Tribhuvan University

Sydney Owenson, Dynamic of Anglo- Irish Relation and The Missionary

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of

Tribhuvan University in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

in ENGLISH

By

Madhukar Pandey

T.U. Regd. No. 6-1-311-144-99

Tribhuvan University

Kathmandu, Nepal

October, 2024

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We certify that this dissertation entitled "Sydney Owenson, Dynamic of Anglo- Irish Relation and The Missionary" was prepared by Mr. Madhukar Pandey under our guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for final examinations by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English.

Dissertation Committee

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Prof. Dr. Beerendra Pandey

Supervisor

Date: October, 2024

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Sydney Owenson, Dynamic of Anglo- Irish Relation and The Missionary" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Madhukar Pandey has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

____

Prof. Dr. Beerendra Pandey

Internal Supervisor

____

Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota

External Examiner

____

Prof. Dr. Dhruba Bahadur Karki

Head of Central Department of English

Date: ______________________

Acknowledgements

At the outset, I profoundly extend my deep gratitude to Prof. Dr. Beerendra Pandey, Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, for his sustained and timely academic guidance in completing this project. Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota merits a very special mentor for giving the whole outline of the research. A mentor serves as a beacon of light; in this regard, Prof. Dr. Dhurba Bahadur Karki, Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Prof. Dr. Shiva Rijal, and Mr. Badri Achraya, my esteemed gurus, have consistently illuminated the intricate path of my research itinerary. Without their suggestions, this research would not have taken on its current form.

The well-intentioned quarter always reminds us of the urgency of a situation and jolts us out of tardiness. To this quarter belong a few: Mr. Dinesh Khanal, Mr. Gopal Khanal, Dr. Dhundi Raj Bhattarai, and Beerendra Pokheral. They not only cautioned and admonished me for my blatant procrastination of work, but also served as a source of inspiration, creating a proper academic environment both physically and mentally. Finding a nugget of information in research is everyone's quest.

This research work obtained this size and shape because of my mother's concentration, perseverance, and frequent concern for my academic struggle. Shreejana painstakingly sacrificed some of life's most envious and irretrievable comforts to see how I grew as a researcher. Despite her busy schedule, she encouraged me to dedicate myself fully to my study. Who says mischief in impish? My little Samriddhi and Sarbham never ceased to demand things trips to a fun park, weekend visits to relatives, family outings, and whatnot. However, this little mischief, for which I will always be grateful, relieved my stress and gave me the energy I needed to begin my work.

Abstract

This dissertation reads Sydney Owenson, Dynamic of Anglo- Irish Relation and The Missionary. The word “enthusiasm” occurs several times in the narrative with reference to its two protagonists, Portuguese missionary Hilarion and Indian priestess Luxima. This trope's use with Hilarion confirms the Romantic Era's hidden worries about whether Romanticism's refined version of enthusiasm was no better than its crude religious counterpart. On the other hand, its use with Luxima shows that enthusiasm can heal. Despite his abundance of zeal, Hilarion relinquishes opportunities to turn his suffering to benefit the community. Luxima’s enthusiasm, on the other hand, projects it as a cross-cultural phenomenon that is oppositional to colonial and proselytizing values. By privileging her enthusiasm over that of Hilarion, Owenson provides an alternative account of cross-cultural relations distinct from the masculinist and Orientalist representations of these relations. Owenson's fictional intervention gives voice to Luxima's ideal, a gesture towards the utopian vision of a peaceful and productive coexistence between East and West, as if to counter these shortcomings of masculine agency.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Missionary (1811) is a notable work by the Anglo-Irish poet and novelist Sydney Owenson. Renowned for her provocative engagement with the cultural and political issues of her time, Owenson held a distinct Irish patriot's perspective on Great Britain's imperial endeavors. She aimed to promote Irish culture and patriotism through her writings, consistently incorporating Irish themes into her numerous novels. Owenson's deep connection to Irish culture is evident in her preference for Irish folk songs, as well as her unwavering support for Irish cultural heritage and writers. Sydney Owenson's Irish patriot perspective significantly influenced her literary works, particularly evident in 'The Missionary.' Owenson's perspective as an Irish patriot likely shaped her portrayal of themes related to Irish identity, culture, and struggles for independence in her works. Likewise, Irish folk songs played a significant role in Sydney Owenson's literary works, particularly in 'The Missionary.' Owenson, also known as Lady Morgan, was a prominent Irish writer who incorporated elements of Irish culture into her novels. The use of Irish folk songs in 'The Missionary' likely added depth and authenticity to the portrayal of Irish characters and settings, reflecting Owenson's interest in showcasing the cultural richness of Ireland. Additionally, the incorporation of folk songs could have served to evoke a sense of nostalgia, patriotism, or emotional resonance among readers, enhancing the overall impact of the narrative (Cohane and Goldstein 425). Furthermore, the utilization of Irish folk songs may have contributed to creating a unique and immersive reading experience, allowing Owenson to connect with her audience on a cultural and emotional level.

In her 1811 historical romance, "The Missionary: An Indian Tale," Owenson sets the narrative in seventeenth-century India, illustrating the cultural encounter between the West and the East through a dramatized account. Romantic authors frequently explore the theme of

the individual's struggle against oppressive sociopolitical systems, and this narrative elaborates on that idea, particularly within the unstable space created by the collision of cultures. Owenson's tale intensifies this conflict, demonstrating how different cultures interact and lead to conflict (Andrews 489). In the context of missionary endeavors, the contact zone was often on the periphery of colonial space. These margins existed primarily because missionaries typically distanced themselves from colonial authorities and found that socially oppressed populations were occasionally receptive to their message (Goldfarb 623-32). Noble lineages, passions, ideals, and accomplishments distinguish the protagonists of Owenson's story, making them particularly intriguing characters. The tragic possibilities inherent in such cultural intermingling add to their appeal, reflecting the transformational force of the sublime a potent aesthetic strategy for Romantic writers. "The Missionary" translates this strategy into the language of zest, exemplifying the passion and zeal of communities existing outside the mainstream of imperial culture.

At times, however, the force of the language of zest collides with colonial angst at native loyalty, which is prioritized over colonial loyalty. Voss asserts that cultural identity always impacts colonized people's identity in various ways (461). Issues of competing cultural and political loyalties ongoing and vexing problems of longstanding hostility throughout the many decades of Britain’s imperial expansion are central concerns in *The Missionary*. Furthermore, the novel underscores the impact of colonial dogma, which aimed to destroy the local culture. The novel uses the missionary theme to examine the violent effects of cross-cultural encounters arising from colonialism. At the same time, it exposes the sexual content of both colonialism and religious conversion. The failure of both the conversion narrative and the marriage plot signal profound skepticism at the capacity of grand cultural narratives to represent female ambition and desire. It reveals the limitations of narrative strategies, as well as the failure of cultural contact.

The dissertation focuses the point that Owenson describes the protagonists as religious enthusiasts and that the novel reflects cultural anxieties associated with enthusiasm, especially in the areas of sexuality and political context. By bringing the idea of Jon Mee's work on the discourse of enthusiasm in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England to inform the analysis of the novel. Mee, whose arguments are embedded in the analysis of *The Missionary*, examines how the cultural politics of the Eighteenth Century and the Romantic period pitted such rebellious enthusiasm against disciplining forms of cultural regulation. It is an indication of how the regulatory norms fall sort of the expectation of the colonial rulers. Mee concerns with two historical arguments about enthusiasm: first that it is the anti-self of Enlightenment, and the second that, although maligned in religion and politics, it was rehabilitated as a term of aesthetics in the Romantic Age (Keirstead 266).

Before writing the analysis of the novel, it should be meaningful to briefly contextualize *The Missionary*. Owenson's choice of a missionary as Romantic hero reflects the then interest in Christian missions to foreign lands of which India was one. Although British missionaries had made only a small impact among native populations, the missionary movement had a sizeable effect in Britain in the early decades of the nineteenth century. In his account of the rise of Evangelicalism in England, Ian Bradley explains, "The activities of the missionaries captured the excitement of the nation and for the first time aroused the hearts and minds of the British to the plight of those beyond their shores" (77). This shows how privileging of emotion over reason led to a change in peoples' approach to the operation of the marginalized. Thus, the novel reviles pathetic situation of colonized people in the colonial context. Also, novel depicts the idea how inhuman behavior the imperialist had in the form of civilization. During the two decades preceding the publication of *The Missionary,* the major foreign missionary societies were organized in Great Britain. Religious historian, Stephen Neill, proposes in *A History of Missions*, several factors to explain the missionary revival of

the 1790s, including the accounts of Captain James Cook's voyages that touched the public's curiosity about distant lands, the Evangelical Revival, and Great Britain's colonial expansion (210-20). Additionally, the impeachment trial of the East India Company's Governor General Warren Hastings during the years 1788-95 publicized the profound commitment that Britain had made to govern the populations of India as well as the deep and morally complex problems arising from this commitment. The corruption of different officers working for the British Empire brought to light the moral ambivalence Before the establishment of the missionary societies, the British had made some efforts to propagate Protestant Christianity in India, but had made little impact. Doss discusses that at the time Owenson was writing the novel, missionary projects in India were still in the early stages and widely scattered. Volunteers were in short supply, and those who chose to serve had to be willing to sacrifice much, even their lives, given the high mortality rate among the British living in India in the early nineteenth century (223-44).

Robert Southey, a vocal advocate of both colonization and foreign missionary work, articulated the connection between the spread of Christianity in India and the security of British imperial interests when he remarked: "In India they want of an established church is a crying evil. Nothing but missionaries can secure in the country what we have won" (123). At the time that Southey penned these lines in April 1807, what the British had "won" in India included control over the Bengal state, military victories over the French and numerous regional powers, a monopoly on trade that was much less lucrative than it had been during the previous century, a wealth of knowledge concerning Indian languages, laws, and customs, and valuable experience in negotiating with and governing a subject population. What the British had not won, Southey emphasized, was the East India Company's permission to establish Protestant Christian missions in the territories under its control. This is not to say that India had yet to see missionaries from Britain. On the contrary, clergymen attached to the

Company had sometimes expanded their ministries to include evangelizing the natives, and the Baptist Missionary Society had been active around Calcutta since 1793. Yet the Company resisted the establishment of missions in its territories primarily from a pragmatic standpoint: a docile native population was much easier to control than one stirred by religious and cultural controversy. Evangelicals pressed hard for accommodations for Indian missions and at last carried their point in 1813, when the East India Company's charter was amended in the Parliament to permit missionaries to operate within the Company's territories.

