

In *Union Street*, however, separation and attachment are in conflict within the mind of the individual woman. The issue of separation and attachment threatens the entire community through the preservation of male supremacy. The fact that society does not allow women to feel dignity in being who they are puts an end to what Gilligan sees as the natural transition. Although the gap between male separation and female attachment is not depicted as a threat in *Union Street* – women unconsciously strive for both separation and attachment simultaneously – it is clear that this society has created another problem: that of denying women altogether.

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Some New Feminist Readers

A number of very useful collections of Feminist studies have been published recently, some of them completely new and others reissues of already established works. Of the latter, *The Feminist Reader*, edited by Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (Macmillan, 1997) goes into its second, successful edition. A much more comprehensive American collection, which also appears in a revised edition, is *Feminisms: an anthology of literary theory and criticism*, edited by Robyn R. Warhol & Diane Price Herndl (Macmillan, 1997).

Two new additions are to be particularly recommended however. *The Second Wave: a reader in Feminist theory*, edited by Linda Nicholson (Routledge, 1997), contains many of the major essays of Feminist theory of the past 40 years. An even more ambitious collection is *Feminisms*, edited by Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires (Oxford Readers, 1997), which covers almost every aspect of the ever-widening field of Feminist theory and practice.

SHELLEY SAGUARO

Maria Edgeworth and the Politics of Commerce

Teaching Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent: an Hibernian Tale* (1800) on an undergraduate, predominantly eighteenth-century, literature course, I found myself increasingly intrigued with its narrative complexity and its attention to the politics of language in a colonial context. I later discovered an 'oriental tale' by Edgeworth which, although its attention to language was less obvious, seemed to be aligned in certain ways. This tale, 'Murad the Unlucky' is one of Edgeworth's so-called 'moral tales' published first in her collection of *Popular Tales*. The story is presently collected in an Oxford University Press World Classics edition of four tales by different authors entitled *Oriental Tales*. Merely four years separate these two pieces by Edgeworth (*Castle Rackrent* was published in 1800 and 'Murad the Unlucky' in 1804), reason enough perhaps to link them, but it is in their subject matter, particularly their attention to language, stereotype and colonialism which link them more significantly. Above all, it was the attention to exchange, whether linguistic, cultural or commercial which seemed overdetermined. Difference is, of course, the meaningful predication for exchange. As the writer of these tales herself came from the ranks of an Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, a colonising elite where, it has been said, not having to attend to identity and difference is its privilege, these features seemed incongruous. When colonial situations are best known for diminishing and subsuming difference and when commerce in colonial contexts is so readily synonymous with conquest, it was difficult at first glance to identify Edgeworth's own project and rationale. Making reference to these two texts, one about a colonised Ireland she knew well and the other, a fanciful Oriental tale, this article focuses on some of the ways in which Edgeworth – Anglo-Irish, liberal, Protestant, middle class and female – addresses the complexities of power at a critical time in Ireland's and her own history. This article also attempts to trace the ways in which the little-known oriental tale may elucidate and reinforce speculations concerning Edgeworth's colonial critique first suggested by the better-known and more intricate *Castle Rackrent*.

Castle Rackrent was published in 1800, the year that saw the ratification of the Act of Union of Ireland with Britain.¹ The proposed Union is an overt issue in the text; it opens and concludes with the fictional Editor,

¹ On March 28, 1800, the terms of the Union were agreed by the Irish parliament and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was formed on 1 January 1801.

(more on him later), making specific reference to the proposed Act. In the postscript he surmises: 'It is a problem of difficult solution to determine whether an Union will hasten or retard the amelioration of this country'. As the Act of Union had been vociferously debated throughout 1799 it is perhaps not surprising that the text is informed and framed by this debate; the Editorial Preface and Postscript reinforce the engagement with these topical issues and purposefully call attention to this specific historical liminality, looking forward and back. The publication of this novel is situated not just on the cusp of the 19thc. but on the 'eve' of the momentous and much disputed Act of Union, with its aspirations for Catholic emancipation and general 'amelioration'. The title-page of the main narrative, that is, the narrative by the Irish steward Thady, however, situates the action 'before the year 1782'; that date is significant in both Edgeworth's and Ireland's history. It was the year of a new declaration of legislative independence for Ireland and its parliament (the so-called 'Grattan's parliament' (1782-1800)); the 'action' then is set specifically prior to this which was a time of more acute subordination and restriction imposed by the English. The editor, whose text is situated in 1800, somewhat unconvincingly claims that the troubles are all in the past:

