may be "adapted to the country and people where it is practised" (1999:61); she also diagnoses several deficiencies inherent in Hindu religion, which she suggests have ultimately led to the downfall of the Hindu empire. For example, despite the sublime notion of Deity which had been formerly cherished by the Hindu people, superstition and the worship of inferior Deities have estranged many believers from the true principles of their religion, leaving only members of the higher castes enlightened by the truly sublime divine essence of their faith. By contrast, since the lower castes were denied access to knowledge and scientific studies, the religion of the uneducated masses "has degenerated into the grossest idolatry" (1999:63), characterized by ignorance and superstition. Moreover, even though Hinduism could effectively ensure peace and stability on the Indian subcontinent over several centuries, the remarkable gentleness preached to its followers has caused them to grow weak and effeminate and thus unable to protect their empire against foreign invaders: "The peculiar construction of the Hindoo government, and the precepts of Hindoo faith, though admirably calculated for the preservation of their empire in happiness and tranquility, were not so favourable to the cultivation of the mind, and to its advancement in the paths of useful knowledge" (1999:65). According to Hamilton, the Hindus allowed their intellect and passions to lie dormant and slowly decline for too long, so that they constituted easy prey to the Muslim invaders and effectively depended on the British troops for their liberation. As already pointed out above, she thus endorses British imperialism by stressing the many alleged benefits of English colonial rule on the Indian subcontinent and presenting the Hindus as being indebted to Britain for the reestablishment of peace and stability. Her highly naïve construction of both the East and British imperialism has been succinctly summarized by Perkins & Russell (25), who argue that

Hamilton reads Indian history as the story of an ancient, fundamentally monothe-

istic and tolerant culture overrun by tyrannical Islamic invaders. In this version of history, the British arrive not as colonizers but as liberators, freeing the Hindus from their long and miserable subjection to a foreign power and allowing them to return to their old forms of government and landownership, which, in a happy coincidence, happen to share a number of principles with traditional British yeomanry.

Throughout the novel, Zaarmilla and Maandaara repeatedly express the gratitude which they feel for their “deliverers” (1999:99), “whose conduct had been so favourable to [their] nation” (1999:103). Similarly, in the “Preliminary Dissertation” Hamilton explains that in “those provinces which [...] have fallen under the dominion of Great Britain, it is to be hoped that the long-suffering Hindoos have experienced a happy change. Nor can we doubt of this, when we consider, that [...] the horrid modes of punishment, inflicted by the Mohammedans, have been abolished” (1999:70). As can be seen, Hamilton asserts what she considers to be the supremacy of the Christian West over the East both with regard to theology and religious practice: on the one hand, she identifies the religious precepts of Hinduism as responsible for the culture’s weakness and “effeminacy”, and on the other, she depicts popular Hindu religion as ignorant idolatry.

A final point to be discussed in relation to both the issue of toleration and Hamilton’s presentation of Hinduism is the striking similarities to be found between her notions of Hinduism and Christianity respectively. Among the many parallels are her interpretation of Hinduism as a monotheistic religion with similar notions of Deity and providential power, as well as her already well-known belief in the supremacy of religious principles over individual doctrines, which apparently also applies to Hinduism. For example, concerning Hamilton’s portrayal of the Hindu Deity it should be noted that she concentrates solely on those attributes that Christians generally associate with their own God: “That Being whom they distinguish by the different appellations of the Principle of Truth, the Spirit of Wisdom! the Supreme! by whom the Universe was spread abroad, whose perfections none can grasp within the limited circle of human views, they say, with equal complacency, all who are studious to perform his will throughout the immense family of creation” (1999:60-61). Similarly, Zaarmilla, the main narrative voice in *Translations*, is often found to profess beliefs and morals comparable to those of Hamilton’s Christian heroes, even though he uses a different terminology. This has also been described by Perkins and Russell, who characterize Zaarmilla as “little more than a mirror image of an educated English gentleman, quoting *The Bhagavad Gita* and the *Hitopadesa* where the Englishman would quote the Bible and quoting Kalidasa where he would Shakespeare” (31). The notion of human nature and the moral values underlying these works seem to be the same, so that Zaarmilla’s observations and attitudes are informed by those religious principles which Hamilton has also identified as the essence of the Christian faith: benevolence and mercy. When first acquainted with the Bible, Zaarmilla even expresses his surprise to find that Hinduism shares with Christianity the same fundamentals: “I had been taught to believe that the pure doctrine of benevolence, and mercy, was unknown to all but the

favoured race of Brahma, that the Christian faith like that of the Mussulmans, was a narrow system of superstitious adherence to the wildest prejudices, engendering hatred, and encouraging merciless persecution against all who differed from them" (1999:83). He immediately acknowledges his mistake and soon gains a profound understanding of Christian ethics thanks to his own Hindu religious piety and morality. This shows that in their essence, Hinduism and Christianity are presented as two distinct but related creeds, both sharing the same morals and worshipping the same Deity, even though they do so in slightly different ways. The question thus arises whether Hamilton extended her appeal for toleration towards Hinduism only because of these alleged similarities, while at the same time denying Hinduism in all its complex teachings and forms of worship proper representation in the novel. Hamilton mentions that Hindus are "tenacious of their own doctrines, in a degree that is unexampled in the history of any other religion" (1999:60), but does not concern herself with the exact nature of these doctrines and thus avoids to some extent the question whether these deserve toleration as well. Since she generally considers religious doctrines more as an impediment towards religious knowledge than as an advantage, however, it may be assumed that she had a high regard for the doctrines and forms of worship peculiar to Hinduism. All things considered it may be argued that Hamilton judges all monotheistic creeds as worthy of toleration which are founded on universal principles making any individual doctrines or peculiar forms of worship unnecessary. In her novels, she grants respect to those characters who are aware of the universal quality of both their Deity and moral code underlying their faith, and who as a result do not feel superior towards other believers.

Perhaps the most prominent issue in Hamilton's reformist agenda is feminism, such as, for example, questions of the rights and duties of women in society or female education<sup>29</sup>. As an essayist and novelist Hamilton contributed actively to the debate and published several treatises (e.g. *Letters addressed to the Daughter of a Nobleman, on the Formation of Religious and Moral Principle*) on these issues. Her novels show a similar concern, as Hamilton discusses the rights and duties of women both directly – in the form of philosophical debates between her characters – and indirectly, by means of plot and characterization. As the title of the publication above already indicates, her views on these matters are again firmly embedded in and inextricably linked with her religious agenda, since she bases her arguments mainly on her notions of providential order and the spiritual equality of all people. This has been pointed out by Perkins and Russell, who argue that Hamilton creates "a conservative, explicitly Christian justification for giving women proper education and recognizing their contribution to society" (17). In general, Hamilton believes that the role of women is set down by Providence as much as the institutions and order of society, maintaining that "each sex, in every situation in life, has its peculiar duties assigned to it by that good Providence which governs all things, and

---

<sup>29</sup>For analyses of feminist aspects in Hamilton's novels, see Johnson (1988), Kelly (1993), Thaddeus (1994) and Taylor (2000).

which seems to delight in order” (2000:102). In the case of women, these peculiar duties pertain mostly to their position and responsibilities in the family and household: they are intricately bound to and defined by the domestic sphere, where they act as dutiful wives, mothers and daughters. Despite this close association with the family, marriage and fulfilment in love should not be regarded as a necessary objective in any woman’s life, since she may also extend her activities beyond the family circle into the local community, as was the custom of women in the Evangelical community. For example, as Mrs. Fielding in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* shows, spinsterhood should be regarded “as an opportunity afforded by Providence for extending [a woman’s] knowledge of the human heart” (2000:251). Accordingly, Mrs. Fielding commits herself entirely to the life of charity. Hamilton thus shows that there is ample opportunity for any woman to exert herself beyond the immediate confines of the domestic sphere; for example, she may “employ her leisure in cultivating her own understanding, and instructing that of others, in seeking for objects on which to exert her charity and benevolence, and in offices of kindness and good-will to her fellow creatures” (2000:103).

However, since Hamilton believes these allegedly feminine duties to have been entrusted to women by Providence, she regards it as a transgression of the providential order to call them into question. This causes her to distance herself from the so-called ‘Revolutionary feminists’, who – as she believed – hoped to divest women from their essentially female qualities and duties and abolish “all the unhappy distinctions of station, and rank, and sex, and age” (2000:107). In the novels, Revolutionary feminists, such as Bridgetina Botherim and Miss Ardent, are allowed to voice their claims; however, these are shown to be utopian and bear the full brunt of Hamilton’s satire. For example, Miss Ardent is said to

[pant] for that blessed period, when the eyes of men shall no longer be attracted by the charms of youth and beauty; when mind, and mind alone, shall be thought worthy of the attention of a philosopher.

In that wished-for aera [sic], the talents of women, she says, shall not be debased by household drudgery, or their noble spirits broken by bare submission, to usurped authority. The reins will then be put into the hands of wisdom; and as women will, in the age of reason, probably be found to have the largest share, it is they who will then drive the chariot of state, and guide the steeds of war! (1999:261-262)

In contrast to Hamilton’s exemplary heroines, who always accept their present condition and know how to make the best of it, the radical feminists miss this important opportunity because they have abandoned themselves to their own utopian schemes. Their failure to act is interpreted by Hamilton as proof of the feminists’ hypocrisy and the inanity of their claims. Unlike them, Hamilton does not preach social, political and economic equality for men and women, but maintains an “ideology of separately gendered spheres” (Wood, 13): while fiercely opposing any attempt to abandon what she regards as this providential and natural boundary, she endeavours to improve the situation of women within that

very sphere, by, for example, raising the prestige of women's roles in the household and improving their education. To Hamilton the roles and duties of women are endowed with as much dignity as those of men, since they both contribute in their own manner to the preservation of society. Men and women should therefore be regarded as equals at least on a spiritual and moral level, while being recognized as different in terms of the tasks assigned to them by Providence. As can be seen, Hamilton thus "remains conservative about the means by which women can be liberated from their restrictive social positions (advocating change from their present system, rather than an overall change in the social structure)" (Taylor 2000:560).

Hamilton's "conservatism" and belief in a providentially ordered society inform also her arguments for female education. As mentioned above, she conceives of both men and women as having been assigned their respective roles in society, for which they should be held fully accountable. In the Bible, women "are exalted to perfect equality with man. They are considered as occupying a station of equal dignity, in the intelligent creation; and as being equally accountable, for the use they make of the gift of reason, and the monitions of conscience" (1999:88). Both sexes are in their own manner responsible for the preservation and well-being of society, and have been endowed with reason and virtue in order to do so in a meaningful manner. As she sees it, Christ treated women as spiritual equals to men in terms of their virtue and morality, since his "'morality was addressed to the judgment without distinction of the sex'" (2000:103). This shows that although women may have been assigned different duties from men by Providence, they are expected to base their actions on the same considerations and religious principles as their male counterparts and to always reflect on the moral import of their behaviour. Then current notions of femininity and models of female education, however, denied women all rational faculties and restricted their abilities to superficial accomplishments. Hamilton thus joins in the widespread criticism of female education, which she views as wrongly conceived to foster vanity and material interests, instead of developing their sense of morality, virtue and judgement or preparing them for their social duties: "'Our whole course of education is, in general, calculated to give additional force to the power of imagination, and to weaken, in a correspondent degree, the influence of judgment'" (2000:188). As she sees it, a "creature instructed but in the art of pleasing, and taught that the sole end of her creation was to attract the attention of the men, could not be expected to tread firmly in the paths of virtue" (2000:101). She also criticizes contemporary notions of femininity, which she believes inhibit women's spiritual and moral development and therefore contradict the teachings of Christ. In order to enable women to fulfil their social roles and duties assigned to them by God, Hamilton considers it therefore imperative that society acknowledges reason and virtue as pertaining to both men and women. Furthermore, women need to be granted access to an education which allows them both to exercise the rational faculties and develop their moral virtue, so that they may become fully accountable for their actions and carry out their specific duties with consideration and judgement. In

order to ensure that women apply their knowledge to a good and useful purpose only, this education should therefore be based on firm religious principles: “‘minds destitute of the solid principles of religion no sooner get a smattering of knowledge than they renounce the respectable duties of their sex; flying from the post assigned to them by Providence, they vainly attempt to seize the command of that which is impossible they can ever reach’” (2000:103). This shows that unlike radical feminists who saw in education an important means to liberate women from the domestic sphere, Hamilton maintained that it should improve women’s domestic abilities and invest this sphere with more dignity.