Chapter Two analyzes *The Missionary* in terms of the trope of enthusiasm which it finds un-tempered and associated with violence in the case of the protagonist, Hilarion. Chapter Three, concludes that the enthusiasm in the case of the heroine, Luxima, is privileged by Owenson. Her story turns out to be an alternative account of India-England relations that call for brotherhood rather than domination.

Chapter 2

Missionary Zeal and Colonial Anxiety in Sydney Owenson's *The Missionary*

There are two protagonists in *The Missionary*: Hilarion, the Franciscan priest who comes to India as a missionary and Luxima, the beautiful Hindu priestess who excites his adoration and whom he apparently converts to Christianity. Owenson describes them as religious enthusiasts. Their self-deceptions combined with their ineffectual efforts to control their passions lead inevitably to the plot's tragic outcome. Hilarion falls victim to his Jesuit rivals when the Inquisition sentences him to death for allegedly breaking his priestly vows, heresy, and "the seduction of a Neophyte" (Owenson 246). He is prepared to sacrifice himself and submit silently to the false charges rather than commit perjury by confessing any criminality in his relationship with the Hindu priestess. Luxima, a nominal convert to Christianity, suffers excommunication from the Hindu community in order to remain with the missionary as his convert. Freeman further explores, this issue has become highly contentious due to the complex and multi-dimensional nature of caste, which has resulted in the division of Christian communities into two distinct groups: marginalized Christians, who were later identified as Dalit Christians, and elite Christians, who primarily consist of Nadars and Vellalas in South India. Traditional forms of difference have persisted and developed into new manifestations, despite the fact that missionaries have substantial qualms about caste identities and the discrimination that results from them. The purpose of this essay is to trace these historical discussions and investigate the ongoing issues that are associated with combating prejudice based on caste, which is still a widespread problem in today's society (21-28).

Luxima's sacrifice is more complex than Hilarion's, for she loses her social identity when stripped of her Brahminical caste. She sees herself as a sacrifice on the Christian altar for the sake of the man she loves and considers her devotion proof that his mission was not in

vain (231). Despite their positions of authority within their own religious communities, Hilarion and Luxima are powerless to transcend the forces of political and cultural systems. The text emphasizes the intensity of these desires by repeatedly identifying the protagonists as enthusiasts, both in terms of their devotion to a religious calling and in the violence of their emotional turmoil. Caught inextricably in the trapping of emotion their relation, finally, ends in tragic and transgressive love. The novel tries to illustrate the contradictory ideas of Luxima's conversion to Christianity for the sake of her man Hilarion but not for the respect to the Christianity, which is why Owenson privileges Luxima's emotion over the Hillarion. As both characters have been presented as enthusiasts, Hilarion is overshadowed by the religious dogma, while Luxima presents herself as a docile but impactful character.

The theme of "the sinful tyranny of human passion," as Hilarion characterizes his ill-fated attraction to Luxima (170), and the counter-theme of absolute consecration to sacred vows continues throughout much of the story. The novel depicts Hilarion's determination to resist his obsessive passion for Luxima and escort her to a convent of Dominican nuns located in one of the European enclaves. Before they reach their destination, however, Hilarion is arrested and sentenced to death by the Inquisition. Luxima escapes from the convent. She is pronounced a relapsed infidel, hence subject to the death penalty, and suffers from a disordered mind and dangerous fever. All this has come as a result of emotional turmoil she has been undergoing. The melodrama at the end of the novel includes Luxima's being stabbed in the heart as she attempts to join Hilarion when he is about to be burned at the stake. Of striking importance is Luxima's reversion to her Hindu faith, and Hilarion's ultimate rejection of orthodox Christianity and devotion to the memory of Luxima, as he retreats from life to a hermit's existence in distant Kashmir.

The Romantic nature of *The Missionary* is clearly evident in the plot of forbidden passion. Why she should call it "foolish" is open to speculation. Perhaps what is most

"foolish" about the story is the idealism of Luxima's utopian vision for the promotion of social harmony and progress within colonial space, a hope that Owenson articulates repeatedly in her works. With her dying breath Luxima eloquently pleads for toleration and accommodation between Christians and Hindus and begs Hilarion to become an active mediator to bring about this social transformation. At a great price, she has learnt the lesson that it is through tolerance and understanding but not through subjugation and domination that peaceful coexistence of both the parties can be guaranteed. She also asks him to tell the stories of her own sacrifice, which exemplifies the tragic consequences of oppression and intolerance. Hilarion fails to do so and subsequently the history of the empire "foolishly" follows the violent course of conquest and domination. Neill further explains that it is the advocacy of coexistence of the Hindu and Christian cultures. Both Luxmia and Hilarion, whether consciously or unknowingly, embrace the other culture, illustrating the need for harmony between both cultures (Neill 1).

In *The Missionary,* the characters' enthusiasm estranges them from their societies and fuels their self-absorption. From Owenson's perspective, the threat that enthusiasm poses for society is not that of energizing the masses as in revolutionary France. Rather, Owenson's text exposes the debilitating effects of enthusiasm on the community when the enthusiast diverts energy from projects that would enhance the social good to an obsessive focus on self-transcendence, figuratively portrayed in her two protagonists, who choose to live in isolation from the everyday world. Hilarion's extreme asceticism impairs his capacity to form the social bonds that lead to productive personal relationships and civic engagement. "Considered as the offspring of Brahma" (90-1), Luxima acts as a living icon of Hinduism, a sacred object rather than a social being. Thus, detached from the regulating power of the social affections, their unchecked enthusiasm carries them further away from a self-concept in line with their material and cultural circumstances. Enthusiasm is not a negative force in

itself but if directed to self- indulgence and transcendence without any concern for social wellbeing can lead to disastrous consequences.

The trope of enthusiasm in the novel functions to magnify and intensify socio-cultural constructions of identity. The exposure of these constructions provides a position from which to critique dominant discourses, including the grand narrative of historical progress, of which colonial expansion is a part. Owenson's text participates in an ongoing discussion of national characteristics, which Britain's global expansion had enlivened through the publication of books on the geography and culture of distant lands. The novel's sympathetic portrayal of the other and specially Owenson's favorable treatment of Hinduism begin to chip away at cultural stereotypes. To the extent that the novel validates Indian culture it challenges the meta-narrative of historical progress that assumes the superiority of the Judeo-Christian Western tradition, the belief in the right and obligation of Europeans to civilize and enlighten "idolaters" steeped in darkness. Ultimately the text demonstrates that however noble and moral the motivation for seeking to convert the other may appear, nothing can justify the violence that this project engenders intentionally or innocently. That Hilarion fails to achieve the goal he had set out for stands to prove the failure of the civilizing mission itself. Despite the vow of chastity and self–restraint, Hilarion is overpowered by emotion and the resultant failure is a mockery of the colonial enterprise itself. However, Luxima does it for herself, for her emotions, and for her own good, not for any doctrine. Whether or not Luxima receives respect from others is irrelevant. Her goal is to get Hilarion as her lifemate, since she has already devoted herself to him. Therefore, from the very beginning to the end of the novel, enthusiasm prevails.

Although the action of the novel is supposed to take place in the 1630s, the references to contemporary events must be noted. Spain's seventeenth-century domination of Portugal references the contemporary situation, in which the ruling family was forced to flee Portugal

as a result of an invasion by France in 1807 (Bartelson 1-17). Violent upheaval on a smaller scale, but more immediately relevant to Owenson's subject, occurred in 1806 in British India, when native soldiers in Vellore turned against their British officers and killed nearly one hundred. The cause of the insurrection was believed to be a reaction against new military dress regulations that offended Hindu customs and gave rise to rumors of forced conversion to Christianity. One significant textual indicator of the violence associated with imperialism and colonialism found in *The Missionary* is the recurring image of *sati,* Hindu widow burning, which was a contentious issue for the colonial government in Bengal throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Owenson situates her tale in a colonial space where Britain is not the colonizing power but rather where Portugal has established commercial, military, and religious institutions that bring Indian and European cultures into conflict. The setting is an India always already subjugated by alien rulers, even though the historical displacement makes it appear that India is not yet the object of British commercial interests. The exotic setting allows Owenson to explore how individuals negotiate relationships and their own identities within overlapping cultural spheres. By displacing the clash of cultures onto a distant colony, the author has greater liberty to treat issues of imperialism, cultural hegemony, colonization, and gender relationships that were of concern to her and many of her Anglo-Irish contemporaries (Ashcroft 5). Owenson repeatedly addresses the implications of Britain's imperialism in her fictional works, as Joseph Lew explains:

> "For Owenson, the metropolis and peripheries of one empire can become analogs for those of another . . . Whether a novel be set in late eighteenth-century Roman Catholic Ireland ruled by British Protestants, in late eighteenth-century Orthodox Athens ruled by the Muslim Turks, or in late seventeenth century Hindu Kashmir increasingly

> infiltrated by European Christians, Owenson suggests that the ethical and sexual issues remain strikingly similar." (48)

The novel's setting signifies the universality of these issues more so than the singularities of a particular culture or nation. Moreover, the novel suggests that this attitude is characteristic of the colonizers. Once they reach their goals, their performance is almost identical everywhere, and when they get a chance to go in, they reveal their cruel reality. Therefore, colonizers' behaviors are quite similar no matter where they go or what they achieve in their lives.

The Missionary presents the narrative plot, the story of man's fall from innocence, his subsequent suffering, ultimate redemption through divine grace, and reinstatement in paradise. The conversion experience that leads to the individual's salvation is shown to be a complex negotiation of competing allegiances, a struggle between the needs of the self and the demands of society (Peel 581–607). Thus, the novel states societal ideas presenting different issues of the then society. Gauri Viswanathan gives serious attention to the subject of religious conversion in the novel, especially its significance as an identity-making gesture that resists institutional erasure of individual difference. She explains that religious conversion is considered an assimilative act when a convert embraces a majority religion, but when an individual leaves the "fold" for an alternative or minority religion, the act of conversion "challenges an established community's assent to religious doctrines and practices," thus calling into question the validity of majority beliefs and threatening the community (xi). Because of the novel's fascination with Luxima's excommunication resulting from her conversion to Christianity, Viswanathan suggests that the text emphasizes the social disruption that religious conversion precipitates (27-31).