The Editor hopes his readers will observe, that these are 'tales of other times;' that the manners depicted in the following pages are not those of the present age; the race of the Rackrents has long since been extinct in Ireland, and the drunken Sir Patrick, the litigious Sir Murtagh, the fighting Sir Kit, and the slovenly Sir Condry, are characters which could no more be met with at present in Ireland, than Squire Western or Parson Trulliber in England. (pp. 4-5)

This alone should alert us to the editor being both positivistic and myopic but in his blindness he proffers some complicating insights by introducing the issue of 'identity':

There is a time when individuals can bear to be rallied for their past follies and absurdities, after they have acquired new habits and a new consciousness. Nations as well as individuals gradually lose attachment to their identity, and the present generation is amused rather than offended by the ridicule that is thrown upon their ancestors... When Ireland loses her identity by an union with Great Britain, she will look back with a smile of good-humoured complacency on the Sir Kits and Sir Condrys of her former existence. (p. 5)

This narrative is provocative and 'unreliable' in the extreme and Edgeworth has contrived, with her benign-seeming editor, to alert us to his profound limitations with the unproblematized premiss that Ireland will lose her identity.

What follows is the narrative of the Irish steward 'honest Thady' who recounts his association with the Rackrent family, one 'of the most ancient in the kingdom' and related to 'the Kings of Ireland'. (pp. 8-9) The family, originally named O'Shaughlin, inherited the estate on the condition that, by an Act of Parliament, their name and arms be changed to Rackrent². The proscription of Gaelic and Catholic Irish by English colonizers has affected all the subjects in the text, the Anglo-Irish mediating editor, the Irish steward and the colonized/colonizing family he serves, and it should not surprise us that in terms of identity and narration, we must have our interpretative wits about us.

1782 – the locus for Thady's story – is also a significant date in Edgeworth's own history for it is the year in which she came from boarding school in England to settle in Ireland on her father's estate, Edgeworthstown, in County Longford. Edgeworth was fifteen. Maria Edgeworth was the third of her father's twenty-two children by four wives; her own mother had died when she was five. She was particularly attached to her father, an eminent figure, an inventor, a philanthropist, innovative landowner, and educationalist. Maria collaborated with him on many of his projects, particularly books and treatises pertaining to education; in this 'partnership' she was his aide and amanuensis and he, her mentor and patron. Though so many of their projects were collaborative, culminating in the autobiography Richard Lovell Edgeworth began and Maria was obliged to finish after his death, *Castle Rackrent* was singularly, an independent project; she wrote it in secrecy, published it anonymously and resisted her father's later contributions and corrections. Edgeworth's own 'domestic politics' must be carried alongside any critique of *Castle Rackrent* which sees it simply as an Anglo-Irish novel which liberally (in both senses of the word), perpetuates colonial discourse.

The text Edgeworth compiles is multi-vocal and complex: a liberal-minded male English editor provides footnotes and a Glossary to aid the 'ignorant English reader' understand and 'consume' the idiomatic monologue of the 'faithful servant' Thady McQuirk – or more frequently, Thady Quirk. The editor aims for transliteration, that is, to represent one discourse in 'the more or less corresponding characters of a different language'; Edgeworth, however, reveals that they can only coexist side by side. This 'translitative' aspect only reveals the editor's futile attempt – at transposing Thady's narrative for English readers:

The author of the following memoirs has ...fair claims to the public favor and attention: he was an illiterate old steward, whose partiality