In her novels, Hamilton illustrates the importance of female virtue and proper education in the characters of Harriet Orwell, Miss Fielding, Martha Goodwin and Lady Grey. These women are very intelligent and perceptive and are constantly employed in further cultivating their mental faculties; however, they use this gift of reason mainly as a means to control their passions and imagination. For instance, Harriet is described as having “naturally acute” feelings; her “sensations of pain and pleasure, of grief and joy, were keen and lively; but education and habit had now so well taught passion to submit to the control of reason, that she was ever mistress of herself” (2000:184). At the same time, however, they have not yet become emotionally detached or indifferent due to their strong self-control, so as to have altogether stifled their natural feelings and affections. Even the contrary is the case, which may be observed in the following characterization of Lady Grey:

the quality of gentleness, which, in woman, is seldom more than a passive tameness of spirit, [...] is, in her, the spontaneous offspring of true humility; it is the transcript of that wisdom which is from above, pure and peaceable, and lovely! - Modesty is not in her the affectation of squeamish delicacy – it is the purity of the heart. Maternal fondness (and never was the heart of a mother more affectionate), is, like every other affection of her soul, put under the control of reason. That blind indulgence, which would be prejudicial to the real interests of its object, is, by her, considered as a selfish gratification, not to be enjoyed, but at the expence [sic] of the future happiness of her child; it is therefore wisely restrained, though sometimes at the expence of present feeling. (1999:222)

As can be seen, Lady Grey appears to be in every respect the epitome of moderation and composure: while she is still capable of experiencing emotions, she never indulges or exaggerates them, so that they have remained pure, honest and virtuous, and never appear in excess. For instance, even though she may show a natural maternal tenderness for her children and ward, she is wise enough not to allow herself to be carried away by her affections and spoil them. The same can be observed with regard to Harriet, whose emotional intelligence distinguishes her from the less mature Bridgetina and Juliet. Hamilton’s exemplary female characters all owe their remarkable self-control to their early education in religious principles, which furthermore enables them to put their knowledge to a useful purpose: they are to a large extent responsible for their families and the

household, and dedicate all their spare time to charitable activities, such as, for example, nursing the sick, supporting the poor and needy, and teaching those not having access to education:

Even here [Miss Fielding] found means of employing her time to the advantage of the little circle by which she was surrounded. By her instructions she improved the young; by her sympathy she consoled the unfortunate; and by her example of unrepining patience, humility, and piety, she edified all who came within the sphere of her observation. (2000:252)

Always engaged in the assistance of others, Hamilton's heroines are remarkably selfless and always put their own interests and wishes behind those of their fellow men.

However, especially the characters of Harriet Orwell and Lady Grey show some important limitations and may be taken to illustrate some problems inherent in Hamilton's concept of femininity. For example, Harriet's notions of female propriety and self-restraint prevent her from enquiring into Julia's moral distress and offering assistance. Harriet has been advised by her aunt Martha Goodwin never to discuss her feelings or emotional issues with her friends, as such intimate discussions may be used as a pretext to exculpate those emotions which should actually be repressed: "In disburthening our hearts, we seem rather more solicitous to obtain a sanction to our passion, than to be put upon a method of conquering them" (2000:191). Minding her aunt's advise, Harriet does not feel justified in forcing Julia into a confession of her feelings and advising her against her fancied infatuation with Vallaton. Even though she senses that Julia suffers from a profound anxiety and is close to succumbing to temptation, she does not offer any spiritual support:

Harriet had, from some hints dropped by Julia in the course of the night, learned that all was not as it should be. She evidently saw, [...] that the mind of Julia suffered from the secret consciousness of some indiscretion. But so little had Harriet of the prying spirit of curiosity, so easily could she controul [sic] the feelings of her well-regulated mind, that so far from diving into the source of Julia's disquiet, she had been at much pains to turn her thoughts from the subject of uneasiness. (2000:151)

As can be seen, Harriet becomes a bystander in Julia's downfall and later has to blame herself for not exerting her positive influence. Her passive guilt suggests that Hamilton was to some extent aware of the limitations inherent in her model for female behaviour and propriety. While warning her female characters and readers never to discuss their feelings with a soul-mate<sup>30</sup>, she has to concede that lack of communication may equally

---

<sup>30</sup>Cf. the letter of Martha Goodwin to Harriet: "In the first place, I would earnestly advise you never to make a confidante of the passion prudence bids you conquer. At the description of our own feelings, imagination takes fire, while the appearance of sympathy feeds the consuming and destructive flame. Few, very few, have sufficient virtue to oppose the current of a friend's desires; nor is it probable, that those who have will be often chosen for bosom confidantes. In disburthening our hearts, we seem rather more solicitous to obtain sanction to our passions, than to be put upon a method of conquering them..." (2000:191).

create problems.

In contrast to Harriet Orwell, Lady Grey does not become guilty herself; however, her ward and pupil Caroline is shown to lack the courage and spontaneity of her sister Olivia, who has been raised by the feminist Miss Ardent. Together with their overly sensitive sister Julia the two girls go for a walk and find an injured man, to whom they offer their help in a joint effort - in contrast to their sister, who runs off hysterically and "faint[s] for a decent length of time" (1999:276). The self-confident Miss Olivia, however, rushes off to call for help and procure cordials, while Miss Caroline stays with the invalid to keep watch over him. When the doctor later declares that the man could not have survived without the immediate assistance of the two girls, it is not altogether clear to whom the man owes his life more. Modest and unpretentious, both girls praise the qualities of their respective sister, without which their own efforts would not have been effective:

‘Then,’ cried the lovely Caroline, ‘it is to my sister Olivia, that he owes his life! - But for her, I should have followed my sister Julia into the house, to call for help; it was Olivia alone, who had the courage to return to him and the presence of mind to afford him relief.’ ‘No, Caroline;’ replied Olivia, ‘without you, I could have done nothing. When I looked back, and saw how the poor man bled, I knew he could not live, without assistance; but it was you, by whom the assistance was principally bestowed.’ (1999:277)

Neither of the girls can claim the sole merit for having saved the man's life, since each of them depends on the other for the qualities which they lack themselves. In the same manner, the education system of both the perfect Lady Grey and the controversial Miss Ardent reveal certain limitations, as neither can successfully prepare their ward for every situation in life. This set-piece scene thus suggests that Hamilton is to some extent aware of the drawbacks of her concepts of femininity and female education. Even though Miss Ardent's ultimate elopement and disgrace leave no doubt which notion of female behaviour the author preferred herself, Hamilton acknowledges the imperfections inherent in any fixed system of female education, her heroines being restrained by their own standards of behaviour.

Reason – as the discussion of female education above already indicates – occupies a high status within Hamilton's system of values, as she believes it has been offered by God to humanity to act as the sovereign guide of human conduct. Whereas the lower creatures in God's creation had been “‘endowed with an instinct that impels them to the peculiar mode of life best suited to their species’” and which directs them in their natural way of beings, mankind was given reason so that they might remain true to the station assigned to them by Providence and fulfil their destiny in life. As an indispensable means to control the passions it constitutes the principal quality which distinguishes mankind from animals and enables them to rise to full human dignity. Only with the help of reason may men and women contribute to God's creation in a meaningful manner, preserve the providential order of society and always act for the benefit of other human beings. At the

same time, however, Hamilton warns her readers of the limitations of reason: as she sees it, it is always fallible since it can be easily corrupted by vanity, pride or passion: “‘Alas! that pride and passion should so often render the precious gift to no avail!’” (2000:102). Furthermore, without any fixed standards of behaviour, it might also be overcome by skilful argumentation. For example, this is illustrated by Julia’s failure to defend herself against the superior rhetorical skills of Vallaton, whose arguments can easily vanquish both her rational faculties and love of virtue. According to Hamilton, it is therefore absolutely necessary to base reason on the unchanging principles of religion, since only these can act as an ultimate arbitrator between good and evil.

Not surprisingly, only Hamilton’s pious characters such as Dr. Orwell, Mr. Sydney and Dr. Severan are fully capable of rational thought; they are aware of the limitations of their reason and have therefore a superior knowledge of human nature. Knowing when to depend on their reason and when on their religious virtue for morally righteous actions, they are in the constant habit of critically reflecting on their behaviour. Hamilton’s atheist philosophers, on the other hand, have lost their minds in speculative philosophy so as to become entirely oblivious to the laws of reason and nature. Even though they pride themselves on their superior intellect, their metaphysical enquiries defy all dictates of reason, since they never base their speculative thoughts on the firm grounds of religious truth. A highly ironical example is presented in *Memoirs* in the character of the so-called Goddess of Reason, who occupies her mind with superficial trifles only and does not utter one meaningful or intelligent sentence. Unlike these foolish philosophers, however, Hamilton’s cold-blooded villain Vallaton is very much in command of his rational faculties, which he uses diligently for the manipulation and exploitation of his fellow men. However, even his superior reason fails him in the end, since it cannot protect him from the viciousness of his atheist mistress, The Goddess of Reason, who betrays him to the Revolutionary Tribunal in Paris to have him executed. His atheism is indirectly responsible for his death, since it causes him to mingle only with similarly evil human beings who despise the bonds of friendship and cannot be trusted. As can be seen, reason is presented as a precious gift of God to be used in conjunction with religious virtue for the benefit of mankind. It enables men and women to contribute to God’s glory on earth and rise to full human dignity; however, without the firm foundation of religious knowledge and virtue, reason becomes a pointless and sometimes even dangerous tool, engendering foolishness and vanity and being used for the manipulation of others.

A concept closely related to reason is nature, which Hamilton – who sees in God the author and creator of the universe – consequently considers to be proof of God’s existence and His divine benevolence. According to her, the wonders of nature all owe their existence to the divine creator and reflect His wisdom and glory. Hamilton’s pious characters study nature in order to increase their knowledge about God’s creation and enjoy existing in harmony with their natural surroundings:

While the mind of Sydney was occupied with these reflections, his father, who

had stood for some moments contemplating the beauty of a tree in full blossom, was expatiating on the charms of nature; and as the association of ideas led 'Nature up to Nature's GOD,' was making observations on the striking proofs of divine benevolence with which they were surrounded; a benevolence which, he observed, makes the beautiful cradle of the embryo fruit a feast no less delightful to the eye, than the fruit itself is to the palate. (2000:72-72)

Furthermore, Hamilton argues that ignorance of the natural world leads to speculation, scepticism and atheism, given that most philosophers are not used to basing their metaphysical enquiries on hard facts: by overlooking or even consciously rejecting the fundamental truths of nature – which ultimately reflect the divine order of God's creation – they start to believe in speculative opinions and deny the existence of God or the fundamental truths of nature. In the novels, this is demonstrated by the foolish atheist philosophers, who shun nature and dedicate themselves solely to their own speculative opinions. Their atheism not only causes them to reject all truths manifest in the works of nature, but also to become oblivious of its beauties. The atheist philosophers have indeed turned into strangers to all natural feelings, such as, for example, affection, benevolence, piety, and the pleasures and awe which nature inspires. Even if they do venture out into God's creation, they tend to see only what they want to see:

to the worshippers of systems, the fair face of Nature has no charms! [...] In vain for him, do the robes of the seasons, wove in the changeful looms of Nature, present the ceaseless charm of variety! [...] Midst of all the beauties of creation, a philosopher sees nothing beautiful, but the system which he worships! (1999:263)

As can be seen, Hamilton's views on nature are not only based on a range of assumptions, but are also closely associated with other concepts, such as that of the 'Natural', God, science and order. For example, her belief that nature represents an essential order depends entirely on the existence of a divine Creator who designed the universe according to a fixed plan. Only this premise enables her to argue that nature reflects fundamental truths and reveals the glory of God, or to link science with religious feelings. Similarly, her concept of the 'Natural' implies an essential notion of human nature, as it considers mankind to be part of God's creation and therefore endowed with certain qualities directly willed by God: coming from nature, these qualities correspond to God's divine plan, and are thus 'Natural' and to be immediately sanctioned. By drawing a clear line between the 'Natural' and the 'Unnatural', Hamilton can thus easily launch her attack against the new philosophy and atheism, both of which she postulates as contradicting nature. Religious feeling, on the other hand, is 'natural', since it has scientific study as its firm basis and is born from a close kinship to nature.

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, Hamilton's reformist agenda is to a large extent inspired by her firm religious convictions, which inform her general views on society,

gender, reform, imperialism, and the meaning of life. As a result, it is possible to trace most of her arguments concerning social reform, the role of women, female education, toleration and the rights and duties of all members of society back to a comprehensive framework of religious assumptions and views, which dictates both the aims and the limitations of her reformist agenda.

## 4.4 Narrative analysis

As illustrated in chapters 4.2 and 4.3, Hamilton's novels *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* reveal the author's strong desire to morally improve her readers and remind them of what she regarded to be the universal principles of the Christian faith. The two novels thus represent primarily didactic rather than aesthetic texts, which largely corresponds to the image of female writing of the period: "Didacticism provided the means for women to conceive of themselves as writers, the rationale for the act of writing, and the basic form of the text produced" (Wood, 12). As critics like Butler, Todd and Wood have pointed out, the quality of such fiction does not reside in the texts' aesthetic merits, but "in the salutary effect they aimed to have on their readers" (Wood, 62). Whether or not a female author was able to impart her moral message was therefore an issue of considerable significance, since it determined the relative success and reception of the novel. The following chapter will thus concentrate on the narrative and formal strategies employed by Hamilton to translate her moral and didactic agenda into fiction. Special consideration will be given to the effects achieved by the specific use of narrative point of view, Hamilton's means of characterization, as well as her use of techniques such as satire and parody.