The Missionary brings the concept of nationalism within historical contexts. Mattingly and Chen (1638–51) further explain that the foundations of a significant nationalist movement in the early twentieth century can be traced back to Christian missionary efforts.

An increasing body of literature acknowledges the role of missionaries in disseminating education and promoting democratic values. However, missionary endeavors frequently resulted in a negative response from the political sphere, leading to a surge in anti-foreign sentiment and the formation of nationalist movements. In the case of the Vellore uprising, the violence appears to have resulted from a crisis of conflicting loyalties: allegiance to the British authorities required an intolerable transgression of the native soldier's religious and national identity. It meant going against the interests and good of those soldiers Similarly, Luxima's conversion precipitates a crisis for Hilarion and for the larger community because her change of religious identity is read as an act of national disloyalty. When luxima is converted into Christianity the whole Hindu society will be in dilemma, whether their religion is progressive or not. Furthermore, it would be a great disservice to the religious tradition of the land. Luxima is excommunicated from both her religion and her society when she chooses to follow her heart. In this regard, we see the language of heart and mind of luxima. Therefore, in the novel Luxima has been interpreted as having an ambivalent position as to whether to follow 'Mind or Heart'. Hilarion accepts responsibility for her welfare as his proselyte, but he fails to negotiate a viable identity for her as a native convert to Christianity. The ambiguity of her situation is registered by the fact that Luxima wears a crucifix and also her Brahminical necklace and an image of the Hindu god of love. Furthermore, Owenson clearly depicts Luxima's status as outcast from both Hindu and Christian societies when sheltering her heroine in the home of another political and religious outsider, a Jewish woman who for political reasons outwardly professed the Christian faith, but "who hated equally the Christians and Pagans" and was ardently devoted to a powerful Hindu official (Owenson 244). Both Luxima and Hilarion inevitably fall victim to an intolerant political system that punishes multiple allegiances. This ambivalence in the major characters comes as a result of their emphasis on emotion and enthusiasm as opposed to reason and rationality.

Owenson points out the futility of attempts to convert Hindus to Christianity due to their national characteristic of religious toleration and their devotion to privileges of caste. Owenson describes this in terms that echo the rhetoric of an Englishman's claim to his constitutional rights. She writes:

> "In the text, what appears to be religious martyrdom becomes an expression of nationalism. The conversion narrative functions as a frame in which to present ambiguities and contentions within the meta-narrative of nationhood and empire. Religious conversion, when considered as an indication of or response to social and political disruption, facilitates the discussion of the ideological conflicts the individual with an oppressive socio-political system, the enthusiast with the larger community, colonizer with colonized".

The cross-cultural encounter between Hilarion and Luxima surfaces anxieties that force the characters to revise the narratives through which they identify themselves and make meaning of their lives. It is evidence of what happens to individuals when they act against the larger expectations and religious assumptions of the community (Schalbroeck 1-12). As the characters attempt to adjust to new circumstances, they must repeatedly reinvent their personal narratives. Hilarion variously sees himself as perfect priest, valiant conqueror, frenzied lover, self-sacrificing martyr, and ascetic. Luxima narrates her roles as sacred priestess, nationless outcast, devoted lover, Indian patriot, and the site of multiple affiliations. The diversity of these contradictory narratives as well as the protagonists' inability to properly regulate their enthusiasm negate any progressive movement in the plot, leaving the main characters worse off at the end of the story than they were before they met, loved, and suffered. The social disruption Luxima's conversion produces is depicted throughout the novel in the lovers' anguish and at the end in the native uprising against the European authorities. These fictional examples of trauma point to flaws in the meta-narrative of

Britain's civilizing mission, flaws that are magnified in the protagonists' inability to effectively translate the energy of religious devotion into productive social reforms.

Owenson's tale examines the risks to self and society frequently associated with the self-authorizing individual, who claims agency through his or her inspired imagination, in other words, the "enthusiast." Religious enthusiasm was certainly a motivating force behind the upsurge in missionary Christianity during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The failure of Hilarion to fully convert Luxima to Christianity is the failure of the unwarranted zeal of an enthusiastic missionary. According to Jon Mee, the discursive interest in enthusiasm during the Romantic period exceeds its association with Protestantism, and spills into other realms of public concern, such as politics and literature. This factor suggests that Owenson's depiction of the effects of enthusiasm has implications that go beyond the personal and religious. In his book *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation,* Mee argues convincingly for the centrality of the discourse on enthusiasm and its regulation during the Romantic period, and suggests that many British writers of the time positioned themselves in relation to this discourse. Enthusiasm was associated not only with religious non-conformity but also with mob mentality, and therefore, was frequently regarded as potentially dangerous and requiring careful regulation. Some of the religious reformers of the eighteenth century, including Evangelicals, sought to reincorporate human emotion into worship in an effort to revive Christian faith in a period of increasing religious abstraction and apathy. "Warmth in matters of religion," Mee asserts, was readily labeled as enthusiasm, thus meriting "regulatory discipline" (13), lest the Puritan excesses of the Commonwealth era be revived along with affective religious worship. Mee explains that in the eighteenth century, British writers and clergymen began to link religious enthusiasm with erotic desire, especially in reference to denunciations of Evangelicalism, which was typically associated with religious enthusiasm: "Enthusiasm was apt to confuse agape [spiritual love] and eros [sensual love],

imaging Christian love in gross terms, and barely managing, if at all, to sublimate sexual desire into religious devotion" (52). Consequently, part of the stigma of being labeled an enthusiast was the charge that one's notion of truth was merely the product of an overheated imagination or, even worse, libidinal desires.

As Mee implies with his example of eros being mistaken for agape under the fervor of religious zeal, the enthusiast is liable to delude himself or herself, with potentially disastrous effect. Hilarion is an enthusiast and his zeal for spreading the message of God is very powerful and intense. If channeled properly his fervor could be a very useful means for religious conversion. However, his zeal reaches pitch of emotional frenzy and begins to take on the hew of sensual love which ultimately turns out to be the cause of his own tragic downfall. *The Missionary,* it is the hero and heroine's failure to recognize their culturally contingent, and hence mistaken, interpretations of a number of crucial cultural markers that drives the plot. For example, Hilarion visualizes his mission in terms of truth conquering falsehood and therefore cannot recognize Hindu spirituality for what it is. Luxima does not perceive the opposition between eros and sprituality that vexes Hilarion and prevents him from freely returning her affection. Both are blind to the community's hostility toward the disruptive potential of the convert. This concern with cultural constructions of reality serves as an important reason for Owenson's diligent attention to the background and complexional makeup of her main protagonist. The nearly inevitable linkage of the enthusiast with political power struggle accounts for the detailed description of Hilarion's family's involvement in the country's fortunes.

The hero of the novel is a Portuguese nobleman, the Count D'Acugna, a younger son in a politically ambitious family, who is sent to a monastery at the age often, after having lost both his parents. He chooses a monastic vocation as a result of his "complexional enthusiasm" (Owenson 72). This is a phrase that links enthusiasm with other inherited

characteristics and also signals Owenson's understanding of the way that natural proclivities can either be tempered or intensified by one's environment. He adopts the name Hilarion, which is the name of a monk renowned for his piety and asceticism.

Owenson gives her protagonist a proper romantic hero's pedigree: gentle birth, fabulous good looks, passionate disposition, deceased parents, and a family fighting against political oppression. She elaborates on the political situation in Portugal during this historical period, which enables her to intimate an allegorical relation with Ireland's political condition under English rule and also to show that the protagonist's lineage includes enthusiasts of the right sort: patriots who will rise up against foreign domination. Portugal, at the time of the story, was ruled by Spain and consequently "bereft of her natural sovereigns" (71), that is, Hilarion's kinsmen, who were the highest-ranking Portuguese nobility. Julia Wright claims: "The parallels between Spain's domination of Portugal and Britain's domination of Ireland would not have been lost on Owenson or her readers" (23). Eventually the D'Acugna family and their supporters overthrow the Spanish in what Owenson describes as "one of the most singular and perfect revolutions, which the history of nations has recorded" (Owenson 71), and the historical aristocrat who becomes king appears in the novel as Hilarion's uncle. Owenson's choice of nationality and time period for the novel is undoubtedly a loosely veiled reference to contemporary English hegemony and affords the author yet another venue in which to promote the political and cultural interests of Ireland. Ireland, too, is bereft of her natural sovereigns and feels the oppressive weight of England's domination. The struggle of a nation to maintain its cultural identity and historical traditions against the pressures of colonialism was an unending source of inspiration to her.

Hilarion is a paragon of priestly asceticism and is renowned for his rigid discipline and peerless piety. Yet his spiritual integrity is untested, for he has been completely sheltered from worldly enticements. Owenson describes Hilarion's state of mind while living in the

monastery as being inflamed with religious enthusiasm and the desire to subjugate the flesh: "[he] sighed to retire to some boundless desert, to live superior to nature's laws, beyond the power of temptation . . ." (73). Although his fellow priests praise him for his nearness to spiritual perfection, Owenson bluntly exposes Hilarion's blindness to the true purpose of a religious life, which is serving others. As a result of indulging his exaggerated religious fervor, "his unregulated mind [became] the victim of his ardent imagination, he lost sight of the true object of human existence, a life acceptable to the Creator by being serviceable to his creatures" (73). Even though Hilirion was an ascetic his spirituality remained untested because he spent his most of the in seclusion away from the evils and temptation of social life. Had he learnt something about social interaction and experience, he would have been able regulate his enthusiasm and would have succeeded in avoiding disaster. Hilarion's enthusiasm drives him away from day-to-day interactions, making him long for the isolated retreats of sublime Nature, and also places him at risk of being overwhelmed by his overactive imagination. His desire to remove himself beyond the power of temptation, when he already practices extreme asceticism in a remote monastery, borders on fanaticism, and his longing to live superior to nature's laws reveals an obsession with transcendence beyond rationality as well as a spiritual hubris that will contribute to Hilarion's later downfall. Hillarian is a character whose mentality, in fact, is very religious however, he has been guided by the philosophy to rule India with the help of this religious tool; the tool is very powerful which has been found by the then leaders of the British Empire.