² George Watson, editor of the Oxford edition of *Castle Rackrent* defines 'rackrent' as 'extortionate rent' and cites a reference from Chapter X of the *The Absentee* (1812) p. 118. Marilyn Butler, in the Penguin edition of *'Castle Rackrent' and 'Ennui'*, notes that Edgeworth may have found a possible source for the name Rackrent in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. See 'Introduction', p. 31.

to the family in which he was bred and born must be obvious to the reader. He tells the history of the Rackrent family in his vernacular idiom, and in the full confidence that Sir Patrick, Sir Murtagh, Sir Kit, and Sir Condry Rackrent's affairs, will be as interesting to all the world as they were to himself. Those who were acquainted with the manners of a certain class of the gentry of Ireland some years ago, will want no evidence of the truth of honest Thady's narrative: to those who are totally unacquainted with Ireland, the following Memoirs will perhaps be scarcely intelligible, or probably they may appear perfectly incredible, For the information of the ignorant English reader a few notes have been subjoined by the editor, and he had it once in contemplation to translate the language of Thady into plain English, but Thady's idiom is incapable of translation, and besides, the authenticity of his story would have been more exposed to doubt if it were not told in his own characteristic manner. Several years ago he related to the editor the history of the Rackrent family, and it was with some difficulty that he was persuaded to have it committed to writing; however, his feelings for the honor of the family, as he expressed himself, prevailed over his habitual laziness, and he at length completed the narrative which is now laid before the public. (pp. 3-4)

This editor then, is one who claims to have the authority to interpret and represent Thady's 'illiterate', idiosyncratic narrative. However, Thady Quirk's narrative is too quirky to translate and so the editor will mediate between the ignorant English and Quirk's 'scarcely intelligible', 'incredible' narrative. The only transposition this editor can manage however, (his marginalia apart), is that of having Thady's idiomatic speech 'committed to writing'. Thady's oral history has been rendered 'complete', indelible and suitably laudatory ('for the honor of the family'), by this. The habits and manners of the past are also to be made intelligible to the present; 'the manners depicted in the following pages are not those of the present age.' The editors project then, is proprietorial and anthropological; he is the mediator between the 'proper' English and the 'quirky' Irish.

In a recent article 'Another Tale to Tell: Postcolonial Theory and the Case of Castle Rackrent', Mary Jean Corbett³ makes this claim:

Edgeworth's editor... seeks to create a third term, situating her own discourse between the 'refined' and the 'vulgar': historical style aims to high, but Thady's non-style is too low and also needs correction, which the editor supplies through the Preface itself, explanatory

³ Mary Jane Corbett, 'Another Tale to Tell: Postcolonial Theory and The Case of *Castle Rackrent*', *Criticism*, Summer, 1994, Vol. XXXVI, No. 3, pp. 383-400.

notes, and a glossary. Edgeworth's editorial apparatus thus enacts, in Kowaleski-Wallace's phrase, a 'process of class and racial positioning'⁴ ...whereby the editor represents her own position, albeit obliquely, as a middle ground between two extremes, a position we might term 'Anglo-Irish'. This strategic mediation, in its attempt to establish a new norm, also figures Edgeworth's own colonial situation: she seeks to produce the colonized for the colonizer and to establish her own authority for doing so, yet also to reform or reconstitute the relations between those two entities.⁵

As plausible and convincing as this appears, particularly when one thinks of Edgeworth's active alliance with her liberal landowning father, this nevertheless seems to me to miss some of the specificities of the text itself. The Editor, not Edgeworth, has taken on 'the middle ground' and the enterprise of mediation.; he is literally, and literarily, a 'middleman'. The editor is a male – as much a fictive representation as Thady, for instance; in fact the whole novel is a double-mime. Edgeworth is said to have based Thady on her family's estate steward John Langan whose 'brogue and strange opinions' she would mimic 'to entertain her family circle.'⁶ Perhaps the Editor serves as Edgeworth's mime of her father or perhaps his Rousseauian friend Thomas Day whom she mimics in *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795) and lampoons in *Belinda* (1801). Rather than being able to see the Editor and Edgeworth as the self-same mediators we must look to the reasons for and implications of Edgeworth's choice of a male editor; certainly by this there is yet another displacement at work – even moreso when one actually attends to the so-called authoritative and interpretative notes and glossary. These, as the Preface, render his enterprise laughable. His myopia is evident in a number of ways, not least in the way in which he fails to 'read' Thady aright and certainly in his ludicrously inapposite footnotes and glossary which manoeuvre the reader away from Thady's narrative into another commentary and discourse altogether, which, interestingly, is easy to overlook. It is as if the Editor is always seduced by his own claims to knowledge and the surrounding space in which to display it. Whatever position the Editor indicates in class or racial terms he is objectified by Edgeworth and satirized; he is chauvinistic and patronizing but above all, he fails to listen, and he fails to interpret, believing, in his arrogance that 'honest Thady's' simple domestic narrative will be without subversion and subterfuge.