### Narrative point of view

In her study of antirevolutionary fiction from the turn of the eighteenth century, Wood draws attention to the many different strategies employed by conservative female writers to communicate an explicit message to their readers. In order to live up to the didactic claims of their texts, they had to closely control their meaning and construct them in ways which obviated ambiguity and discouraged individual interpretations of their stories: "in order to be didactically effective, [...] the narrator must maintain strict control, as far as that is possible, over the reader's production of meaning by adopting a position of moral and exegetical authority" (Wood 85-86). However, a too authoritarian voice on the part of the narrator presented the danger of compromising the female author's reputation and casting her as morally suspect. As discussed in the historical overview, eighteenth century notions of femininity were still restricted to ideals such as passivity, domesticity, modesty and selflessness. This means that if women authors seemed to adopt too strong a voice, they transgressed the boundaries of feminine propriety in the eyes of the reading public

and subverted the conservative ideology which they claimed to perpetuate. As a result, they had to devise different strategies allowing them to “reconcile their narrative acts with conservative models of female virtue” (Wood 86). For instance, while an all-powerful and omniscient narrator drawing attention to the moral lessons in his story was still a common feature of many didactic novels, female writers often gave a voice to a number of characters with similar authority to that of the narrator. This pertains also to the two novels under discussion here, which – even though they present different narrative situations – also share a number of strategies employed to ensure narrative closure without simultaneously arousing moral suspicion. While *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* may be said to be more conventional in its use of an omniscient and all-powerful heterodiegetic narrator, the epistolary novel *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* presents a range of homodiegetic narrators, who differ in their opinions and are easily found out by their readers to be naïve, biased and gullible. However, both novels experiment with different strategies to delegate moral authority from the narrators to other characters, both within and without the text, and to insert the didactic lesson at a variety of textual levels. The following sub-chapter will thus examine the specific narrative techniques employed by Hamilton by analysing the implications of her choice of certain narrative situations, the relative power of her narrators, and the use of certain strategies to ensure narrative closure.

As already mentioned before, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* is an epistolary novel, in which the correspondence between Zaarmilla and Maandaara allows Hamilton to juxtapose and directly contrast different narrative voices. Besides Zaarmilla and Maandaara, the wise Brahmin Sheermaal joins in their literary conversation. By juxtaposing their different positions and views, Hamilton is able to emphasize the subjectivity of their accounts: as they are all in one form or other biased and naïve, neither carries absolute narrative authority, and it is mainly the responsibility of the readers to locate ‘truth’ within their reports and draw the right conclusions from them. For instance, whereas Zaarmilla is overly inclined in favour for the British, interpreting their presence in India in a highly positive light and trying to read all encounters with them in conformity to his initial good opinion, Sheermaal and Maandaara are both prejudiced against the British and Christianity. Their different predispositions are even made the explicit topic of their letters, as they accuse each other of being deluded, gullible and blind to the ‘real’ truth. For example, Maandaara invokes the authority of Sheermaal in order to “dismiss the spirit of delusion” (1999:106) which has apparently beset Zaarmilla, and to liberate him “from the influence of the magic of the Christians” (1999:107). Sheermaal immediately complies with Maandaara’s request and hastens “to remove from Zaarmilla’s eyes the film of prejudice, and to convince him that the opinions he has conceived, concerning the Christians of England, are altogether false and erroneous” (1999:108). Zaarmilla refutes their accusations by reversing them and charges Sheermaal and Maandaara to be blinded by prejudice in return: “It is with grief that I behold a mind, great and noble as that of my friend’s,

darkened by the clouds of prejudice” (1999:139). The subjectivity of their accounts is also further highlighted in the second volume when Zaarmilla is slowly forced to recognize the faultiness of his views and ask for Maandaara’s pardon for “the presumption of [his] ignorance” (1999:256).

Hamilton’s choice of both the epistolary format and unreliable narrators is unusual, as novels of letters were more associated with Jacobin than with antirevolutionary novels; for obvious reasons: since the medium of the letter was generally recognized as privileging individual experience and subjective expression, it was little used by conservative writers who were chiefly concerned with the construction of an objective and unambiguous ‘truth’ in their novels. As Wood points out: “The letter, as the repository of personal voice, [...] carries revolutionary potential. The epistolary form not only provides a space for voicing the heroine’s revolutionary desire, but valorizes the voice of an individual over that of the community” (74). Furthermore, since personal narration was believed to address more the passions than reason, anti-Jacobin writers considered it a dangerous means of manipulation and incitement to crime and riots. While personal autodiegetic narration was therefore a common feature in the novels by Hays, Godwin and Wollstonecraft, antirevolutionary novelists carefully avoided such potentially seditious voices and posited their claim to objectivity to emphasize the manipulatory effects of literary sentimentality. In modern academia, the potentially subversive effects of the novel’s epistolary format have also been noted by Mellor and Ty (1991), who consider it a means to produce a multiplicity of meanings and engage in Bakhtinian heteroglossia: “by employing an epistolary format, she opens up a space for critical or ironic responses to any given speaker’s opinion” (Mellor 154). Under this aspect, Hamilton’s use of the epistolary format and autodiegetic narration distances her to some extent from the anti-Jacobin camp; however, this does not signify that she should be categorized as a Jacobin either. Indeed, any classification of *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* as an inherently subversive text on the basis of Hamilton’s choice of narrative techniques would be highly superficial, since it does not take into account either the specific purposes of these narrative choices or the anti-Jacobin ideology infusing the narration itself. It should also be noted that the audiegetic narration in Hamilton’s epistolary novel pursues a different objective than it does in Jacobin novels. While Jacobin writers were strongly concerned with the psychological development of their characters, using first person narration as a means of introspection, Hamilton shows little interest in the emotional at all: instead, she uses the naïve and uninformed voice of Zaarmilla to provide both an idealized and defamiliarized description of British society, its institutions, social practices, morals and manners. In other words, it provides a concise portrait of social life in Britain, rather than examining how British institutions affect people’s psychological development<sup>31</sup>. A comprehensive list

---

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Wood (75): “psychological realism became a central component of the Jacobin novel; by delineating the psychological effects of social circumstances, the Jacobin novel could ‘prove’ the dangers of specific institutions and conventions.”

of the topics thereby addressed has been provided by Kelly (1993:138-139), including:

the evils of the pew system in churches, the absurdities of modern architecture, the state of the theatre, the benefits of science, snobbery in advertising, the role of charity, the benefits of enclosing common lands, the unreliability of newspapers, the injustice of imprisonment for debt, the ignorance of critics, the nature of British rule in India, the growth of religious scepticism, the futility of melancholy, the pleasures of nature, the virtues of the professional middle class, the importance of moral and intellectual merit, the superiority of simple over elaborate dress (especially for women), the proper way to manage an estate, the uses of travel, the character of marriage East and West, the excesses of fashionable society, the absurdities of modern 'philosophy', and a great deal about the education, character, and role of women.

Hamilton draws on the Enlightenment tradition of the satirical travel narrative, which is mostly associated with writers such as Montesquieu, Goldsmith and Johnson. According to Perkins and Russell (20), this genre "uses the commentary of a naïve or inadequate observer to defamiliarize" and therefore criticize social ills in the author's home culture. The oriental observer's naivety serves to highlight the grotesque absurdity of certain social practices sanctioned by custom and long tradition, and to call into question some authorities which, according to the author, do not deserve their high status in society. For example, Zaarmilla shows little regard and understanding for the alleged superiority of the so-called people of fashion, mistakes social gatherings of women as a form of religious penance in which they sacrifice their rational faculties to the Goddess of Fashion, and exalts the disinterest and sagacity of the Church to "preserve the primitive purity of their religion" (1999:176) by maintaining all churchmen in a state of poverty:

Worldly riches and honours are held out, not as rewards to virtue; but rather as means of proving the degree of pride, venality, hypocrisy, meanness, &c. of the individuals; and as they are carefully withheld from all, [...] men of modest virtue, and rigid integrity, run no risk of being spoiled by the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. (1999:176)

In his detailed descriptions of British culture Zaarmilla supposes the latter to be perfect – considering that it derives its values from the equally perfect teachings of Christ – and can thus only provide a distorted depiction of life in Britain. For example, he often fails to identify the true motivation informing people's behaviour and ascribes a far higher and more honourable motive to people's morals and manners than they actually deserve. This may be observed in his brief outline of British politics, which he assumes to be guided solely by the principles of reason and concern for the welfare of the people: "Uninfluenced by the favour of party, uncontaminated by the base motives of avarice or ambition, [the members of parliament] pursue with steady steps the path of equity, and have nothing so much at heart as the public welfare" (1999:85). As can be seen, he creates a comic and ironical contrast between his own idealized interpretation and reality, inadvertently

highlighting how far the British have already moved away from the values to which they supposedly claim adherence. His own idealized depiction, on the other hand, might be said to represent an account of what Britain would be like if its inhabitants were true to its values. This shows that there exists a very strong didactic agenda underlying Hamilton's choice of the epistolary format and the resulting unreliability of the novel's narrative voices: that of reminding Hamilton's readers of the values which they claim to embrace and by doing so achieve their spiritual reformation. Instead of obscuring Hamilton's reformist programme, the novel's unreliable narrators serve to emphasize it and make it possible in the first place.

As mentioned above, most anti-Jacobin novelists claimed to represent objective truth by employing an authoritarian and all-powerful heterodiegetic narrator who mediated between the story-world and the reader. The epistolary format of *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* therefore makes this novel an exception among anti-Jacobin fiction and aligns Hamilton again more closely with the older tradition of the Enlightenment. As pointed out by Kelly, a typical characteristic of Enlightenment discourse was "its comparative and relativist approach to different cultures past and present" (1993:133), which arose from and corresponded to the Enlightenment philosophers' claim to scientific enquiry. With regard to different notions of representing truth, such a relativist approach calls into question the possibility of objective truth and prevents readers from uncritically accepting any claims to objectivity: being confronted with different and even contradictory accounts of reality, readers become more easily aware of the difficulties inherent in any claim to objectivity, thereby arriving at a more complex perception of truth. Concerning *Translations*, this specific concept of truth in story-telling has also been noted by Mellor (155), who argues that by "adopting the viewpoints of all the participants involved [...] we may be able to transcend a misleading scientific or weak objectivity, [...] and approach [...] a 'strong objectivity,' in which the understanding of all participants, including those most on the margins, are taken into account." This allows us to conclude that Hamilton's choice of the epistolary format using mostly subjective and biased narrative voices places her firmly within the tradition of the Enlightenment, both in terms of genre and the novel's underlying concept of truth in fiction.