Hilarion's enthusiasm worsens the weaknesses that bring about his ultimate failure. Religious seclusion in combination with his natural tendency to privilege imagination result in Hilarion's uneven development: "Dead to all those ties, which, at once, constitute the charm and the anxiety of existence, . . . the spring of human affection untouched within his bosom, and the faculty of human reason unused within his mind" (75). Because his

enthusiasm is unchecked by reason, it holds potential danger for the community, and doubly so, since Hilarion's lack of human affection precludes the establishment of the social bonds that were considered an important regulating force of enthusiastic excess. The text draws upon the traditional association of monasticism with a range of abusive and anti-social behaviors, thus affording an easy target to cite as the cause of the protagonist's incapacity to subordinate enthusiasm to rational control.

At his own monastery, Hilarion had increased the strictness of his asceticism with the result that "his ardent imagination became his ruling faculty" and having physically isolated himself from society, the monastic environment "contributed to cherish and to perpetuate the religious melancholy and gloomy enthusiasm of his character" (76). Hilarion exhibits all the signs of a future saint: the local populace experiences miraculous healings from touching his clothing, and his piety surpasses even that of his so-called superiors. Everyone is impressed with the degree to which he devotes himself to his priestly role and all assume his religious enthusiasm signifies divine favor:

> "Such was the veneration he had established for his character, by the austerity of his life, and the superiority of his genius, by the rank he had sacrificed, and the dignity he had retained, that his associates sought not in natural or moral causes for the source of effects so striking and so extraordinary." They conclude that God will perform a miracle through the young priest." (76)

He has a supernatural vision confirming his belief that he has a divinely impelled mission to convert the benighted idolaters of India. Consequently, he embarks on his mission with a high level of enthusiasm as well as a staunch belief that his success is a foregone conclusion. Because Hilarion is deemed the most pious and self-denying of his fellow Franciscans, and because he has influential family connections, he is selected for the important mission of furthering the spread of Christianity in India.

The reader understands Hilarion's political and personal motives for undertaking the mission to India and is prepared for the complications that will inevitably arise as a result of his enthusiasm and his ignorance of the true motive behind Christian ministries, as Owenson has explained, service to one's community. Lacking the social affections that can productively channel his energy, Hilarion seems destined to act out the narrative of forceful conquest. In this way Hiliarion became a kind of tool in the service of colonialism. His desire to spread the light of Christianity among Indians has sprung from his sense of pious duty but he was mostly ignorant about the evils of colonization (Porter 367–91).

When Hilarion arrives in India, the missionary narrates his own actions with reference to two authoritative Western models: the emperor Alexander the Great, the disseminator of classical Greek civilization, and St. Francis Xavier, the sixteenth-century Jesuit priest who is known as one of the greatest of all Christian missionaries. Hilarion has every reason to believe that he will live up to the expectations placed upon him by his religious order to outdo Xavier, who a century earlier had visited India, where he performed miracles, made hundreds of conversions, baptizing them into the Roman church. The fact that Hilarion, who burns with ambition to do great deeds in the name of Christianity, identifies with both the military conqueror and the saint reveals the paradox of missionary imperialism. Owenson shows how the narrative of mission and Christian conversion blurs with that of imperial conquest when she indicates that Hilarion's first glimpse of the Indian subcontinent brings to his mind the image of the Mongol conqueror Tamerlane and the military feats of Mohammed. In his mind, he conflates the roles of conqueror and evangelist, especially as he invokes the prophet/warrior Mohammed as a model. As a religious missionary, he should have concentrated on his role as an evangelist but unconsciously he visualizes himself in the role of conqueror. When he embarks on his journey from Goa to Kashmir, he sees the landscape

through the eyes of Alexander the Great, as a territory to be conquered (Harding 158–60). His heart swells with ambition:

> "To penetrate into those regions, which the spirit of invasion, or the enterprise of commerce, had never yet reached; to pass that boundary, which the hallowed footstep of Christianity had never yet consecrated; to preach the doctrine of a self-denying faith, in the land of perpetual enjoyment; and, amidst the luxurious shades, which the Indian fancy contemplates as the model of its own heavenly Indra, to attack, in the birthplace of Brahma, the vital soul of a religion, supposed to have existed by its enthusiast votary beyond all area of human record, beyond all reach of human tradition, which had so long survived the vicissitudes of time, the shock of conquest, and the persecution of intolerance. . . . (83)"

In this excerpt Owenson implicitly praises Hinduism and critiques Christianity by alluding to the rhetoric of violence frequently associated with the imperial enterprise with her use of the verb "attack" and the phrase "spirit of invasion." In addition, the verb "penetrate" and the phrase "to pass that boundary" suggest the sexual violence that associates the site of colonization with rape. While such rhetorical markers tend to identify Hilarion with a traditional Western interpretation of the meeting of West and East, there is another, maybe more important, rhetoric that demands our attention: that of competing cultural ideologies and religious systems. Perhaps it is not surprising that to Hilarion's way of thinking, the purpose of his mission is to overthrow and defeat the false, idolatrous religion and to liberate the deluded enthusiasts from their superstitions. Hilarion, himself a consummate enthusiast, is less concerned with rescuing souls from the certainty of eternal damnation than with his own ability to triumph over a competing ideology. His yearning "to preach the doctrine of a self-denying faith" is quickly followed by the desire "to attack . . . the vital soul of a religion" which till then had withstood any and all attempts to dislodge it. Preaching will be his

weapon of conquest in the war of ideologies. The predominance of the verbs and nouns of invasion and conquest tend to liken his meeting with the east to a rape that involves great degree of violence. It shows him to be one who is for assault and victory not for love, compassion, and harmony.

Hilarion, who has missed the real point of rendering service to others, initiates his mission with a carefully calculated ploy that clearly aligns him with the role of conqueror rather than that of Christian minister. For his first public appearance, he joins a group of religious men who have come to declaim their views before the most powerful priest in the land, Luxima's grandfather, the Guru of Kashmir. In his outward appearance, he feigns accommodation to the culture of the Other, but only as part of his strategy of conquest. Owenson explains that he complies with local customs "in submission to those prejudices, which he could only hope finally to vanquish by previously respecting" (91). He is confident that his renowned eloquence and his imposing presence as the Pope's special representative and as the bearer of the light of Truth to this benighted and deluded people will win the victory. Hilarion is waging ideological warfare. He relies upon the power of rhetoric, his imposing personality, and his boundless enthusiasm to persuade and convert his listeners. To his unspeakable dismay, his preaching, which wrings earnest tears from his own eyes and gains the rapturous attention of the gathering, has only a momentary effect that is quickly annulled by the sensual spectacle of the Guru's religious procession. When summing up the content of the disputants, Owenson settles on one main failing of all of their doctrines, the error is that they are "too little connected with the true happiness of society" (93). Hilarion's enthusiasm blinds him to the value of social affections and their importance to the success of his mission. His failure to demonstrate the superiority of the Truth of Christianity through his brilliant oratory suggests that his conviction of Truth may not be the weapon that he assumed would enable him to defeat false ideologies. His acquaintance with the Hindu priestess,

Luxima, puts even more pressure on the narrative of conversion as conquest and of his role as Christian conqueror.

Hilarion first learns about Luxima from a native authority, the Pundit, who acts as the missionary's tutor and advisor. The Pundit explains that the beautiful priestess holds sway over a large following of devotees and were she to convert to Christianity, practically the whole nation would follow suit. "Once converted," the Pundit intimates, "her example would operate like a spell on her compatriots, and the follower of Brahma would fly from the altar of his ancient gods, to worship in that temple in which she would become a votarist" (98). To a large degree, the Pundit has already put into play the plot of seduction by marketing Luxima as a desirable conquest. He even suggests how Hilarion can gain access to her at her secluded compound. As though she needs to spell out the sexual undercurrent of the Pundit's remarks, Owenson's footnote to the text at this point refers to the violation of women during armed conflicts: "The women are so sacred in India, that even the common soldiery leaves them unmolested in the midst of slaughter and desolation" (98). The footnote is meant to reinforce the concept of Luxima's purity, unapproachableness, as well as her high social rank, but it also exposes the narrative of sexual violation. Thus, the pundit himself is responsible for the future encounter and affinity between Hilirion and Luxmia. He inspires in Hilirion a desire to approach Luxima and use her for his own purpose which paves the way for the violence and the fall that would soon follow.

Hilarion relies upon his pious example, inspired preaching, and aura of authority as he wages ideological war against Hindu idolatry. His confidence is shaken, however, when the native audience meets his rhetorical arsenal with indifference. It is not that Christian doctrine is rejected or that Hilarion himself is ridiculed, rather interactions within the contact zone do not operate according to an established cultural paradigm. The Indians misread Hilarion's actions and intentions just as he misreads theirs. Increasingly frustrated over his lack of

progress in converting the native population, the missionary comes to place all of his expectations on bringing Luxima into the fold. The distinctions among political conquest, sexual conquest, and religious conversion lose definition for him as he struggles to make sense of his role in the absence of familiar cultural indices.

When Hilarion discovers that his role as Truth's conquering agent is irrelevant in the face of both the realities of a non-Western culture and his passionate but ill-fated love for a Hindu woman, the priestess Luxima, he abandons the conquest narrative in both its political and religious manifestations. That is, he ceases to liken his actions and purpose to those of the historical figures who inspire his imagination St. Francis Xavier, Alexander the Great, and the Prophet Muhammad, whom he especially admired for combining spiritual leadership with military prowess. He is instead forced to recognize that his personal failings his inability to suppress his passions and to remain untouched by the culture of the other make his original mission futile. Ammai explains that unable to reestablish his mission or to adapt to the changed circumstances, the missionary ultimately abandons his identification with the forces of political domination and cultural change and instead comes to see himself as the conquered rather than the conqueror: his passion for Luxima overpowers his self-control, and his efforts to establish his position as morally and spiritually superior are met with indifference from the native population (98-104). This is how the conqueror is conquered and his mission meets with frustration and tragic failure. It is not only his failure as an individual enthusiast in the role of an avowed evangelist but the failure of the entire colonizing mission characterized by military might and imperial arrogance.