Marilyn Butler, in her introduction to the recent Penguin edition which brings together *Castle Rackrent* and *Ennui* in one volume, notes 'little has

⁴ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity*, (Oxford: OUP, 1991), p. 154.

⁵ Mary Jane Corbett, op. cit., p. 386.

⁶ M. Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p.174, cited in M.J. Corbett, p. 390.

been written about *Castle Rackrent's* feminist implications, and not much about its women.⁷ She notes Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's study of the 19th century woman writer *The Madwoman in the Attic*⁸ as the exception – (certainly Kowaleski-Wallace's study⁹ should also be mentioned). Gilbert and Gubar discuss Edgeworth's relationship with her patriarchal, proprietorial father and note several revealing anecdotes. One refers to the death-bed wish of Richard Lovell Edgeworth who asked his daughter to write to his publisher pledging that she would add 200 pages to his 480-page memoir within a month of his death. In the margin of the letter she wrote at his command she added 'I never promised'.¹⁰ Although she complied with her father's wishes by completing the book the resisting marginalia seems revealing and relevant to *Castle Rackrent* as a text which is about the politics of language and about the strategies for telling when as a colonized or patronized subject straightforward ways are forbidden. Some critics acknowledge Thady 'yea-saying', his ostensible allegiance, his ingratiating obsequiousness. Terry Eagleton, for instance, in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* extends the notion that Thady's 'loquacity... is also... the rhetorical strategy of the 'lower Irish', disarming authority' and questions Edgeworth's own 'rhetorical strategy':

The novel may have been published in the year of the Union; but the manuscript was being prepared for the publishers in the thick of the United Irish insurrection in which Maria's father suffered the fate of all good liberals and narrowly escaped a hammering by both sides. What if the narrative were a fantastic rendering of all that? – if Thady Quirk were no loyal lackey but a type of the disaffected Catholic peasantry, concealing his subversion beneath a mask of servility and working covertly for the overthrow of the landlords? ¹¹

There is ample evidence that Thady's 'dramatic monologue' is disingenuous and I cannot agree with the critic who says that it is Thady who 'fails to discern the patently ridiculous habits and manners of many of his masters, resorting instead to a blind obedience to his quasi-aristocratic betters'.¹² It is rather that his masters, mistresses, the editor and it seems, many of the novel's readers fail to discern Thady's cunning strategies (and thereby, Edgeworth's also) believing only in their own stereotypical notions of Thady's

⁷ op. cit., p. 53

⁸ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

⁹ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth and Patriarchal Complicity*, (Oxford: O.U.P., 1991).

¹⁰ op. cit., p. 152

¹¹ T. Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture*, (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 164-5.

¹² M.J. Corbett, p. 387.

simplicity and dependency. Like Edgeworth's seeming assent but covert resistance, 'I never promised', Thady maintains a facade of compliance. For instance, he is adept at acting as a fool and thus 'foil' for the appropriations which his son Jason is carrying on. Thady claims that his allegiance to the Rackrents is more than that to his son Jason who has managed to dispossess the Rackrent family of their manorial home; Jason has worked his way from good scholar to clerk to property agent and then attorney and in the process has devised a way to dispossess the dissolute and bankrupt Rackrents. Thady's bald statements about his son's affairs and what Thady really thinks and does, revealed in linguistic nodes and nuances, are two very different things. He deliberately fails to intervene as his master Sir Condy is bankrupted and dispossessed by his son Jason's stratagems; a repeated line 'but I said nothing' or 'so I said nothing, but just looked on to see how it would all end' (p. 55) should be placed alongside 'I heard all'. Perhaps the most telling passage is one where, in the midst of extravagant claims about his allegiance to the family and his disapproval of Jason, Thady recounts:

Oh Jason! Jason! How will you stand to this in the face of the country, and all who know you, (says I); and what will people tinker and say, when they see you living here in Castle Rackrent, and the lawful owner turned out of the seat of his ancestors, without a cabin to put his head into, or so much as a potatoe to eat?' – Jason, whilst I was saying this and a great deal more, made me signs and winks, and frowns; but I took no heed, for I was grieved and sick at heart for my poor master, and couldn't but speak. (p. 77)

Surely, Thady does 'protest too much' and it is difficult to avoid the notion that no 'cabin to put his head into, or so much as a potatoe to eat' is precisely the retribution a dissolute rackrent landlord deserves and that, despite his repeated denials, Thady thinks so too.

Gilbert and Gubar concentrate on a 'critique of patriarchy' and suggest that Edgeworth 'specifically identifies with Thady's ambivalence in the face of exploitative male power'. In this light they include an inscription which Maria's father had etched on her writing desk:

On this humble desk were written all the numerous works of my daughter, Maria Edgeworth, in the common sitting room of my family. In these works which were chiefly written to please me, she has never attacked the personal character of any human being or interfered with the opinion of any sect or party, religious or political;...she improved and amused her own mind, and gratified her heart, which I do believe is better than her head.¹³

¹³ op. cit., p. 152.

If the tone of this patronizing claim is familiar it is because it has the same tone and gesture as that of Edgeworth's liberal, male editor who stakes a similar claim over 'honest Thady'. It remains difficult, however, to see just where we find Maria Edgeworth aligned at least, in any straightforward way; to align her with Thady seems as problematic as identifying her with the Editor. Certainly, her highly satiric and subversive 'An Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification' collected in *Letters for Literary Ladies* in 1795 might aptly cite Thady as an exemplary practitioner in the art of subversive compliance or as Edgeworth has it with wives in mind, 'the vacant stare, the insipid smile, the passive aspect of the humbly perverse.'¹⁴ Whether the context is that of master/bondsman or husband/wife; or even father/daughter 'the 'enemy' (the narrator's 'slip' in the Letters), must be harassed by living up to or acting out to a ludicrous extent, the 'bad name' with which they have been stereotypically labelled. The wife's dedicated vacancy and obedience then, is part of a concerted campaign of 'perpetual petty skirmishes' when 'you must not dare to provoke to combined forces of the enemy.'¹⁵ Edgeworth may then, as Gilbert and Gubar suggest, find an element of identification with Thady but this would also seem to ignore the specificity of Thady's position and experience and she seems careful to keep that specificity to the fore, not least, linguistically. The male editor, who has so many of the proprietorial, arrogant attributes that we can surmise were her father's is nonetheless 'other' to conservative, Tory, and unilateral English 'ignorance'. In the Preface we see the Editor making a claim for modes of discourse which are reminiscent of postmodern attention to *petit histoires*, the hidden othernesses of historical grand narratives:

The heroes of history are so decked out by the fine fancy of the professed historian; they talk in such measured prose... Besides, there is much uncertainty even in the best authenticated ancient or modern histories; and the love of truth...necessarily leads to a love of secret memoirs and private anecdotes. We cannot judge either of the feelings or of the characters of men with perfect accuracy from their actions or their appearance in public; it is from their careless conversations, their half finished sentences, that we may hope with the greatest probability of success to discover their real characters. (p. 1)

With the emphasis on 'domestic lives' and 'behind the scenes' this sounds very much like the litany of a feminist revisionism – but if this editor is also 'feminized' it is not identical to Thady's 'feminine' position, nor indeed to Maria's. The propensity for facile categorization and stereotype has been thoroughly disrupted. And, if the Editor, Richard Lovell Edgeworth and

¹⁴ M. Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, (London: J.M. Dent, 1993), p. 77.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 65.