At the same time, however, *Translations* features also a number of narrative strategies typical of didactic anti-Jacobin novels, such as the use of embedded narratives intended to teach moral lessons and the significant narrative authority of what Kelly has termed the "paternal chorus" (1993:154). According to Wood, this chorus consists of "authoritative mentorial figures within the novels who are paternalistic, if not actually male, and who speak in alignment with the narrator" (67). This definition pertains only partly to *Translations*, since the novel does not feature any omniscient heterodiegetic narrator wielding moral authority over the story. The absence of a reliable narrative voice, however, only increases the importance of the paternal chorus, considering that the latter speaks with speaks even with a moral authority superior to the autodiegetic narrator Zaarmilla. The

character in charge of providing an alternative and more trustworthy perspective on the story is Dr. Severan. Whereas Zaarmilla repeatedly draws the wrong conclusions about characters and events in his narration, the greater knowledge and judgement of Dr. Severan enables him to analyse certain narrative events, provide background information, and inform the readers about the moral lessons to be drawn from the story. As a result, especially in the second volume of the novel, Zaarmilla delegates his didactic responsibilities as a narrator more and more frequently to his friend Dr. Severan, whose inset narratives and moral judgements provide a stable framework in the novel's compilation of otherwise subjective accounts. For example, Dr. Severan usually furnishes Zaarmilla with the background information necessary to properly understand and interpret the different characters' behaviour:

[Dr. Severan] began with observing, that 'to those who take pleasure in investigating the phenomena that fall under their observation, either mental or material, it is not sufficient to say that things are so, they must develop [sic] the causes in which they have originated. [...] This investigation, if accurately followed, [...] will invariably lead us to the early education of the object of it. (1999:214)

As can be seen, the character of Dr. Severan serves the important function of narrating the life histories of Zaarmilla's acquaintances in order to shed light on their present spiritual and moral condition. For instance, he informs Zaarmilla about the early education of both Lady Grey and Miss Ardent, illustrating the relative advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to female education, and using his superior understanding to account for the moral and intellectual superiority of Lady Grey. He also provides him with a history of scepticism and atheism in which he identifies several effective means of combating these pernicious influences in society. And finally, he reveals to Zaarmilla the differences between natural and the new philosophy in order to prevent his friend from forming any precipitate judgement against the study of philosophy as such:

'But let not my noble friend imagine from his account this scepticism, or from his own penetrating observation on the conduct of the gentlemen at Ardent-Hall, that metaphysical enquiry is without its use. Such enquiry expands the powers of the human mind, enlarges the understanding, and, by placing the science of morals on a true foundation, tends to increase the happiness of society.' (1999:272)

The moral function of Dr. Severan is particularly important since Zaarmilla's interpretive abilities are significantly limited towards the end of the novel. Despite his by then lengthy acquaintance with the foolish philosophers and first-hand experience of the dangers of atheism and enthusiasm, he fails to draw the right conclusions from his observations and learn from them. For example, Zaarmilla suddenly professes his belief in the superiority of the new philosophy over Christian morality, contradicting all evidence from

his own accounts of the relative qualities of both of them. His interpretations of narrative events stand therefore often in complete contrast to the descriptions provided by himself, which can be observed in his assessment of a young woman whom he had depicted just before as judicious and morally exemplary:

notwithstanding all I have said in favour of this excellent woman, truth obliges me to confess, that the powers of her mind are not sufficiently enlarged to embrace the doctrines of Atheism! She is blind enough, not to perceive the evident superiority of any of the systems of the philosophers to the Christian faith; and weakly asserts, that if all that was taught by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, was generally practised, it would not be great injury to the happiness of society. (1999:280)

Such comments are an obvious source of irony and satire in the novel; however, considering that they contradict Zaarmilla's originally high opinion of Christianity, as well as his own experience and better judgement, it is not altogether evident whether he means them to be satirical himself. After all, throughout the novel Zaarmilla is consistently biased in favour of Christianity, thereby drawing an idealized version of Britain, so that this sudden change of opinion may create a certain confusion on the part of the readers: whereas in the beginning they are expected to agree with him in the principles and morals dictating his perception of Britain, they suddenly need to modify their understanding of his comments and interpret them as meaning the contrary. Only in his final letter does Zaarmilla again voice his opinion in a straightforward manner and return to his original approval of Christian morals. In this relative confusion of opinions and judgements, the voice of Dr. Severan might be seen as a moral orientation for Hamilton's readers, providing the only consistent and reliable depiction and interpretation of the narrative events. This shows that even though *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* draws on the Enlightenment tradition of the satirical travel narrative, the novel also features some of the strategies typically used by anti-Jacobin novelists to impart their didactic message.

Unlike *Translations*, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* uses the authoritarian voice of a male heterodiegetic narrator, who – following the conventions of third-person narration – speaks with great confidence and wields ultimate authority over the story: omniscient and omnipresent, he has the power to select the information which he chooses to integrate into his story, displays the characters' thoughts and subconscious and explains the motivations underlying their behaviour. As pointed out by Wood, "Hamilton has a lesson to teach, and her narrator therefore engages in the authoritarian practice of drawing moral conclusions from events in the narrative. [...] the narrator acts as a supersystem, attempting to control the didactic impact of his text through direct commentary [...], or by the use of embedded statements" (93). Importantly, Hamilton's heterodiegetic narrator is explicitly gendered as being male, which allows her to speak with an authoritarian tone beyond the level of female propriety and thus fulfil her didactic mission more completely. As already mentioned, Hamilton first published *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* anonymously and

invented an elaborate frame narrative establishing the masculine identity of both the author and the editor: the latter has come to London for reasons of business when he literally stumbles over the manuscript of *Memoirs* on the street. On inquiring after the author he learns that he was a poor lodger recently deceased, who burned the first fifty pages of the manuscript in order to heat his flat. Intrigued by the poor lodger's fate he purchases the manuscript, consults his friends about its literary value and then sends it to a publisher to have it submitted to the world. The gender of the narrator is further confirmed in the novel, for instance, when he refers to himself as "us lords of the creation" (2000:193) and when he dissociates himself from his female readers by making fun of them. He also confidently uses satire and irony – techniques that are generally associated with the authors Fielding and Smollett, as well as with primarily male authors of anti-Jacobin novels. The following paragraphs will provide a more detailed analysis of the specific strategies employed by Hamilton to assume "masculine" authority over her text.

The narrator deliberately regulates the flow of the narrative in terms of narrative pace and information distribution, deciding when to give and when to withhold information and looking into the future to foreshadow events. Furthermore, he frequently interrupts the narration to analyse what has passed between the characters, hints at future events and points out the correct moral conclusion. A good example can be found in his analysis of Julia's upbringing and education, which – as he already tells the reader in the first volume – will ultimately bring about her downfall:

The beauty and the peace of virtue Julia found enshrined in her own breast; but had that breast ever been taught to glow with devotional sentiment, to expand in grateful adoration of Divine beneficence, and to wrap itself in the delightful contemplation of a future state of felicity, fairer colours would probably have marked its future destiny. (2000:87)

Being omniscient, he also possesses insight into the subconscious of all characters and uses his power to reveal the motivations underlying their actions. By doing so, he can easily identify the reasons for misconduct or the origins of problems and grievances, and thus suggest more appropriate courses of action. For example, he minutely analyses the causes for Bridgetina's extreme sensibility so as to leave no doubt about her mental disorder<sup>32</sup>, and delivers a similar account and explanation of Julia's moral vacillations:

While following the course of an unreined imagination, she experienced that deluding species of delight, which rather intoxicates than exhilarates, and which, by its inebriating quality, gives to the sanguine votary of fancy a disrelish for the common enjoyments of life; the eagerness with which her mind grasped at the idea of an extraordinary extatic [sic], agitated her whole frame, and deprived her of peace and rest. (2000:75)

---

<sup>32</sup>"By incessantly ruminating on her own situation, she had worked her mind into a state of effervescence, whose airy fumes so completely filled the light balloon of fancy, that judgment [sic] and common-sense [...] suffered themselves to be carried along by its wild career" (219).

As can be seen, the narrator assumes authority by pointing out exemplary or reprehensible behaviour and passing judgement on his characters. Enjoying full liberty even to chasten and ridicule his characters or to pass comment on issues of public interest, he acts as the ultimate arbitrator of the story world, and determines how the readers should interpret the events or certain issues narrated.

The narrator, however, does not only pass judgement on the characters; he is equally outspoken when it comes to his readers, whom he is eager to morally improve by means of examples and direct admonition. For instance, after a series of misunderstandings which have arisen between Harriet and Henry, the narrator reminds his readers not to be too hasty in forming judgements, so that they might not commit the same mistake and disappoint their close friends by being unjustifiably harsh to them:

And here, kind reader, of whatever age or gender thou mayest haply chance to be, we entreat thee to make one moment's pause; and to be so obliging as to give a glance towards the person whose conduct thou hast last condemned. Believe it certain, that with all thy penetration thou mayest, peradventure, have mistaken the intentions of his heart. Mitigate, therefore, the fierceness of thy wrath. Retract the harshness of thy censure, and so shalt thou, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, escape the bitterness of remorse for the cruelty of injustice. (215)

In his function as an arbitrator, the narrator's final judgement over an issue or character is often explicitly stated, leaving no doubt about his opinion on the subject. However, he also frequently employs irony to voice implicit criticism: in such cases he gives the impression of withholding his judgement or of agreeing with the character whom he so mercilessly subjects to ridicule. By taking on the perspective of one of the characters, he may then highlight the absurdity of the opinion thus voiced. This occurs, for example, when the narrator – assuming the perspective of Bridgetina – seemingly derides Henry for disregarding her love:

For all the multiplied proofs of tenderness which he every day received, we are sorry to confess that Henry was exceedingly ungrateful. So little did he know how to estimate the value of the metaphysical harangues with which Bridgetina always came prepared, that though previous to her entrance he had been only chatting on indifferent topics with Harriet Orwell, he seemed to regard her appearance as a very undesirable interruption. (159)

Even though the narrator may superficially side with Bridgetina, his concern for her amorous sentiments are ironical and only serve to belittle her character and aspirations. Sometimes the irony arises from the comic contrast between the gravity of a narrative event and the light-hearted and amiably disinterested tone which the narrator uses to describe it. The irony produces a highly critical undertone serving to heighten the impact of his censure. An interesting example is his description of warfare, in which he refrains

from all indignation when providing a precise picture of the absurdity of wars between two countries:

The two nations then at war, having at length sacrificed such a quantity of human blood, and expended such a portion of treasure, as was deemed sufficient for the amusement of the governing powers on either side, thought proper to make a peace; and after a few preliminaries, in which the original cause of dispute was not once mentioned, and things were put as nearly as possible into the same state in which they were at the commencement of hostilities, its ratification was formally announced. (2000:77)

As can be seen, the narrator uses satire in order to endow his voice with an even more critical undertone. His profound obligation to Horatian satire is already established in the novel's epigraph<sup>33</sup>, which explains the specific function of satire in the novel: where the narrator fails to convince by means of reason, he proposes to ridicule people out of their faults. There are of course exceptions, when the narrator, rather than appealing to his readers' satirical disposition, hopes to elicit compassion and sympathy. In these instances his narration shows a high degree of solemnity, concern and seriousness. His tone is also very different when he is engaged in positive criticism. Keeping within the tradition of an overt narrator, his laudatory comments are mostly explicit and direct; unlike the satirical undertone of many of his critical comments, his manner here is entirely earnest and straightforward. This can be noticed, for example, when he stresses the importance of simplicity in life, commends Harriet's exemplary morals and manners, or paints an idyllic Arcadia of British rural life.

The narrator also shows an acute awareness of his own task as the mediator of the story, which may be observed in self-reflexive comments on his narrative strategies, his attitude towards fiction, and his relationship to the implied female reader. For example, he delineates for his readers a whole range of strategies to convey the information required by them, justifying his choice for one and not the others. He also reveals his own limitations as a narrator, and informs his readership when he either does not want or is not able to provide the information they want. He further pays attention to the expectations of his – predominantly female – readers<sup>34</sup>, which he comically anticipates in order to make fun of them:

We should be extremely happy to oblige the dear boarding-school angels by a faithful repetition of every word that passed in these interesting conversations betwixt Julia and her happy lover; but as we have no doubt that their own sprightly imaginations will amply supply the deficiency, we leave it to fancy to

---

<sup>33</sup>“Ridicule shall frequently prevail, / And cut the knot, when graver reasons fail.” (Horace, *Satires*, 1.10.14.)

<sup>34</sup>This point has also been made by Eleanor Ty in her analysis of the use of parody in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (cf. 1991:116).

paint the particulars of each tender scene, and content ourselves with observing, that by attributing to her lover a refinement of delicacy, which, though congenial to her own mind, was very foreign to his thoughts, Julia became the dupe of her own romantic imagination. (210)

However, even though the narrator ostentatiously distances himself from female readers of fiction by pouring ridicule on them, he also addresses them as his most likely audience: after all, he has chosen the genre of the novel as the medium most suitable for his story, and is aware that this particular choice implies a primarily female readership. His satirical intrusions thus might be interpreted to contain a didactic element as well, as he endeavours to teach them how to benefit most from his story: for example, he draws explicit parallels between Julia's predilection for novels and later misfortune, and that of his female readers, warning them of the dangers of novel reading and of a too romantic imagination.

As can be seen, the narrator's attitude towards novels is highly paradoxical: even though he has chosen fiction as the medium most suitable to communicate his didactic programme, he considers most novels to be dangerous reading material for uneducated readers. As a result, he actively seeks to dissociate himself from stereotypical novels and their conventions, for example, by pointing out the differences between his own tale and conventional novels, and by delineating what would have happened if he had followed the conventions of the genre:

During this period, the amours of our hero would, of themselves, be sufficient to fill a volume; and much do we wish it were in our power to gratify the laudable curiosity of our reader with a circumstantial and minute detail of this part of his history. Convinced as we are, from authority the most respectable, that it is from works like these the modern philosopher seeks the materials with which he builds his system of the human mind, we feel distressed at withholding from him information so desirable as that which we certainly have in our power to bestow. But, alas! in spite of all our efforts, we find ourselves still so much the slaves of a certain weakness, called delicacy, as to be withheld from the description (56).

The narrator thus claims that following the conventions of the novel form would have violated his delicacy and good taste, which is why his own work is so different from conventional representatives of the genre. What is interesting to note in the quotation above is that the narrator seemingly delegates his power to give and withhold information to a higher authority – the universal principles of good taste. This means that even though he is explicitly aware of his power over the story, he still feels bound to the fixed principles of morality and does not consider himself free to do as he likes. Instead, he claims to act as an instrument of a higher cause, thereby endowing his story with superior moral authority than just his own. This again confirms Hamilton's strong focus on her religious agenda, which is not only reflected in the story's plot and dialogues, but also in her choice of narrative techniques. Through the voice of the narrator Hamilton expresses her belief

in fixed religious precepts which have been set down by the ultimate authority over all life on earth, her Christian God.