Hilarion's failure is magnified by his powerlessness to prevent either the narrative of Christian conversion or of mutual affection from being misread by those around him as a narrative of sexual violation. Despite his assertions of the innocent nature of his relationship with Luxima, members of both cultures misconstrue his actions and his character. Bellenoit

argues that Missionaries at that time were guided specifically by two ways: first, they need to demolish the established structure of Hindu society, and second, they would expand Christianity in the name of education and civilization (269-94). The local arm of The Inquisition tries him and finds him guilty of seducing a newcomer, and the local Indian population considers him to be the seducer of a Hindu priestess. Such a misreading is inevitable due to the eroticized and Orientalized view of the Other that dominates Western colonial thought. While the accusations of sexual misbehavior may indeed be unjustified given Hilarion's exceptional self-discipline and rigid adherence to his priestly vows, his accusers rightly judge the erotic nature of his interest in the beautiful Hindu woman. Owenson's continual reference to the characters' enthusiasm as a defining and motivating force upon which the plot turns underscores how inescapable such an interpretation must be, given the discourse prevalent in the Romantic era that linked enthusiasm to unbridled sexuality and that eroticized the West's relation to the East. The west always saw the east as a feminine figure to be penetrated by the west seen as a symbol of masculinity. This stereotyping was a part of romantic orientalism and Hilarion's failure is by extension of that western romanticizing of the Orient.

One reason that the Missionary's narrative of conversion is misread as seduction is the discursive association of enthusiasm with sexual excess. Another reason for this misinterpretation is the lack of a suitable narrative framework in which to interpret cross-cultural relationships that do not fit the master/slave or conqueror/conquered models. The narrative of unity based upon opposite yet complementary qualities that Owenson attempts to establish at the beginning of the novel can never achieve the equilibrium required to sustain it because of the power differentials conventionally figured as inherent cultural disparities the lofty and commanding West versus the luxurious, subservient, and complaisant East.

In many ways, the novel reinscribes the Orientalist view of the East, although the characterization of Luxima goes beyond a mere stereotype. Owenson explicitly shows that the Franciscan priest and the Hindu prophetess are equally matched in birth, education, spiritual devotion, personal beauty, moral rectitude, and, of course, enthusiasm. Their attraction is mutual and their love grows with their deeper acquaintance. Although there are considerable, and even insurmountable, barriers to their finding happiness together, Owenson has characterized them as ideally matched for each other, not in a union of equals, but rather as complementary components of a global equation, with the West dominating the submissive East. It is not a relation of equals because one of the items in the binary opposition is privileged over the other. The east is treated as an underdog. The east is supine and malleable whereas the west is powerful and commanding:

> "Silently gazing, in wonder, upon each other, they stood finely opposed, the noblest specimens of the human species, as it appears in the most opposite regions of the earth; she, like the East, lovely and luxuriant; he, like the West, lofty and commanding: the one, radiant in all the luster, attractive in all the softness which distinguishes her native regions; the other, towering in all the energy, imposing in all the vigor, which marks his ruder latitudes: she, looking like a creature formed to feel and to submit; he, like a being created to resist and to command: while both appeared as the ministers and representatives of the two most powerful religions of the earth; the one no less enthusiastic in her brilliant errors, than the other confident in his immutable truth." (109)

The way that Owenson links personal, and by extension national, characteristics to geographical climate echoes prevailing attitudes, frequently appearing in travel literature, about the effects of climate on national character. Owenson's text, however, uses this concept to underscore the rigidity of cultural institutions that prevent a harmonious outcome to the

relationship and inevitably foster violence. Interestingly, the priest's confidence "in his immutable truth" is juxtaposed with the Hindu priestess's enthusiasm "in her brilliant errors," subtly calling into question the basis for the Western appropriation of "truth," since Hilarion's confidence in it actually derives from his own enthusiasm to the same extent that Luxima's enthusiasm drives her to embrace the "erroneous" doctrines of Hinduism.

In Owenson's characterization of Luxima as the colonized subject, it is as if she were measuring the distance of the fictional setting from the metropole in levels of enthusiasm. This is one means by which Owenson distinguishes her heroine as culturally different from the Europeans. Luxima represents an alternative spirituality, one that challenges Hilarion's assumptions. Furthermore, she exhibits a predisposition to sacrifice everything for love.

Owenson gives Luxima the title "Brachmachira," that is, a Hindu priestess who is widowed but still a virgin. We learn that her husband died before they could consummate the marriage. The young widow planned to bum herself alongside her husband's corpse on the funeral pyre but was dissuaded from committing *sati* by her grandfather, for she was his only living relative. Because of her Brahminical ancestry and her status as a virgin widow, she possesses the necessary qualifications to fulfill the duties of priestess.

Luxima is introduced to the reader as the culmination of a lavish religious spectacle. Owenson describes the Hindu priestess's procession with sensory images that privilege smell and hearing over sight. In fact, the priestess's "perfect form" is veiled, shrouded like one of the "splendid illusions" of her religion. The "mysterious charm" surrounding her person is enhanced by its symbolic representation in the exotic flowers that are the only ornaments permitted to adorn her, "the most sacred of vestals, the Prophetess and Brachmachira of Cashmire" (90). This flowery perfume seems to be indistinguishable from Luxima's own respiration, and both are considered sacred, as seen in Owenson's voluptuous, or to use her

own preferred term, *luxurious,* description. Luxima is compared to beautiful nature and she also represents the mystery that nature is supposed to symbolize:

> "Considered as the offspring of Brahma, as a ray of the divine excellence, the Indians of the most distinguished rank drew back as she approached, lest their very breath should pollute that region of purity her respiration consecrated; and the odour of the sacred flowers, by which she was adorned, was inhaled with an eager devotion, as if it purified the soul, it almost seemed to penetrate." (90-1).

Owenson characterizes Luxima as a perfectly integrated body and spirit, a woman who is at once sacred and sensuous, and whose worship of the Hindu god of love harmoniously incorporates mystic love and spiritual purity. The Pundit describes high caste Hindu women such as Luxima in these words: "Devoted to their husbands and their gods, religion and love make up the business of their lives" (96). Moreover, Luxima is presented as the embodiment of the lovely and luxuriant East, tantalizingly removed from everyday existence, yet potentially available for physical enjoyment and (sexual) conquest. In what appears to be a strategy to depict the heroine's cultural difference, Owenson employs contradictory descriptors for Luxima: ethereal and sensual, seraphic and womanly, fragile and imperious. At first, Luxima's character may seem confusing or contradictory, but that ambiguity is the effect for which Owenson is striving in this novel. Owenson creates an Orientalist aesthetic that goes beyond the predictable descriptions of exotic scenery and bizarre or quaint cultural practices of picturesque natives. The jarring juxtaposition of seemingly opposite qualities, for example the sensuality and purity ascribed to Luxima, indicates an alternative system of cultural valuation. Because Luxima's character does not fit any Western model, the reader cannot confidently predict her actions or responses. The reader therefore experiences some of the same uncertainty that a European visitor to India might feel, and the resulting cultural

discomfort contributes to the ambiguity embraced in the author's aesthetic conception of her exotic heroine.

Of course, the quality that most fits Luxima for her role as priestess is her religious enthusiasm, which Owenson describes as a kind of madness not abandonment of reason altogether but rather a state that privileges the senses over rationality:

> "Her enthusiasm once kindled, her imagination became disordered: believing herself inspired, she looked the immortality she fancied, and uttered rhapsodies in accents so impressive and so tender, and with emotions so wild, and yet so touching, that the mind no longer struggled against the imposition of the senses, and the spirit of fanatical zeal confirmed the influence of human loveliness." (10).

The bewitching Luxima is caught up in an enthusiasm that, like Hilarion's, is made visible by the performance of the rites of her priestly office an enthusiasm that overrides reason and isolates her from others. Yet unlike Hilarion, Luxima guiltlessly indulges in the sensual overload, as the reader also is encouraged to do. Consequently, Hilarion's opposite response to Luxima is doubly surprising.

After the exquisite depiction of Luxima's incomparable beauty and her festive entourage, a scene that is a delight to read, Owenson startles the reader with Hilarion's response to this same spectacle: he turns away in disgust at what he sees as a profane perversion of religious worship. Owenson clearly intends the reader to recognize Hilarion's perspective as a distortion of the foreign culture. The missionary's response differs from that of the Orientalist in an important respect: Hilarion finds the exotic sensuality disgusting rather than intoxicating or enchanting: he is "horror-struck" by the "impious rites" he has witnessed (100). Luxima symbolizes a spirituality that embraces the body rather than denigrates it, and this is one reason why Hilarion, the confirmed ascetic, reacts so violently to Eastern religious practice. While Hilarion counts on carrying his audience to his vision of

Truth on the wings of his own “brilliant enthusiasm” and “powerful eloquence” (87), Luxima instead gains the worshipful adoration of her compatriots through her enthusiastic sense of oneness with the deity through which she prophesies and manifests bodily her ecstatic condition. Hilarion is enchanted by Luxmia’s beauty but repulsed by the religious rites in the performance of which Luxima is involved. This is how Hilarion is torn between two aspects of Luxmia. This ambivalence is very baffling.

The circumstances under which Hilarion approaches Luxima make cross-cultural communication difficult. Under the influence of religious enthusiasm, the priest misreads Hindu spirituality as blasphemy, an error that inevitably results from Europe’s flawed arithmetic of dominance and subordination. Hilarion has long miscalculated the worth of social bonds and overvalued religious zeal. Being estranged from his own humanity, so to speak, he barely possesses the means to effect a change of heart in others since he is relatively unacquainted with his own.

Hilarion attempts to convert the priestess Luxima through preaching. But she, like the men in the temple, remains unconvinced, in spite of his earnestness. He gives her a translation of Scripture in hopes that the Word of God will accomplish what the word of man fails to bring about. Luxima, however, views the sacred text as just one of many and doesn’t recognize it as the ultimate Truth. Her apparent conversion, that later proves to be superficial, comes about through more intimate contact with the missionary and as a result of his deeds rather than his words. Hilarion saves Luxima’s pet fawn from an attacking wolf, but is injured in the struggle. Luxima discovers his condition and attends to his wounds herself. She is attracted by his bravery and his purity of heart, and out of personal loyalty she agrees to be his follower. In an effort to contain a relationship that excites his passion, Hilarion deliberately narrates the conquest of the priestess’s heart as a conquest of her soul when he insists upon calling her “my daughter” (119). Owenson makes it clear that he stands in

relation to Luxima as a lover, for he admits his obsession with the beautiful Hindu, and he is unable to effectively disguise his amorous feelings. Luxima challenges Hilarion's narrative of spiritual mentor and religious proselyte in the following speech in which she questions his determination to place her in a convent. Hilarion is blinded by a false sense of his own heightened superiority and fails to understand the realities of other people and their cultures:

> "Thou sayest that it is the law of thy religion that thou obeyest, when thou shalt send me from thee: but, if it is a virtue in thy religion to stifle the best and purest feelings of the heart, that nature implants, how shall I believe in or adopt its tenets? I, whose nature, whose faith itself, was love how from thee shall I learn to subdue my feelings, who first taught me to substitute a human, for a heavenly passion? Alas, I have but changed the object, the devotion is still the same; and thou art loved by the outcast, as the Priestess once loved Heaven only." (230-1).

Rather than saving Luxima from idolatry, Hilarion has actually confirmed her in it, through her adoration of him. He is unwilling to admit the erotic basis for her adherence to him, and he resists the validity of the feelings that nature implants in his heart, because he must avert the crime of breaking his priestly vow of chastity. Additionally, he may see his own fate mirrored in hers: the logical outcome of the excesses associated with an enthusiasm that takes the subject out of himself or herself. Such an unhinging of the self leaves the subject vulnerable to unregulated passion and at risk of being excluded from society.

Hilarion, therefore, clings to the narrative of conversion even when it is clear that it no longer applies because only within that narrative can he retain his ideals of Truth and goodness and his sense of purpose and agency. In his attempt to counter the consequences of opening himself to such powerful emotions, he persists in reading Luxima's abandonment of her religious office as a conversion to Christianity, rather than as her passionate devotion to him as the chosen object of her desire. Luxima follows him not because she has become a

Christian but because she is devoted to him as an enchanting individual. He fails to understand this and interprets it as her conversion. In a desperate effort to frame the narrative of his actions within the discourse of spiritual, rather than sensual, love, Hilarion admonishes the agents of the Inquisition regarding their treatment of Luxima, as they are both taken into custody:

> ". . . guard and protect this sacred, this consecrated vestal! look at her! otherwise than pure and innocent, you dare not believe her: know then, also, she is a Christian Neophyte, who has received the Baptismal rites, and who is destined to set a bright example to her idolatrous nation, and to become the future spouse of God." (236)

In his speech, Hilarion emphasizes Luxima's virginal purity, and by extension, his own. Yet he is powerless to prevent innocence from being read as experience, and cross-cultural bonds of affection as coercion and submission, that is, as sexual violation.

Hilarion, the monastic ascetic and religious enthusiast who mortified the flesh and scorned human emotion, quite naturally becomes the impassioned lover hopelessly barred from uniting with his beloved and tormenting himself in familiar, yet unanticipated, ways. Owenson capitalizes on the lovers' anxious plight by dwelling on the painfulness of their emotional struggle, a strategy which both heightens the erotic tone of the novel and also contributes to the overall theme of violence resulting from enthusiasm.

The text achieves an erotic thrill through the narration of Hilarion's nearly ceaseless exertions to contain his sexual attraction to Luxima by invoking the rhetoric of spiritual devotion. In a passage that typifies the narrative of sublimation, Owenson describes the priest's determination to "resign forever" the object of "his tyrannic passion," that is, Luxima. "To strengthen him in his intention," he reminds himself of the stark contrast between his former state of "sacred peace" and his present "self-debasement" (158). The passage continues:

> "He remembered that he was the minister of Heaven; devoted, by vows the most awful and the most binding, to its cause alone; and that he had come into perilous and distant regions, to preach its truths, not by precept only, but by example, and to substitute, in the land of idolatry, the religion of \the Spirit, for that of the senses. He sought pertinaciously to deceive himself, and to mistake the feelings which rose from the pangs of jealousy, for the visitation of conscience. . .. He sought to believe . . . that Heaven itself . . . had snatched him from an abyss of crime, towards which, an ardent and unguarded zeal for its sacred cause had insensibly seduced him. . .. Religion became debtor to the passions she opposed, and the ardour of his devotion borrowed its warmth and energy from the overflowing of those human feelings it sought to combat and to destroy." (158-9)

Owenson intensifies the eroticism by suggesting that it stems from the enthusiast's confusion of the categories of spiritual devotion and sexual desire. Furthermore, Hilarion's body is sexualized through a kind of hyper-chastity, the deliciousness of experiencing the agonies of unfulfilled desires in an autoerotic isolation, either in solitary flights of imagination or else in the presence of the beloved, while maintaining a chaste distance, for the most part. Hilarion and Luxima enact Orientalism's eroticization of the mysterious, because distant, Other. The purity and beauty of chastity is so enthralling that it ironically appears to exude the fragrance of erotic fascination. The imagery of violence associated with Hilarion's efforts to gain control over his passions, and articulated in his desire to combat and to destroy human feelings, illustrates the nebulous distinction between love and violation that underlies the narrative and works against the harmonious union of the two lovers.

In *The Missionary,* Owenson presents the reality of cross-cultural relationships as complex, fraught with ideological tensions than could be readily resolved through the symbolic marriage that normally would cement the unification or blending of cultures and

facilitate the bridging of the cultural gap. Such a remedy is ruled out from the get-go both protagonists would have to abandon completely the cultural markers, the fundamental narratives of their subjectivities, that make up their identities in order to enact the necessary compromise that would facilitate marriage. Because marriage never seems to be a viable option for the characters, who are too tightly wedded to conflicting ideologies to make concessions, this episode of reciprocal adoration becomes encoded as a process of violation rather than the development of mutual understanding and love. Even before the relationship between Hilarion and Luxima becomes an object of public comment, the reader is prompted to recognize its fundamentally destructive nature. Hilarion assumes an air of cool detachment in order to mask his ardor. Secretly pleased at the signs of affection he detects in the young woman's face and manner, Hilarion attempts to disguise his own feelings with hollow protestations of his lack of personal interest: "Oh, no! believe me, Luxima, that, between thee and me, nothing can now, or ever will, exist, but the sacred cause which first led me to thee" (149). His declaration of indifference prompts Luxima to retort: "I oft am sad, and oft regret the glorious death they robbed me of; for, oh! Had I expired upon my husband's pyre, in celestial happiness with him I should have enjoyed the bliss of Heaven while fourteen Indras reign" (150). This reference to the violent death of the self-immolating *sati* underscores the injuriousness of this relationship. This shows that Luxima has not really been converted because even in the company of Hilarion she is engrossed with the idea of sati which is integral to Hindu religious practice. Outwardly, she may appear to be Hilarion's but she is a Hindu to the core.

The failure of other characters to identify this encounter as a love story, and the subsequent failure of the marriage plot, can be read as an indictment of British colonial policies and practices, of the mono-cultural arrogance that appears to drive missionary Christianity, and of the prevailing systems of gender stereotypes. Wright articulates this

notion well when she writes, "the impossibility of marriage is used to reinforce Owenson's point about the disciplinary pressure of cultural habit" (37). This pressure, exerted from political, religious, and gender systems, leads to an eruption in the form of a violation of some kind. Owenson's novel seems to suggest that violation of the Other undercuts the success of any overtures to make compromises and precludes the harmony that marriage symbolizes. Hilarion refuses to compromise his reputation by transgressing his religious vows nor will he forsake the cultural system in which he holds authority, that is, the Catholic Church and European social hierarchies. Luxima agrees to be called a Christian in order to remain with Hilarion, although she ultimately identifies herself as a Hindu. The capacity to compromise and to achieve balance is a form of self-regulation unknown to the confirmed enthusiast. So, too, the disproportionate distribution of power within the contact zone of colonial space circumscribes the individual's ability to establish relationships of equality across cultural lines.

The other characters' misreading of Hilarion and Luxima's mutual love as seduction and violation exposes serious ambiguities in the missionary imperial romance. The text illustrates a steady erosion of the distinction between religious enthusiasm and sensuality and the breakdown of the meta-narrative of the civilizing mission into the foolish narrative of violent conquest. This failure of civilizing mission is a great setback to the arrogance of imperial venture.

Ironically, the seduction narrative that Hilarion tries so desperately to counter by his own assertions to the contrary is a surprisingly accurate description of his own experience in India. When he first approaches Luxima, he is moved by her appearance as she offers reverence to the setting sun, "while all the enthusiasm of a false, but ardent devotion, sparkled in her upturned eye, and diffused itself over her seraphic countenance" (112).

Aroused by these physical effects of spiritual devotion that he witnesses in Luxima, Hilarion responds with similar passion:

> "It was then that a zeal no less enthusiastic, a devotion no less fervid, animated the Christian Priest. He darted forward, and seized an arm thus raised in impious homage. He discarded the usual mildness of his evangelic feelings; with vehemence he exclaimed, "Mistaken being! know you what you do? that profanely you offer to the Created, that which belongs to the Creator only!" (112)

Unwittingly, Hilarion has broken a cultural taboo in approaching the priestess and touching her. While his action is motivated by his own fervent religious devotion, nonetheless he accosts Luxima with uncharacteristic vehemence. She naturally responds with indignation and her words make clear the sense of violation that she experiences: "Depart hence: that, by an instant ablution in these consecrated waters, I may efface the pollution of thy touch; leave me, that I may expiate a crime, for which I must else innocently suffer" (112). The fact that Luxima labels his zealous gesture a crime exposes the Missionary to the allegation of sexually motivated aggression. Luxima's confidence that by instant ablution in these consecrated waters she can annul the effects of bodily pollution shows the status of her body as a site, not of contention between the spiritual, emotional, and physical, but of harmony. In fact, this successful integration of body and spirit elevates the female and by extension, the feminized East as the locus of health, wholeness, and naturalness, in contrast with the self-conflicted male, whose practice of rigid subjugation of the body comes to be seen as unnatural, even dangerous.