As can be seen, the male identity of the narrator enables Hamilton to voice her didactic message with confidence and authority and to exercise close control over both the story and its reception by his female readers. However, as is the case in *Translations*, the narrator does not act as the sole authority in the story world, delegating it frequently to the paternal chorus, which here consists also of female characters: as pointed out by Kelly “Hamilton does show that women may join the authoritative paternal chorus, as seen in Mrs Fielding, who both moralizes like Mr Sydney and Dr Orwell and criticizes as sharply as the narrator” (1993:154). The paternal chorus engages in what Wood (76) has termed the “fictional debate” – a narrative strategy which enables Hamilton to present and discuss her religious and moral agenda and to discredit revolutionary texts and ideas.

According to Kelly, *Memoirs* “dramatizes its political content through dialogue, including individual characteristic ‘speech’ and dramatic interchange between these diverse ‘voices’” (1993:152). For instance, Dr. Orwell, Mr. Sydney and Martha Goodwin discuss the relative merits of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, drawing attention to potential defects in Wollstonecraft’s argument and thereby producing an alternative model of female identity. Other topics dealt with by means of the fictional debate are, for example, the prevalence of religious principles over particular doctrines, the insignificance of material wealth, the importance of reason as a means to control the passions, etc. In letters or conversations dedicated to the topic, they analyse the different points of view, point out mistaken or heretical beliefs and present their own superior morals.

All things considered it can be said that Hamilton draws on the moral authority of both her male narrator and the “paternal chorus” to communicate her moral agenda. In comparison to *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* is more explicit in its didactic message, since it features a confident narrator having the power to directly address his readers and elaborate on the moral lessons to be drawn from the narrative. Both novels, however, show a predilection for the philosophical debate, in which characters acting as mouthpieces for Hamilton’s own views discuss different topics of the Revolutionary debate. A significant part of Hamilton’s agenda is thus conveyed by means of “telling” rather than “showing”; to what extent “showing” serves didactic purposes will be analysed in the two next sub-chapters on characterization and plot.

#### 4.4.1 Characters and characterization

As relatively typical representatives of the anti-Jacobin novel, both *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* feature largely flat characters – easily recognizable as either good or bad – and incorporate the whole range of character types usually found in other specimens of the genre. For instance, stereotypical foolish philosophers may be found in the characters of Sir Caprice Ardent, Mr. Axiom

and Mr. Puzzledorf in *Translations*, as well as in Mr. Glib and Mr. Myope in *Memoirs*. Bridgetina and Miss Ardent, on the other hand, represent decent revolutionary feminists, whereas Bridgetina and Julia embody typical female Quixotes. A properly Machiavellian anti-Jacobin villain is represented by Vallaton, while the role of his victim is played by Julia. Despite slight deviations (as in the case of Miss Ardent), the characters remain faithful to these roles throughout the narrative and confirm then current stereotypical notions associated with them. For instance, in conformity with images of female philosophers and feminists, Miss Ardent, Julia and Bridgetina transgress the boundaries of female propriety, thus upholding assumptions about their alleged sexual lasciviousness. Vallaton, on the other hand, acts like the stereotypical Jacobin villain who hypocritically endorses the new philosophy only to serve his own selfish interests. He confirms concerns that Jacobin theories merely served as a pretext for social climbers to enrich themselves at the cost of the hard-working middle classes. And finally, the blind enthusiasm of Mr. Myope and Sir Caprice Ardent supports the belief that individuals voicing strong political and religious beliefs merely exchange one object of admiration for the next. Following the conventions of anti-Jacobin fiction, all philosophers profess themselves stout atheists.

The immoral characters described above are pitted against and contrasted with the exemplary ones for didactic effect. Among those easily recognizable as morally good are, for example, Percy, Mr. Denbeigh, Dr. Severan and Lady Grey in *Translations*, and the Orwells, the Sydneys, Martha Goodwin and Miss Fielding in *Memoirs*. They embody middle-class ideals of reason, virtue, industriousness, piety, modesty and benevolence. The foolish philosophers, revolutionary feminists and anti-Jacobin villains, on the other hand, stand for the decadence and anarchy which will arise once Jacobinism gains the upper hand in society. As pointed out by Kelly, “Sir Caprice, his family, and followers represent three important and interconnected themes of the mid-1790s Revolution debate – the pervasiveness of the fashion system, even in the domain of art, philosophy and politics; the decadence and incapacity of some of the upper classes; and the transmuted courtly character of ‘Jacobinism’” (1993:139). As can be seen, both Hamilton’s “good” and “bad” characters serve important allegorical functions in conformity with common anti-Jacobin rhetoric against the new philosophy. An exceptional and therefore interesting case is the high moral status of the Dissenting Sydneys in *Memoirs*. Whereas many anti-Jacobin authors regarded Dissenters as dangerous adherents of Jacobin philosophies, Hamilton does not favour any denomination by granting them superior knowledge of God. She therefore concedes to the Sydneys as much moral authority as she gives to the Orwell family. Since both Dr. Orwell and Mr. Sydney live according to the principles of the Bible, they are presented as morally righteous; neither pays heed to the doctrinal subtleties which differentiate their religious groups, while they both emphasize the teachings of Jesus as a unifying precept. The high moral status of the Sydneys illustrates the important role of toleration in Hamilton’s religious agenda, as well as her focus on those religious principles which unite all Christians.

In terms of character development, it should be noted that very few of the characters evolve or mature as the plot develops: the morally impeccable characters are so from the very beginning, and the fallen ones like Bridgetina, Sir Caprice Ardent and Vallaton are not allowed to learn from their mistakes. Despite frequent setbacks, they do not mature as characters or undergo periods of selfintrospection or doubt, which would allow them to depart on a path of learning. Bridgetina is exhorted by Mr. Sydney to “make amends for her past conduct” (2000:364), but is not given an opportunity to do so in the course of the novel. Mr. Myope experiences a brief catharsis but cannot renounce his tendency to enthusiasm, whereas Vallaton is only overwhelmed in the seconds before his death by the horrors of his life. Importantly, morally ambiguous characters like Miss Ardent, Julia and Captain Delmond are denied an opportunity to atone for their faults and (in the case of Julia and Captain Delmond) have to die before they are assured God’s forgiveness. The only major character truly learning from his experiences is Zaarmilla, even though it takes him a long time to interpret the narrative events correctly. In general it can be noticed that if moral transformations occur (as happens with Mr. Glib and Bridgetina), they receive hardly any attention throughout the novels, but are instead shortly dealt with at the end of the novel. As pointed out by Wood, “antirevolutionary novels focus less on personal and psychological and emotional development than on an individual’s propriety of action within a social setting” (75-76). This differentiates them largely from Jacobin novels, in which the immediate impact of social institutions on the psychological development of the characters often features as an important theme. With regard to the two novels under discussion here, a further explanation for the characters’ static nature can be found in Hamilton’s strong emphasis on education in forming personalities. As mentioned above, Hamilton maintained that any people’s behaviour could be accounted for by the education which they had enjoyed, the principles guiding their actions having been instilled into them very early in their lives. Since the novels feature only adult characters, their socialization has been long completed and their margin for development is therefore limited. A reason for the philosophers’ resistance to critical selfinspection can also be found in their stout atheism. Lacking fixed religious principles or a God to whom they have to account for their behaviour, they are free to continue the reckless course of their lives without seeing the necessity for change.

In terms of the novels’ didactic function, the characters serve primarily as allegories exemplifying different character types, as Hamilton contrasts them for didactic effect. This has been pointed out by Kelly, who argues that “*Memoirs* conducts its anti-Jacobin argument mainly by plotting affective relationships between characters representing factions within the professional middle-class cultural revolution” (1993:152). The reader is thus often presented with several ways of acting in a particular circumstance and shown which of them should be adopted. The ongoing comparison between characters works to establish two opposite camps, both serving important allegorical functions. Whereas the morally good and exemplary characters stand for the middle-class ideals and values, the

morally reprehensible embody the revolutionary threats of moral anarchy and selfishness.

Despite their different narrative modes, *Translations* and *Memoirs* display similar strategies with regard to characterization, both explicit and implicit. For instance, one of the most common *modus operandi* found in both novels is explicit characterization by either the narrators or other characters. The reader thus gets to know the different characters by means of thorough descriptions of their physiognomy, dress, morals and manners. Whereas the role of presenting them is primarily assumed by the heterodiegetic narrator in *Memoirs*, it has been largely delegated to Dr. Severan in *Translations*. Zaarmilla also goes about the business of describing the characters he encounters; however, in his case the readers are not to trust his first impressions. In *Memoirs*, on the other hand, an example of highly trustworthy explicit characterization can be found in the following presentation of Dr. Orwell and Mr. Sydney by the narrator:

The characters of Doctor Orwell and Mr. Sydney were in many respects so strikingly similar, that the outlines might justly be described in the same terms. Both were benevolent, pious, unaffected, and sincere. The minds of neither were narrowed by party zeal, nor heated by prejudice. To this liberal turn of thinking were they indebted for the blessing of mutual friendship: a friendship, which received no interruption from the difference of their opinions in some speculative points, as each, conscious of the integrity that governed his own breast, gave integrity to the other... (43)

Another indication of the characters' personality is provided by descriptions of their domestic situation, such as, for example, the orderliness of the household, the upbringing of their children, and the occupation and pastime activities of the characters at home. Hamilton's focus on domestic values denotes the shift in ideology towards the domestic sphere, which was seen to represent middle-class identity with its emphasis on the subjective self, reason and virtue. The characters' relative success at domestic life can therefore be understood as an illustration to what extent they cherish and live these values. For example, the household of the Orwells is described as a scene of domestic felicity, where the individual family members live an industrious life dedicated to the physical and spiritual wellbeing of their family and neighbours. Not only is their home a hallmark of orderliness, they also engage in charitable activity and perform their domestic duties with diligence and intelligence<sup>35</sup>. The same is the case with Lady Grey, who – as the reader learns – “is a good estate manager, looks after the poor and distressed, supervises her children's education, and was the intellectual equal and advisor as well as domestic companion of her late husband” (Kelly 1993:141). Treasuring the virtues of the domestic sphere, they are thus seen to be virtuous, modest, hard-working, pious and goodnatured. The household

---

<sup>35</sup>See for example the following description: “It was now past twelve o'clock. Already had the active and judicious Harriet performed every domestic task, and having compleatly [sic] regulated the family economy for the day, was quietly seated at her work with her aunt and her sister, listening to Hume's History of England, as it was read to them by a little orphan girl she had herself instructed” (73).

of the philosopher Mr. Glib, on the other hand, presents a scenario of untidiness, chaos and neglect: his children wear tattered clothes and behave like wild brutes, displaying their parents' failure to provide any moral guidance. Indeed, the only instruction they were offered by their father is contempt for the Christian church and religion. Moreover, Mr. Glib does not only neglect his parental but also his professional duties, and both home and shop are in disrepair<sup>36</sup>. His domestic failings reflect also on the anarchical life which he and the other new philosophers are leading: he is immediately recognizable as a morally dubious character and therefore a threat to society; the New Philosophy is portrayed as being identical with atheism, chaos, dirtiness and neglect.

A further mode of characterization is presented by the frequent discourses by characters on different topics. Their subjects of choice and arguments in favour or against these problems shed important light on their personality, ideological orientation, and moral fortitude. It becomes easily discernible who the 'good' characters are just from identifying which role they have been assigned in the presentation of Hamilton's religious agenda. For example, Dr. Orwell, Mr. Sydney, Dr. Severan, Miss Goodwin, Miss Fielding and Lady Grey provide the most enlightening moral lectures on the importance of religious piety, reason and virtue. Similarly, Harriet Orwell is recognized as intelligent and virtuous due to her thoughtful contributions to conversations with Julia. An interesting case is the morally ambivalent Captain Delmond, who – although being an atheist – is meant to attract the readers' sympathy for his fatherly affection. In the instances where readers are shown his loving side, a religious blessing often slips from his tongue, even though he otherwise proudly proclaims his disregard for religions of all kinds. This shows to what extent Hamilton uses religious piety and rhetoric as an indicator of her characters' moral righteousness, even in cases when the character in question is not religious at all. The characters, however, do not only reveal their personality by means of the content of these discussions; they also provide a profile of themselves by their manner of interacting with each other, as well as their specific diction. For example, Bridgetina attracts ridicule for 'speaking in soliloquies', i.e. for parroting the sublime and convoluted diction of novels<sup>37</sup>, Mr. Glib displays his lack of intelligence by communicating only in reduced, catchword-like sentences<sup>38</sup>, and Mrs. Botherim achieves a similar effect by her thoughtless but well-intentioned prattle.