Hilarion's religious enthusiasm threatens to spill over into sexual aggression, but also presents a related peril: the unnatural eroticization of the body that results from severe asceticism. While at the monastery, Hilarion obsessively exposes himself to extreme climatic and physical conditions, in addition to the rigorous bodily discipline he practices in

observance of his monastic vows. Owenson implies that his severe regimen has in no way diminished his physical attractiveness, and she describes him as a paragon of European masculinity: “never did a mortal form present a finer image of what man was, when God first created him after his own likeness, and sin had not yet effaced the glorious impress of the Divinity. Nature stood honoured in this most perfect model of her power” (77). In fact, his austerity has enhanced his virility, as exemplified later in the novel when he kills a wolf with his crosier and bare hands! Numerous references to Hilarion’s conscious effort to repress feelings of bodily pleasure foreground the celibate male body as a site of contending forces. Self-denial, benevolence, and self-control are constantly under attack from self-consciousness, pride, and unregulated flights of imagination. In describing Hilarion’s newly aroused amorousness, Owenson draws the reader’s attention to the physical manifestations of powerful emotion. Hilarion is unable to maintain a balance between flights of fancy and conscious thinking. The repressed emotions and desires threatened to erupt from time to time and throw him off balance:

> “Nature had now breathed upon his feelings her vivifying spirit: and as some pleasurable and local sensation, which, at first, quivers in the lip, and mantles on the cheek, gradually diffuses itself through the frame, and communicates a vibratory emotion to every nerve and fibre; so, the sentiment, which had at first, imperceptibly stolen on his heart, now mastered and absorbed his life.” (145)

The continuation of this passage explains that Hilarion has not relinquished any part of his moral firmness, for “to feel, was still with him to be weak to love, a crime and to resist, perfection” (145). In fact, it is the pleasurable agony of resistance that would focus his attention more narrowly on his own physicality that approaches the erotic. He takes resistance to temptation as a sign of perfection but succumbs to the call of the erotic:

> "And the painful vibration, between the natural feeling and conscientious principle, left him a prey to those internal and harassing conflicts, which rose and increased, in proportion to the respective exercise and action of a passionate impulse, and a rigid sense of duty". (145)

Owenson's text makes use of the dramatic tension caused by Hilarion's adamant determination to fulfill his priestly vows even when tormented by his all-consuming passion for Luxima.

After his arrival in Kashmir he observes the expected physical austerities associated with a certain holy week, and he decides that he must intensify his penance by depriving himself of the company of his "dangerous Neophyte" (145), Luxima. Owenson deftly connects physical penance used to gain a heightened spiritual state with that used to enhance erotic feelings: "the restlessness with which he submitted to the severe and voluntary penance enhanced every pleasure, and exaggerated every enjoyment he had relinquished" (145-6). The text's focus on the male celibate body can be viewed as a sign of Hilarion's enthusiasm that not only mistakes eros for agape, but also places the source of erotic pleasure in his own deliberately intensified sensations heightened through his imagination rather than in the nominal object of his desire.

The Missionary throws the center of conflict away from the contested feminized territory of the colonized and onto the fetishized male body of the colonizer and would be conqueror. Ultimately it is his, and not the woman's, defenses that are penetrated and whose resistance is swept away by erotic passion. Hilarion sees himself as the victim of powerful emotions he cannot control, possessed by the thought of his beloved Luxima.

The reversal of gender roles evident in the priest's seduction by the adoring priestess persists in the novel with imagery that links Hilarion with the self immolating Hindu widow. In many Western accounts of widow burnings, the event is represented as a religious rite

whereby a Hindu widow demonstrates her piety and also her devotion to her deceased husband. This cultural practice both horrified and fascinated outsiders and, as Lata Mani states, grew to be seen in Britain "as a potent signifier of the oppression of all Indian women, and thereby of the degradation of India as a whole" (2). Missionaries, some colonial government officials, and other Westerners frequently tried to dissuade the women who were preparing to undergo *sati* and these observers would sometimes record their intense frustration when they were unsuccessful, helplessly standing by while the woman was burnt alive on the funeral pyre. Such helplessness in the face of violence finds a powerful echo in the closing scenes of the novel, where Hilarion cannot forestall Luxima's self-sacrificing gesture.

When the two lovers first speak openly about their mutual passion and their need to resist it, Luxima is the first to insist upon the necessity of dying in order to escape the shame of having offended her god and suffering her "nation's curse and shame" (Owenson170). She exclaims to Hilarion:

> "Oh! no; 't were best, ere that, I died! for now I shall become a link between thy soul and a better, purer state of things; spotless and unpolluted, I shall reach the realms of peace, and a part of thyself will have gone before thee to the bosom of that great Spirit, of which we are alike emanations. . . .'t were best that now I died; and that I died for thee". (170)

Luxima declares that their love for each other has united them spiritually: "there is now but one soul between us" and that "to preserve that soul pure and untainted . . . let us remember our respective vows, and immolate ourselves to their performance" (178-9). Owenson again employs the image of immolation when Hilarion vows to relinquish the woman he loves: "The vow had passed his lips; it was registered in heaven; and nature almost sunk beneath the

sacrifice which religion had exacted." In the next sentence this sacrifice is termed "the great immolation" (182).

A more literal representation of *sati* occurs after Luxima's excommunication as a result of her apostasy and for "supporting the infidel in her arms a circumstance sufficient to confirm every suspicion of her guilt" (187). This banishment necessitates her flight from Kashmir under the protection of the Christian priest. As the unfortunate pair travel through a harsh landscape, a wildfire arises, and Hilarion, who has left Luxima sleeping by a brook while he searches for shelter, literally passes through the fire in order to return to his beloved, determined to risk his own life in an effort to protect her. During Owenson's lifetime, Westerners frequently read into the practice of *sati* the Romantic notion of the wife preferring death to life without her beloved, or the Hindu woman's conviction that her soul would be eternally united with her husband's in heaven. Owenson encodes this incident as providential by having the hero credit God for revealing to him the means by which he could protect himself from the flames, the fire-resistant mountain flax growing nearby:

> "At this sight, the providential care of the Divinity, who everywhere presents an antidote to that evil which may eventually become the bane of human preservation, smote his heart and raising his soul and eyes in thankfulness to Heaven, he wrapped round his uncovered head, the fibres of this singular and indestructible fossil". (212)

Hilarion does not come through the ordeal entirely unscathed, for he suffers some bums a testimony to the material suffering of the self-immolating Hindu widow.

The most obvious parallel between Hilarion and the *sati* is drawn at the climax of the story, when the priest, condemned by the Jesuit controlled Inquisition, is to be burned at the stake. The guiltless victim, who kneels in prayer before the pyre, is quite naturally likened to a Christian martyr, whose "innocence was not proof against the testimony of his interested

accusers" (246). Yet the scene of martyrdom becomes the site of *sati* when Luxima arrives and declares her intention to bum with her beloved:

> "She murmured the Gayatra, pronounced by the Indian women before their voluntary immolation, now looked wildly round her, and, catching a glimpse of the Missionary's figure, through the waving of the flames, behind which he struggled in the hands of his guards, she shrieked, and in a voice scarcely human, exclaimed, 'My beloved, I come! Brahma receive and eternally unite our spirits!' She sprang upon the pile: the fire, which had only kindled in that point where she stood, caught the light drapery of her robe a dreadful death assailed her . . . the Missionary rushed forward . . . he snatched the victim from a fate he sought not himself to avoid . . . the flames of her robe were extinguished in his close embrace. . ." (249)

Initially, Hilarion resembles the *sati* who struggles against the approaching flames and must be restrained by those officiating, but then acts the part of the Western male rescuer as he snatches Luxima from the fire and extinguishes her burning garments. The effect of Luxima's actions, however, is to rescue Hilarion from his fiery death by the diversion that results from her appearance in front of an already restless and resentful native audience and also by receiving the knife blow aimed at the missionary by one of the Jesuits, "the hand of fanaticism" (249).

Hilarion and the Pundit attend the dying priestess and then cremate her corpse. In spite of Hilarion's declaration that he shall die along with his beloved "And if thy hour is come, mine also is arrived, for triumphing over the fate which would divide us: we shall die, as we dared not live together!" (256) he cannot dictate his own fate, especially not by committing the crime of self-murder. Curiously, the description of Hilarion's subsequent isolation and consecrated devotions "he prayed at the confluence of rivers, at the rising and the setting of the sun" (260) closely resembles the piety, simplicity, and humility of the ideal

life prescribed for an Indian widow who does not ascend the pyre. Blaming himself for Luxima's violent death, the missionary abandons his position within the ranks of the oppressing and imitates the posture of the oppressed.

After Luxima's death, Hilarion apparently leaves the Christian fold when he pursues a hermit existence dedicated to the memory of his beloved, who was "the deity of his secret worship" (261). His idolatry could be construed as either resembling hagiolatry or Hindu polytheism or some blending of the two. In any case, Hilarion's conversion is an identity-making gesture that signals his shift in allegiance from the oppressors to the oppressed. The significance of this gesture lies in how it functions within the metanarratives that the novel has invoked. The failure of the mission and Hilarion's subsequent isolation derail the narrative of historical progress, in which superior Europeans nobly undertake the task of civilizing "heathen" nations. From a different standpoint, however, Hilarion's conversion indicates the kind of humility and change of heart expected of a Christian who follows God's plan of salvation. What may look like personal failure may in fact be a positive sign within the providential plot.

Hilarion's retreat into his hermit cave and Luxima's tragic death should not be construed as indications that the characters have somehow forfeited divine favor or deserved divine retribution. Thomas Vargish explains that within the "decorum" of the providential worldview the virtuous may not always prosper in the way the reader may wish, nevertheless, the suffering and even death of the innocent are "providential," in the sense that these are not meaningless trials. Vargish refers to Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa,* in which the heroine's fate seems unjust, given her innocence and goodness. After the unscrupulous Lovelace rapes Clarissa, she gradually fades out of material existence and dies. "She transcends her circumstances and their temporal contexts," writes Vargish. "In effect she leaves the concrete, empirical world, the world of the novel. . . . Clarissa learns that 'God almighty would not let

me depend for comfort upon any but Himself.' That knowledge, no doubt, represents the providential intention for Clarissa" (46). Similarly, the failures of Owenson's protagonists reveal something of the providential intention for their situation.

Hilarion does not live up to his ideal as Truth's conquering agent over entrenched idolatry, a failing that actually brings him more closely in touch with his own humanity. Yet he fails on another level. Although he has won Luxima as his proselyte, his spiritual "daughter," he cannot shield her from the violent consequences that befall her for consenting to his spiritual tutelage and guidance. The man's providential duty is to provide for and protect those entrusted to his care. Writing of the men who add to Clarissa's suffering rather than defend her innocence, Vargish says: "Lovelace betrays the decorum, the true order of things, in which he would protect and honor the innocent Like Clarissa's father he betrays his proper identity in the providential design by attempting to arrogate the power of providence" (45). Hilarion, of course, intends to protect Luxima, and his failure to do so points equally to flawed cultural systems as to his personal flaws.

The failure of the priest's "brilliant enthusiasm" and "powerful oratory" to convince others of the Truth of his ideology points to the defectiveness of a monocultural perspective or platform to effect reform. Unable to produce any conversions to Christianity through his spectacular oratory, Hilarion learns the inadequacy of rhetoric to change material conditions, a lesson doubly reinforced by the futility of calling Luxima "daughter," as though that appellation could inoculate him from feelings of a lover, and by the ineffectiveness of his public declaration of their sexual innocence, which the community considers fraudulent Owenson's text suggests that Truth lies not in ideologies but within the human heart, that is, in the affective qualities that draw individuals into community with one another the social bonds that regulate enthusiasm for the greater good.

Luxima's timely appearance at the scene of the public punishment of a condemned heretic quite literally confirms Hilarion's earlier declaration that he looks to her for his redemption. Owenson describes Luxima darting through the crowd of spectators to reach Hilarion as though she were a form of energy rather than a bodily entity. For the length of two and a half paragraphs, Luxima remains nameless and, significantly, genderless. She is "a form scarcely human, darting with die velocity of lightning . . . thus bright and aerial as it stood, it looked like a spirit sent from Heaven" (248). The appearance of this "singular phantom" is thought by the Christians to be the sign of a "miracle, wrought for the salvation of a persecuted martyr, whose innocence was asserted by the firmness and fortitude with which he met a dreadful fate" (248, 249). The Hindus respond to Luxima's ethereal appearance in similar fashion, viewing her as "the fancied *herald* of the tenth *Avatar*, announcing vengeance to the enemies of their religion" (emphasis in original, 249). In the eyes of both cultures, she appears an agent of Providence, sent to intervene in human affairs in order to establish justice. Luxima's singular appearance comes from both the ethereal quality that would have her resemble a disembodied spirit and also from the seemingly contradictory symbolism of the crucifix she wears at her bosom and the mark on her forehead indicating her affiliation with Hinduism.

With these signs of ambiguity regarding Luxima's identity, Owenson heightens the dramatic effect of the heroine's sudden appearance. Hilarion responds to her arrival with surprise and also reinforces Luxima's composite identity by recognizing her as "his disciple! his mistress! the Pagan priestess the Christian Neophyte" (249). Luxima's seemingly miraculous arrival just before Hilarion is to be executed is a plot development that readers would accept as an indication of the workings of providence in the affairs of men and women. Yet, Owenson is compelled in the next chapter to revisit the causality of the novel's climax in order to demystify Luxima's role. The narrator explains that Luxima sees the Inquisitorial

procession heading toward the site of execution and recognizes Hilarion as one of the prisoners; consequently, the distraught heroine rushes out of her room to join her beloved. Here the text emphasizes Luxima's active participation in driving forward the ensuing events and reinforces woman's ability to challenge social injustices and to marshal the energies of personal devotion for social change. Luxima's initiative is part of the larger providential framework that has brought the lovers together, a fact Hilarion acknowledges when he tells her as they flee the site of execution, "The Providence which has hitherto miraculously preserved us, may still make us the object of its care" (253). The narrator confirms this supernatural attention by affirming "it was the light of heaven that guided him" to the haven where he would witness his beloved's most profound prophesy, her utopian vision for a community based on compromise and respect rather than conversion and violence.

Chapter 3

Conclusion: Privileging Luxima

Owenson's decision to retitle the novel *Luxima, the Prophetess, A Tale of Indian* for the 1849 revised edition draws attention to the heroine's capacity to drive the action of the story as well as to her role as a prophet, that is, her position of spiritual authority, which is largely derived from an enthusiasm that connects body and spirit. Freeman argues that Luxima's religious practice leads to productive social engagement rather than to repression of the self and sterile isolation which was the cause behind Hilirion fall from grace as made clear towards the end of the narratives (23).

Luxima, much more than Hilarion, takes action that tends to promote the social welfare. For example, her religious charity takes practical shape in the shelters for travelers that she caused to be built while serving as Brachmachira (207). Her decision to attend to Hilarion's wounds on several occasions and thereby to transgress religious taboos of physical contact illustrates how Luxima values human practice over cultural tradition, as does her earlier choice to forego *sati* and acquiesce to her grandfather's wish to preserve her life for the sake of the family.

In the character of the female patriot, Luxima stands for the practice of maintaining competing loyalties, loyalties that the novel identifies as uniquely women to negotiate. At the end of the novel when Hilarion supports the quickly expiring body of his beloved, he knows that the bright destiny he had envisioned for Luxima as the means to convert an idolatrous nation cannot come to pass. Luxima offers an alternative narrative that blends the utopian aspects of the missionary project with the Edenic qualities that Owenson associates with Hinduism's intimate connection with the natural world. Luxima presents an ideal of peaceful coexistence, cooperation, and tolerance a vision that is dependent upon the willingness of the two men, Hilarion and the Pundit, who receive her dying request to disseminate the account

of her friendship with and ill-fated love for the missionary. Moreover, she projects for Hilarion an active role-mediating between the two cultures, when she addresses him with her dying breath. O'Connor states that This places Luximia's greatness above Hilarion. The scene of her death underlines her nobility even in her death (24).

Luxima's dying wish is that her lover will be inspired by her sacrifice, and that his actions will memorialize her existence and his words will disseminate a truth embodied in her life story. What her wish shows is that individual passion transcends all social limitations, boundaries, and descriptors. HERSON and Herson remarks the Hindu priestess ultimately reaffirms her cultural identity as a Hindu but voices her undiminished love for the missionary and characterizes her separate loyalties with the metaphor that distinguishes "mind" and "heart." For Luxima, these are not competing affiliations, for she has already successfully practiced the integration of body and spirit as priestess of a religion of love that embraces sensuality (37).

Luxima recognizes her ambiguous status as a both a Hindu and Christian martyr. She interprets her self-sacrifice as a miracle that redeems Hilarion's life, preserving him from immanent death. In fact, Luxima has made a number of sacrifices, prompted by her love for the Missionary. First, she offers her hands to Hilarion as a gesture of reconciliation, when she thinks she has offended him, in spite of the severe consequences of breaking the taboo of being touched. She has forfeited her caste and country in order to be his follower, and she does not make that sacrifice lightly, for it has caused her almost unspeakable suffering, physically, morally, socially, and spiritually. Lew mentions that Luxima makes an interesting Christ figure because of her gender and her profession of her Hindu faith. The outcome she hopes from the narrative of her life is that Brahmins and Christians will practice brotherly love, the same message lesson of the New Testament, the scriptures that she characterized as filled with holy love (49). Luxima's desire for reconciliation and her emphasis on the

peaceful coexistence of two cultures runs counter to Hilarion's unconscious desire for conquest and domination.

Luxima's utopian vision requires concessions from all parties: Hindus must abandon the caste system, and Christians must temper their zeal, adopt toleration by recognizing that God has shed his mercy on Hindus as well as Christians. Owenson here identifies prejudices that make cross-cultural relationships next to impossible, but these are also constituent tenets that define Hindus and Christians. In order for Luxima's ideal to be realized, the cultural markers of Hindu and Christian would have to be relinquished in favor of a common humanity that transcends such distinctions. Luxima believes that her story illustrates such transcendence, empowered by her pure passion for the priest. She requests that Hilarion tell of her suffering and his own failure to convert her and to save her life. In fact, the text suggests that conversion is unnecessary because Luxima is a natural Christian, as seen in her martyrdom, her practice of a religion of brotherly love, and her invocation of Brahma in terms and under circumstances that leave the reader to believe her god is really the Almighty Christian God.

Luxima's self-sacrifice illustrates a romantic ideal of the transforming power of sexual love to overcome cultural barriers, but also reproduces the disturbing pattern of the expendability of the native for the sake of the European's redemption. Although Luxima's death references both the Christian narrative of martyrdom and the colonial narrative of *sati,* ultimately her sacrifice becomes meaningful only in the utopian projection of human society elevated above religious and cultural distinctions, where benevolence and universal brotherhood prevail. The men, however, fail to adhere to Luxima's vision: Hilarion becomes a recluse and abandons narrative and agency altogether. Rather than submitting to Luxima's plea that he "live for" her by performing the work of reconciliation, he appears to live as her, remaining apart from the world, praying "at the confluence of rivers, at the rising and the

setting of the sun" as the priestess had done (260). Luxima is "the deity of his secret worship" (261), for an urn containing her ashes, his cross stained with her blood, and her Brahminical necklace comprise his altar, an indication that the distinctions between Hindu and Christian have lost their significance for him. Hilarion's withdrawal into isolation ensures that his enthusiasm remains quarantined: it's potential to engender violence has been neutralized. This points to the idea that Hilarion fails utterly as an evangelist and comes out in the color of conqueror. This is a failure of west which he symbolically represents. His asceticism betrays him and Luxmia's sacrifice and desire for harmony helps her get the better of Hilarion. This privileging of Luxmia is by extension respect for the colonized India and Ireland which were under the yoke of British imperialism.

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