Especially with regard to Hamilton's immoral characters, common modes of character-

---

<sup>36</sup>Cf. "Arrived at Mr. Glib's, she slipt [sic] in through the shop and back-parlour to the kitchen; but there she found only the three children, busily employed in picking the bones that had been sent out upon the stranger's plates. She begged the eldest boy to go into the parlour for his mother: 'No, but I wont though,' returned the little half-naked urchin, 'I would as soon go to church.'" (47)

<sup>37</sup>Cf. "'O divine Philosophy! by thy light I am taught to perceive that happiness is the only true end of existence. To be happy, it is necessary for me to love...'" (2000:177)

<sup>38</sup>Cf. "'Here is a whole nation of philosophers, all as wise as ourselves! All enjoying the proper dignity of man! Things just as they ought! No man working for another! All alike! All equal! No laws! No government! No coercion! Every one exerting his energies as he pleases! Take a wife today: leave her again tomorrow! It is the very essence of virtue, and the quintessence of enjoyment!'" (2000:141)

ization are physiognomy and Theophrastan names. This – as pointed out by Grenby – represents a typical strategy in anti-Jacobin novels, where the “physiognomies with which the authors endow [the characters] are also giveaways, working as both a hint as to what their opinions will be, and a physical manifestation of those ideas” (96). A good example is Bridgetina Botherim, whose ridiculous opinions are only matched by her farcical appearance and behaviour. As mentioned previously, she is ugly, has both a squint and a shrill voice, dresses slovenly, is bald beneath her wig, and cannot walk properly due to the shortness of her legs. Moreover, the story often descends into farce when it ridicules her, as happens, for example, when she abandons herself to her dreams about Henry and consequently gets lost in a herd of pigs. Telling names, on the other hand, are frequently used to discredit the intellectual and moral qualities of the foolish philosophers. As the names already indicate, Mr. Myope, Mr. Axiom, Sir Caprice Ardent and Dr. Sceptic are forever defined by their foolish belief in the new philosophy, and are therefore predisposed to short-sighted enthusiasm and scepticism.

Using the means of characterization analysed above, Hamilton assigns to all characters a fixed and easily recognizable moral status which serves to dictate the readers’ interpretation of the characters’ behaviour and opinions. The readers are thus left with no doubt as to how they should think about these characters, and – importantly – whom they should emulate. All in all it may be concluded that characters and characterization form an integral part of the strategies employed by Hamilton to translate her reformative program into fiction; while the morally exemplary characters illustrate and live the values which make up Hamilton’s moral agenda and act as mouthpieces for her opinions, the immoral characters manifest all the putative flaws of the Jacobin rebels, their dismal fates revealing to the readers what may happen if they stray from the path of virtue.

#### 4.4.2 Plot

Another set of strategies to refute revolutionary ideas and promote didactic messages presented itself in the novels’ plots. Most of these were well-known to readers, since conservative writers were confined in their choice of plot types, and the types themselves were rather formulaic. As a result, common plot trajectories, such as, the Quixote story and the plot of courtship were used and re-used by many anti-Jacobin writers, among them Hamilton. Many of these plot types stand in a direct – although opposite – relation to the revolutionary plots of Jacobin fiction, which conservative writers endeavoured to discredit by rewriting them “according to a dysphoric model, which posits tragic and absurd outcomes to the implementation of revolutionary social theory” (Wood 76). The following sub-chapter will investigate the different plot types and counter-plots employed by Hamilton to reinforce the didactic effect of her novels; specific regard will also be given to forces of plot movement and the question whether these reflect her own specific religious *weltanschauung*.

Generally, both *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* present a loosely connected assemblage of plot elements, including lengthy descriptions or monologues on a certain topic, philosophical and religious discussions, as well as personal life stories. In *Translations*, the main storyline of Zaarmilla's journey provides the opportunity to juxtapose several unrelated life stories, as well as descriptions of and commentaries on British institutions and social practices. Examples of such typically anti-Jacobin and highly didactic inserted stories are, for instance, the so-called "Fantom motif" and the "sisters plot". As already discussed in chapter 3.7, the "Fantom motif" reveals the immediate consequences of the new philosophy by having a naïve victim of the philosophers' manipulative power put them into practice. In the case of *Translations*, this victim is the servant Timothy Trundle, who has imbibed notions of social equality from his master and becomes a highwayman stealing from the rich as a result. When he is committed to the gallows, his master's callous indifference reveals that the latter never intended to put his theories into practice. The "sisters plot" on the other hand, features as the short set-piece scene, where the behaviour of the three sisters Olivia, Julia and Caroline is contrasted for didactic effect. *Memoirs* reveals a similar structure of loosely connected inserted stories, which take the form of character descriptions, personal histories and philosophical debate. In the case of both novels, most of these narratives are highly didactic, which makes it possible to presume that the plot moves primarily in order to give the characters opportunities to engage in a discourse on a given topic or dwell on their own experiences. As already mentioned, the action consists to a large extent of dialogue, as the characters proceed from one topic of Hamilton's reformatory agenda to the next.

However, especially in *Memoirs*, there are instances where plot movement does not only seem to be motivated by Hamilton's ambition to create opportunities for moral discussions on the topics of the revolutionary debate. Many events in the plot are simply the product of comical misunderstandings, as mostly the philosophers fail to interpret reality correctly and consequently create widespread confusion and chaos. As pointed out by Kelly, these philosophers may be considered stereotypical representatives of Quixotes, who are "unrealistic and impractical pursuers of visionary ideals. Quixotes misread the world and act inappropriately because their ideology or 'system' is false, derived from the wrong books" (1993:145). The Quixote story is usually adapted in anti-Jacobin fiction to draw attention to the dangerous influences of novels and 'philosophy' and to expose the narratives which they propagate as false consciousness. Even though fictional and philosophical discourses were gendered as either female or male respectively, and did not in themselves feature any parallels, many anti-Jacobin authors portrayed them as being intrinsically connected. For example, in *Memoirs*, novels are shown to produce a moral vacuum in the minds of their readers, which may be easily filled by the dangerous notions of speculative philosophy. According to Kelly, they regarded imaginative fantasy and metaphysical enquiry as "variants of merely theoretical, unrealistic, impractical, im-

pulsive enthusiasm that produced the Revolution in France and motivated Revolutionary sympathizers in Britain” (1993:146).

In *Memoirs*, the Quixote story is introduced by means of the characters of Bridgetina and Julia, whose love for novels and speculative philosophy causes them to entertain unrealistic notions of reality and transgress the boundaries of appropriate female behaviour. Julia, for instance, understands her life in the terms of romantic fiction and often draws the wrong conclusions, due to having mistaken fiction for fact. She mistakenly assumes Vallaton to be the long-lost son of an aristocratic couple and interprets her father’s wish to marry her to Major Minden as an act of patriarchal oppression:

Her fate was cruel, but it was not unexampled. From all that she had read, she had rather cause to esteem herself peculiarly fortunate in being so long exempted from the common misfortune of her sex. Few novels furnished an example of any young woman who had been permitted to attain her nineteenth year, without having been distressed by the addresses of a numberless train of admirers, all equally odious and disagreeable as this Major Minden. Where was the female, possessed of any tolerable share of beauty, who had not been persecuted by a cruel and hardhearted father, in favour of some one of the detested wretches by whom she was beset? (2000:231)

In the end, Julia elopes with Vallaton precisely because of these precipitate and unjustified accusations. Her failure to interpret reality properly plunges her family into utter ruin and brings about many sharp disappointments among her friends and family. The narrative of Julia’s romantic imagination and seduction constitutes a typical Quixote story, in which the young woman’s predilection for novels causes her to entertain false expectations about the world. She derives these notions from the courtly ideology underlying the reading material and consequentially cherishes ideals inappropriate for her own social status. The narrative of Julia’s quixotic pursuit thus draws attention to the dangers and revolutionary potential of indiscriminate novel reading: the notions which Julia has imbibed from courtly romances cause her to rebel against her father and sacrifice her female virtue.

However, the fate of Julia, who after all is named after Rousseau’s heroine in *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, also represents a critique of the plot of sensibility and domestic subversion which – as pointed out by Nicola Watson – were considered to be allegories of revolutionary power and energy (cf. 4). Hamilton rewrites Rousseau’s plot of sensibility by endowing it with a tragic ending, which – so the reader learns – is directly brought about by Julia’s own mistaken philosophical beliefs. By having Julia die as a result of her female desire, she attempts to expose what she believes to be the dangers inherent in Rousseau’s philosophical views. A further connection might be drawn to Mary Hays’ *Emma Courtney* and Godwin’s *Memoirs of the Author of “The Rights of Woman”*. In Mary Hays’ novel, the equally Quixotic heroine Emma voices a passionate desire for a man with whom she is not married, causing conservative reviewers to dismiss Hays as

a sexual fanatic. Similarly, Godwin's revelations about Wollstonecraft's unorthodox life style and notion of femininity utterly destroyed the reputation of his deceased wife. In the cases of both Hays and Wollstonecraft, their allegedly deviant sexual behaviour were used to discredit their claims for female equality and critiques of conventional notions of femininity. The narrative of Julia's seduction and death might be seen as a further allusion to the scandals provoked by them: Hamilton attributes to Julia motivations and sexual desires which echo those voiced by Emma Courtney and punishes her with a death similar to that of Mary Wollstonecraft. By postulating a tragic outcome to female desire, Hamilton thus marks Hays' and Wollstonecraft's feminist claims as dangerous and sexually transgressive. As pointed out by Wood, "Hamilton's antirevolutionary attack, then, is carried out at a number of narrative levels, and cannily invokes prevalent public outrage against specific figures in order to support her antirevolutionary message" (77).

Another character engaged in a typical quixotic pursuit is Bridgetina, "whose reading of novels and 'philosophy' has made her despise domesticity and conventional feminine conduct" (Kelly, 1993:145). Due to her highly limited scope of understanding she is unable to see things as they are and: "Every hint was lost on Bridgetina, whose mind was so completely occupied in discussion and investigation of abstract theory, as to be totally lost to the perception of all that was obvious to common observation" (2000:194-195). Fancying Henry in love with her, she tells the other characters about their alleged mutual attraction and elopes alone to marry him. Her failure to interpret reality correctly not only causes a series of misunderstandings, but also constitutes an important source of action in the plot. For instance, following Bridgetina's elopement the narrative moves to London to focus on the acquaintances of Miss Fielding and Henry; her fancied infatuation with Henry also brings about a number of complications in the love narrative of Henry and Harriet. In contrast to Hamilton's treatment of Julia, her use of the Quixote narrative with regard to Bridgetina constitutes a source of satire and farce rather than tragedy. However, it is equally possible to identify references to both Rousseau and Hays. For example, Bridgetina indulges in extreme sensibility and proudly avows her admiration for Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*, regarding Julia as a model for the female sex: "'Was any character ever drawn so natural, so sublime, so truly virtuous?'" (2000:99). Moreover, her character and Quixotic plot have been identified as having been "modelled on the fictional character Emma Courtney who is an autobiographical rendition of Mary Hays" (Ty 1991:119). For instance, Bridgetina sometimes quotes passages from *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* verbatim and comically acts out some of its main arguments: for instance, she voices Emma's longings for a society without prejudices, where women are free to use their intellect and to express both their opinions and sentiments. However, from the mouth of Bridgetina these earnest pleas are reduced to ludicrous and unfounded claims, since readers know her intellect to be poor, her opinions unworthy of notice and her sentiments the result of mere fancy. Brand-marking Emma Courtney as a subversive and therefore threatening work of fiction, Hamilton laughs off its putative dangers by

turning them into the butt of satire and ridicule:

To recast [Emma] into a shrew figure makes her an innocuous figure, familiar to literary conventions, and therefore easily categorized and dismissed. The parodic version of Hays's *Emma Courtney*, unlike its original, is non-threatening to the patriarchal order, precisely because she is so comic. (Ty 1991:119)

As can be seen from the example of both Julia and Bridgetina, Hamilton adapts the typically anti-Jacobin plot type of the Quixote story to disparage revolutionary texts such as *Emma Courtney* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, to mount an attack against her political antagonists Wollstonecraft and Hays, and to draw attention to the philosophers' faulty perception of reality.

As already argued, the philosophers' failure to interpret reality correctly may be understood to constitute one of the main impetus to plot movement in *Memoirs*, since it causes comical misunderstandings and complications in the main storyline. Other driving forces of plot movement are conscious manipulation (as in the case of Vallaton) or selfish disregard of the duties which social interaction continuously requires. The story's dependence on these negative factors may be seen to denote a world-view in which the inadequacy of both human understanding and moral sentiment are mainly responsible for the chaos and anarchy which characterize human existence: while the world created for the characters is theoretically one of bliss and happiness, the limitations of human beings, such as faulty and heretical beliefs of the characters, deviations from the teachings of the Bible, or simple misunderstandings, are the cause of misery and suffering in Hamilton's fictional reality. The only possible means to preclude misery or chaos would therefore be a strict but intelligent observation of Christian teachings on the part of all characters. This interpretation of the plot movement and structure in *Memoirs* thus postulates important parallels between the novel's plot and Hamilton's religious beliefs, assuming the former to reflect the latter. Another correlation between plot and Hamilton's religious views has been drawn by Kelly, who interprets the loose plot structure of *Memoirs* as a strategy to foreground the Anglican and Arminian doctrines of "free will and providential opportunity in the individual life, in contrast to English Jacobin novels' 'necessitarian' form" (1993:148). Kelly argues that unlike the new philosophers, who locate the factors determining all human action and identity in external circumstances, Hamilton places her characters within "a comic novelistic universe with a benevolent deity dispensing narrative justice not by some abstract 'system' but by local charity and domestic virtues" (1993:148). Kelly is certainly justified in drawing attention to Hamilton's fierce critique of 'Necessitarianism', which she achieves by emphasizing personal responsibility and commitment to charitable activities. However, his analysis does not elaborate on the relatively high importance which the novels accord to Providence in directing the characters' lives. As the latter are in the constant habit of referring their actions to the high moral principles of their creator and resigning themselves to what they believe to be the will of Providence, their scope of free

decisions is relatively small. This does not necessarily stand in contrast with Anglican doctrine; however, it does not signify that Hamilton (who was nominally a Presbyterian) was aware of her affiliation to any specific theological doctrine – be it Anglican, Arminian or Presbyterian – either.

Another interesting plot element to be analysed in the context of Hamilton's religious convictions is the *deus ex machina* enabling the happy ending of *Memoirs*. This narrative strategy – which here takes the form of an unexpected fortune allowing Henry and Harriet to get married – stands in a certain contrast with the earlier moral tenor of the novel; namely that neither money nor marriage are necessary for happiness in life. Furthermore, it also contradicts Hamilton's belief that reward for virtue would be dispensed in the afterlife rather than this life on earth. After all, the fortune is being dispensed as a kind of recompense for the lovers' modesty and patience: since they readily accepted bachelor- and spinsterhood as a noble alternative to marriage, Hamilton may be said to reward them with a form of happiness to which she obviously grants more importance than she is ready to admit. The incongruity between her religious convictions and the apparently obligatory happy ending arises mainly from generic demands of the novel. As pointed out by Wood, "the formal conventions of the domestic novel, and the exigencies of didacticism, [...], impose a narrative structure that concludes in material rewards – generally through marriage – at the conclusion of the plot, providing moral and formal closure" (72). The practice to grant material benefits in return for virtuous behaviour also resulted from the general conflation of value systems and discourses, according to which industriousness, religious piety and patriotism were all regarded as signifiers of virtue. However, since these values were often associated with the same practices and mutually dependent, authors of fiction were required to provide novelistic closure with regard to each of them. For example, considering that morally righteous people were automatically believed to be patriotic, religiously devout, sexually chaste and socially active at the same time, it was customary for novelists to reward them with an appropriate recompense for each of these virtues. Hamilton follows this tradition and employs highly stereotypical plot elements in order to cater for her readers' expectations. In order to prevent her novel from arousing false expectations in her readers and from appearing too conventional, Hamilton draws attention to the many characters to whom she does not grant marriage and makes light of the happy but predictable reunions between Henry and Harriet and Churchill and Maria. This is achieved by having stereotypical female readers vent their outrage against the too few marriages which the novel offers: "'And I,' rejoins another fair judge, 'shall condemn the book without mercy, if Mrs. Fielding be not married to her old lover Mr. Sydney. It must be so, to be sure. After being in love with each other for thirty years, it would be *so* romantic! and they must of course be *so* happy!'" By thus highlighting the case of Mrs. Fielding, Hamilton can thus remind her readers that marriage is not the ultimate goal in life:

'From the day I heard of [Mr. Sydney's] marriage,' Mrs. Fielding tells the

readers, “I have devoted myself to a single life. I have endeavoured to create to myself objects of interest that might occupy my attention, and engage my affections. These I have found in the large family of the unfortunate. My plan has been successful in bringing peace to my bosom; and peace is the happiness of age – it is all the happiness of which in this side of the grave I shall be solicitous.” (2000.388)

Nevertheless, despite the moralizing soliloquy of Mrs. Fielding, Hamilton cannot entirely draw attention away from the conventional ending of her story. All in all, there are only few novels which do not follow the rather predictable resolution of rewards and punishment, such as *Clarissa* by Richardson or *Sidney Bidulph* by Sheridan. Otherwise even Evangelically inclined authors like Hamilton seem to have felt they were required to disregard their own moral tenets in order to meet the demands of both readers and the genre.

To conclude, it can be seen that Hamilton uses plot for her didactic aims in two separate ways: by integrating anti-Jacobin plot elements into her novels and by rewriting Jacobin plots according to a tragic model. Both strategies pursue a highly didactic purpose, which makes it possible to presume that plot movement is restricted to the provision of moral instruction. That this is not entirely the case, however, may be observed in *Memoirs*, where plot movement is also brought about by the characters’ failure to interpret reality correctly: indeed, all complications and setbacks in the storyline may be traced back to the philosophers’ faulty notions of reality. Even though the anarchy and chaos thus created may be seen to confirm Hamilton’s own understanding of human suffering, it is not altogether possible to draw parallels between the novel’s plot structure and Hamilton’s religious *weltanschauung*. This is primarily due to formal conventions, which should be generally regarded as the principal factor determining plot movement and plot structure, rather than the author’s specific ideological orientation.

#### 4.4.3 Intertextual references, parody and plagiarism

The final chapter of this analysis is dedicated to a set of strategies commonly used by anti-Jacobin writers in their attack against Jacobinism: explicit and implicit references to Jacobin works, parody and plagiarism. Instead of merely establishing their own reformative agenda, anti-Jacobin novels also present a direct reaction to other texts of the political and reformative debate, from which their authors seek to dissociate themselves by pouring ridicule on them. This pertains also to Hamilton, who integrates such intertextual references into her novels by a number of strategies. For example, she mentions well-known authors and philosophers and discusses the injurious qualities of their work. In *Translations*, for instance, the reader learns that “the names of Hume, Bolingbroke, and Voltaire frequently occur” (1999:95) in an essay entitled “Thoughts on the Prevalence of Infidelity”. By means of the reference the three philosophers are easily marked as enemies

of the Christian religion; they are further discredited when Zaarmilla adds an explanation to their philosophies:

What makes me certain they are not Christians is, that from what Percy has said concerning their opinions, it is evident that these unhappy men are unconscious of the precious spark of immortality which glows within their bosoms. Nay, so much are they inflated by vanity, so infatuated by the spirit of pride, as to utter words of arrogance with the tongue of presumption; saying, that men ought not to believe in the supreme Inheritor of eternity. (1999:95)

In conformity with anti-Jacobin practice, Hamilton does not concern herself with the actual philosophical theories of these authors, but reduces them to one criterion by means of which she intends to discredit them. Another title frequently alluded to is Paine's *The Age of Reason*, which Hamilton mostly uses as a catch-phrase when drawing attention to the alleged foolishness of the new philosophers:

All the Philosophers now at Ardent-Hall, perform poojah to different systems: and seem to have no opinion in common, except the expectation of the return of the Suttee Jogue, which they distinguish by the name of *Age of Reason*. In this blessed æra of purity and perfection, it is believed by each of the Philosophers, that the worship of the Idol shall be established, and the doctrines of his priest, be the faith of the world. (1999:257-258)

The reference to Paine is not made entirely explicit; instead, Hamilton, who relies on her readers to be familiar with the title, uses it simply as a trademark for the philosophers' utopian fantasies.

In some instances the intertextual reference is integrated into a philosophical debate, where the characters discuss the relative merits and flaws of the text in question and present alternative views on the issue. Works referred to in this manner are, for example, Godwin's *Political Justice*, Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* and Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*. In a central passage in *Memoirs* several characters discuss different concepts of femininity and models of female education with reference to Rousseau and Wollstonecraft. While the exemplary characters identify alleged flaws in the arguments advanced by the two authors, the negative characters clumsily try to defend them. Importantly, their discussion does not go into detail about the texts in question; instead the characters introduce their own opinions on the rights and duties of women in society.

Another common strategy is plagiarism: as mentioned in chapter 3.7, anti-Jacobin novels often plagiarize Jacobin texts and feature long quotations so as to ridicule them. The work most frequently cited in Hamilton's novels is Godwin's *Political Justice*, of which long passages are integrated verbatim into the discussions between the foolish philosophers. The plagiarized paragraphs are identified by the fictional editor, who is careful to inform the readers about the exact source furnishing the philosophers with

these ludicrous ideas. Hamilton achieves the satire mainly by putting the quotations into the mouth of highly farcical characters, whose intellectual simplicity never fails to expose the theories in question to open ridicule. They present them out of context and with little relevance to the topic in discussion; often their lack of understanding causes them to grotesquely exaggerate or misinterpret individual arguments. According to London, this strategy “is intended to render the original ludicrous by a process of decontextualisation that involves fracturing the coherence on which the affective unity of the source work depends” (74). A good example is Bridgetina, who declaims passages from *Political Justice* in a parrot-like manner in order to show off her learning. However, her paucity of intellect makes her unfit for conversation when projects for the spiritual improvement and benefit of society are being discussed by the more serious characters in the story. Her declamations of Godwin constitute therefore a highly unsuitable and improper contribution to otherwise serious debates. Not only does she lack understanding of the passages she quotes, she also recites them out of context and with little relevance to the topics discussed. The incongruity of her declamations is even exposed and explicitly stated by the narrator, who recounts that her partners in conversation

were not a little astonished to hear such a stream of eloquence flow from so unexpected a source. They for some time thought it inexhaustible, but on putting some pertinent queries to the fair orator, they discovered that her eloquence [...] ran always the same round. In vain did they endeavour to make it trace a wider circle: it could neither stop, nor turn, nor go strait [sic] forwards, nor move in any other direction than that in which it had at first attracted their curiosity. (2000:237)

As a result, Hamilton gives the impression that the philosophical theories are hardly pertinent to the “true” concerns of society. They seem to be at a total remove from reality and therefore inappropriate for the reform of British society.

However, by plagiarising Godwin’s *Political Justice* Hamilton does not only satirize Godwin’s theories, she also presents them as a realistic danger to society. Another character often found reciting passages from *Political Justice* is Vallaton, who, however, uses these quotations in a different manner than Bridgetina and for different purposes as well: unlike the former, Vallaton understands the source text from which he plagiarizes and can easily manipulate it to indulge his own licentious and immoral wants. Importantly, he does not believe in Godwin’s theories, understanding that they are not meant to be put into practice. At the same time, he recognizes their enormous argumentative and manipulative power and uses them to incite less educated beings to transgress both the laws of the country and their own moral conscience. As the theories are highly abstract and display a merciless rationality, they leave his victims at a loss to defend themselves against his arguments. They are further presented in a very scientific jargon, which makes it difficult to thoroughly comprehend or argue against them. Quoting Godwin, Vallaton can easily persuade Julia to forsake her parents and elope with him. Julia, who tries to

consult her natural feelings and common sense, is step by step out-reasoned by her counterpart, who is so eminently superior in eloquence. This shows that Godwin's theories may present a realistic threat to society, as their abstract rhetoric and complicated argumentation enables their author and those using his arguments to prove whatever pleases them. This interpretation implies to some extent that the theories are not necessarily malignant in themselves, as long as they do not fall into the wrong hands or are not used for evil purposes. However, since this danger may never be entirely ruled out, Godwin's treatise constitutes a serious threat to social peace and stability.

Interestingly, Hamilton uses the frame narrative in *Memoirs* to comment both on her use of plagiarism and treatment of Godwin in the novel, even though she presents Godwin's theories in a far more benevolent manner than she does later in the novel:

From the use that is made by Vallaton of some of the opinions promulgated in Mr. Godwin's *Political Justice*, it appears to me to have been the intention of your author not to pass an indiscriminate censure on that ingenious, and in many parts admirable, performance, but to expose the dangerous tendency of those parts of his theory which might, by a bad man, be converted into an engine of mischief, and be made the means of ensnaring innocence and virtue. (2000:36)

Whether Hamilton really considered Godwin's political theories admirable is, of course, to be doubted, considering that she satirizes both him and his theories mercilessly in the novels. As the examples of Bridgetina and Vallaton above have shown, Godwin's treatise serves either as a means to show off one's learning or to seduce young women from the path of virtue. Instead of critically investigating Godwin's arguments and identifying the "admirable" parts of the treatise, Hamilton removes them from their context and imposes on them her own highly negative interpretations and fields of application. While many passages from *Political Justice* have found their way into the novel, they are never properly discussed or explained to the reader. This has also been pointed out by Grenby, who concludes his analysis of plagiarism by stating that "although various anti-Jacobin novelists subpoena numerous new philosophers to stand before the primed and packed jury of their readers, quoting sometimes substantial passages from their works, it is never actually their thought or their works which come under scrutiny" (76).

As can be seen, Hamilton's novels feature frequent intertextual references to Jacobin texts from the revolutionary debate. She endeavours to discredit these texts by having her characters both discuss and quote them in philosophical debates, presenting a grotesquely parodied version of their political ideas. Even though Hamilton may have claimed to show some regard for these authors, her treatment of them suggests the opposite, as she shamelessly plagiarizes and parodies them.

#### 4.4.4 Conclusion

The aim of the last chapter was to investigate the narrative strategies used by Hamilton to translate her didactic agenda into fiction. As was shown, Hamilton relies to a large extent on the narrative authority of her narrators and the important paternal chorus acting as mouthpieces for her own views. She consequently structures the novels' storylines around didactic philosophical debates and embedded narratives and instigates disruptions in the plot primarily to create opportunities for moral instruction. Both novels feature stock characters and typical plot elements from the anti-Jacobin novel, as well as frequent derisive references to Jacobin texts from the revolutionary debate.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

As was shown in the course of this study, the anti-Jacobin novels *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* reflect their author's ambition to reform British society by reminding her readers of the moral values of Christianity. Believing that all social disorders afflicting Britain may be traced back to individual transgressions of providential will and order, Hamilton argues that peace and prosperity can only be assured by submitting society again to this providential will. As a result her views on political and social reform, and the rights and duties of individuals in society are all defined by her religious *weltanschauung*, which seeks to retain traditional institutions and concepts of gender, and precludes political programmes for the reform of society. Her partial endorsement of the status quo dissociates Hamilton from revolutionary feminists and Jacobins such as Wollstonecraft and Hays and causes her to wield a fierce attack against the 'Jacobin threat' in her novels. At the same time, however, Hamilton maintains that social reform is absolutely necessary and voices severe criticism of the degenerate morals and manners of the aristocracy, the intellectual subjugation of women, and the supremacy of fashion over good taste and morality. Though limited by her political orthodoxy, her reformative programme may thus still be characterized as ambitious, as she ceaselessly invites her contemporaries to cultivate their rational faculties, extend their knowledge by discriminate reading, and show concern for those in need of help, among other things. A set of narrative strategies, such as, for example, authoritarian narrators and characters, satire, parody and stock plots enables Hamilton to achieve close narrative control and thus communicate her didactic agenda effectively.

---

# Chapter 6

## Bibliography

Binhammer, Katherine. "The Persistence of Reading: Governing Female Novel-Reading in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*." In *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 2003, Spring; 27 (2): 1-22.

Bradley, James E. "Toleration and movements of Christian reunion, 1660-1789." In: Brown, Stewart Jay and Timothy Tackett (eds.). *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 7: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution, 1660-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 348-370.

Braude, Ann. "Women's History Is American Religious History." In Tweed, Thomas A. *Retelling US Religious History*. Berkeley, Calif. [u.a.]: Univ. of California Press, 1997, 87-107.

Brown, Stewart Jay and Timothy Tackett (eds.). *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 7: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution, 1660-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Brown, Stewart Jay and Timothy Tackett (eds.). "Introduction." In: Brown, Stewart Jay and Timothy Tackett (eds.). *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 7: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution, 1660-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 1-11.

Brown, Stewart Jay. *Providence and empire. Religion, politics and society in the United Kingdom, 1815-1914*. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2008.

Butler, Marylin. *Maria Edgeworth*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

—. *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*. Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1975.

Chitnis, Anand C. *The Scottish Enlightenment. A Social History*. London: Croom Helm, 1976.

Congreve, William: "Incognita". In Salzman, Paul (ed.): *An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, 471-525.

Egenolf, Susan B. *The Art of Political Fiction in Hamilton, Edgeworth, and Owenson*. Surrey, England: Ashgate; 2009.

Grenby, M.O. *The anti-Jacobin novel: British conservatism and the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Grogan, Claire. "Identifying Foreign Bodies: New Philosophers and Hottentots in Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 18.3 (Spring 2006): 305-27.

---

Hamilton, Elizabeth. *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (ed. Perkins and Russell). Toronto: Broadview Literary Press, 1999.

—. *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (ed. Grogan). Toronto: Broadview Literary Press, 2000.

Hilton, Boyd. *The Age of Atonement. The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Hunt, Linda C. "A Woman's Portion: Jane Austen and the Female Character". In Schofield, Mary Anne (ed.); Macheski, Cecilia (ed.). *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*. Athens: Ohio UP; 1986, pp. 8-28.

Johnson, Claudia. *Jane Austen. Women, Politics and the Novel*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Kelly, Gary. *Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790-1827*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993.

—. *English Fiction of the Romantic Period. 1789-1830*. London and New York: Longman, 1989.

Know-Shaw, Peter. *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

London, April. "Novel and History in Anti-Jacobin Satire". *Yearbook of English Studies. Special Issue on Time and Narrative 30*, 2000, 71-81.

McKeon, Michael: *The Origins of the English Novel. 1600-1740*. Baltimore: The Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Mellor, Anne K. *Romanticism and Gender*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

—. "Romantic Orientalism Begins at Home: Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*." *Studies in Romanticism*. Boston: Summer 2005. Vol. 44 (2), 151-64.

Murray, Julie. "Histories of Female Progress in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Volume 22, no. 4, 2010, 673-692.

Narain, Mona. "Colonial Desires: The Fantasy of Empire and Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*." *Studies in Romanticism*. Boston: Winter 2006. Vol. 45, Iss. 4, 585-600.

Newman, Gerald (ed.). *Britain in the Hanoverian Age. 1714-1837. An Encyclopedia*. London and New York: Garland Publishing, 1997.

—. "French Revolution (1789)." In Newman, Gerald (ed.). *Britain in the Hanoverian Age. 1714-1837. An Encyclopedia*. London and New York: Garland Publishing, 1997, 272-274.

—. "Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century: Suggestions toward a General Interpretation." *Victorian Studies: A Journal of the Humanities, Arts and Sciences*, 1975; 18: 385-418.

—. *The Rise of English Nationalism. A Cultural History, 1740-1830*. London: Macmillan, 1997.

Rosenblatt, Helena. "The Christian Enlightenment." In: Brown, Stewart Jay and Timothy Tackett (eds.). *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 7: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution, 1660-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 283-301.

- Stock, R.D. "Enthusiasm". In Newman, Gerald (ed.). *Britain in the Hanoverian Age. 1714-1837. An Encyclopedia*. London and New York: Garland Publishing, 1997, 233-234.
- Taylor, Barbara. *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Taylor, Susan B. "Feminism and Orientalism in Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*." *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2000 Oct; 29 (5): 555-81.
- Thaddeus, Janice Farrar. "Elizabeth Hamilton's Modern Philosophers and the Uncertainties of Satire". IN: Gill, James E. (ed. and introd.). *Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays on Eighteenth-Century Satire*. Knoxville, TN: U of Tennessee P; 1995. xiv, pp. 395-418.
- . "Elizabeth Hamilton's Domestic Politics". *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 1994 (23): 265-84.
- Todd, Janet. *The sign of Angellica: women, writing, and fiction*. New York: Columbia Press, 1989.
- (ed. and introd.). *Female Education in the Age of Enlightenment. Volume 1*. London: William Pickering, 1996.
- Tompkins, J. M. S.: *The Popular Novel in England, 1770 - 1800*. London: Methuen, 1969.
- Tweed, Thomas A. *Retelling US Religious History*. Berkeley, Calif. [u.a.]: Univ. of California Press, 1997.
- Ty, Eleanor. *Unsex'd Revolutionaries: Five Women Novelists of the 1790's*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- . "Female Philosophy Refunctioned: Elizabeth Hamilton's Parodic Novel"; *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 1991 Oct; 22 (4), 111-129.
- Wallace, Miriam L. (ed. and introd.). *Enlightening Romanticism, Romancing the Enlightenment: British Novels from 1750 to 1832*. Surrey, England: Ashgate; 2009.
- Wallace, Tara Ghoshal. "Reading the Metropole: Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*." IN: Wallace, Miriam L. (ed. and introd.). *Enlightening Romanticism, Romancing the Enlightenment: British Novels from 1750 to 1832*. Surrey, England: Ashgate; 2009, 131-142.
- Watson, Nicola. *Revolution and the form of the British novel, 1790-1825*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- White, Laura Mooneyham. *Jane Austen's Anglicanism*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2011.
- Wood, Lisa. *Modes of Discipline. Women, Conservatism, and the Novel after the French Revolution*. London: Associated University Press, 2003.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *The Vindications. Edited by D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf*. Toronto: Broadview literary texts, 1997.

---

# Abstract

The end of the eighteenth century saw significant social and ideological changes in Great Britain: following the Enlightenment and the Revolution in France, groundbreaking theories about human rights, social equality and democratic representation threatened political orthodoxy and revolutionary feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays campaigned against the intellectual and economic suppression of women. At the same time, however, the British government introduced a number of repressive measures to pre-empt all dangers of social unrest and revolution.

The “war of ideas” between pro- and counter-revolutionary forces was also waged in the field of literature, where several hundred conservative anti-Jacobin novels flooded the market to combat subversive ideas. A member of the anti-Jacobin camp was Elizabeth Hamilton – author of several educational and religious tracts, and the two novels *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*. While her novels represent to a significant degree typical samples of anti-Jacobin discourse and rhetoric, Hamilton also employs them to communicate her own reformist programme, which is defined by her specifically Christian religious *weltanschauung*. The following paper examines both anti-Jacobin and Christian ideologies underlying her novels, as well as the narrative strategies employed to translate her reformist agenda into fiction. The author will demonstrate that her views on political and social reform and the rights and duties of individuals in society are all defined by her religious convictions, which both determine Hamilton’s commitment to reform and set the boundaries of her liberalism.

## Zusammenfassung

Gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts war Großbritannien Schauplatz bedeutender gesellschaftlicher und ideologischer Umwälzungen: Die Aufklärung und Revolution in Frankreich brachten neue Ideen von Menschenrechten, sozialer Gleichheit, und demokratischer Repräsentation. Berühmte Frauenrechtlerinnen, allen voran Mary Wollstonecraft und Mary Hays, kritisierten die intellektuelle und wirtschaftliche Ausgrenzung von Frauen; und die britische Regierung versuchte mit einer Serie repressiver Maßnahmen, den schwelenden Aufruhr in der britischen Gesellschaft im Keim zu ersticken.

Im Bereich der Literatur führte die ideologische Debatte zwischen pro- und anti-revolutionären Kräften zu einer Massenproduktion so genannter anti-Jakobinischer Romane, die als Propagandaliteratur revolutionäres Gedankengut bekämpfen

sollten. Eine der konservativen anti-Jakobinischen Schriftstellerinnen war Elizabeth Hamilton (1756-1816), die neben religiösen und pädagogischen Essays auch zwei Romane, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* und *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, veröffentlichte. Während sie in diesen Romanen typische Diskurse und Argumente der Anti-Jakobiner übernimmt, stellt sie diesen auch ihr eigenes Reformprogramm entgegen,

---

welches sich auf eine speziell Christlich religiöse Weltanschauung stützt. Die folgende Arbeit beleuchtet das anti-Jakobinische und christliche Gedankengut in Hamiltons Romanen und analysiert die narrativen Techniken zu deren literarischen Umsetzung. Es wird gezeigt, dass Hamiltons Argumente zu Politik, sozialer Reform, Menschenrechten und Frauenrechten auf ihre persönliche religiöse Weltsicht zurückgeführt werden können. Diese Weltsicht legitimiert die von ihr verlangten gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen, setzt ihrem Liberalismus jedoch auch strenge Grenzen.

## Lebenslauf

- 2005 - 2011: Diplomstudium Anglistik und Amerikanistik (erster Studienabschnitt mit ausgezeichnetem Erfolg abgeschlossen)
- 2009-2010: Einjähriger Studienaufenthalt in Edinburgh
- Ab 2008: Lehramtsstudium Englisch/Französisch
- 2003-2008: Bachelorstudium “Interkulturelle Kommunikation” (Englisch, Französisch) am Zentrum für Translationswissenschaften; Abschlussprüfung 2008 mit ausgezeichnetem Erfolg abgeschlossen
- 2002-2004: Studium der Instrumentalpädagogik an der Musikuniversität Wien
- 1991 – 2002: Konzertfachstudium Violoncello am Konservatorium Wien
- 2003: AHS-Matura mit ausgezeichnetem Erfolg (Notendurchschnitt 1,0)
- 1995 - 2003: AHS Fichtnergasse; Musikgymnasium Wien, Neustiftgasse