Maria herself can be identified as having, on the one hand, both overlapping and contesting interests then certainly Thady and Maria Edgeworth cannot be viewed as identical, even allegorically. For example, a 'feminist' analysis of *Castle Rackrent* and 'honest Thady', far from seeing Thady as feminized, might rather reveal his own misogyny not to mention racial and religious prejudices which are in themselves Edgeworth's satirical target.¹⁶ Edgeworth's text is deliberately problematizing stereotype. The reader must, like any other consumer and as with all other transactions, attend, interpret and identify afresh.

And so to another colonial loci. Robert Mack introduces and edits the recent collection of *Oriental Tales* in which Edgeworth's 'Murad the Unlucky' appears. He contextualizes it by outlining the interest in 'orientalism' and the popularity of *Arabian Nights* and other narratives of the East, but he also cites a passage from *Practical Education* (1798), which Maria wrote with her father. The passage warns specifically against the romanticizing of the East and the false heroism it engenders and notes that the young boy who admires Sinbad and Robinson Crusoe may with little extension grow up to 'admire the soldier of fortune, the commercial adventurer, or the nabob, who has discovered the secret of Aladdin's wonderful lamp, and who has realized the treasures of Aboulcasem'. Robert Mack attends to the passage as explicitly anti-colonialist:

'Commercial adventurers' and 'soldiers of fortune' were plunderers and fortune-hunting thieves; 'nabobs' or 'nabob plunderers', in the more recent sense in which Edgeworth is using the term, were Englishmen who returned from the East with great (and more frequently than not ill-gotten) wealth. Edgeworth's clear implication is that the spoils of colonialism – the 'stolen' secrets of Aladdin's lamp – are the results of a misguided avarice and ambition. Edgeworth is presenting in the passage nothing less than a not-so-subtle critique of British imperial policy, with a critique as well of the pedagogical misadventures which encouraged the English to think of the world as a rich 'object' ripe for spoil. (p. xliiii)

In this light, he addresses 'Murad the Unlucky' as a 'corrective oriental tale', deliberately anti-romantic:

The world of Edgeworth's tale is emphatically not the hazy, opulent landscape of the earliest Eastern tales; it is a world ravaged by the

¹⁶ See p. 26 where Thady enacts a series of stereotypical misrecognitions of his own when he identifies Sir Condy's new wife as 'the Jewish' (though she wears a diamond cross) and 'little better than a blackamoor' by a trick of the light. Her supposed Jewishness leads him into further false assumptions, including linguistic ones.

plague, threatened constantly by natural disasters and social unrest, and inhabited by the forces of a foreign occupation... (p. xlv)¹⁷

The tale is about two men 'remarkable for their good and bad fortune - one is called Murad the Unlucky and the other Saladin the Lucky.' (p. 216) Murad's father dreams a dream of terrible hybridity before Murad is born and fearing the dream as an omen, the infant is neglected and classified from birth as 'Unlucky' - and his 'unlucky' life is self-fulfilling; he goes from one disaster and error of judgement to another in a syndrome which has been imposed by fantasy and superstition constantly reiterated by those around him: "'Unlucky he was, and is, and ever will be. Those that are born to ill luck cannot help themselves...'" (p. 218), insists his nurse. His brother, Saladin however, was named 'Lucky' 'because, the day he was born, a vessel, freighted with rich merchandize for [his] father, arrived safely in port'. (p. 218) Saladin relates:

'My being called Saladin, the Lucky, first inspired me with confidence in myself: though I own that I cannot remember any extraordinary instances of good luck in my childhood. An old nurse... repeated to me twenty times a day that nothing I undertook could fail to succeed...' (p. 244)

Over-confidence, however, leads to an accident; with guidance from a Frenchman 'who was employed and favoured by the Sultan, to the great astonishment of [his] prejudiced countrymen' (p. 244) and who in turn cures Saladin 'of many foolish prejudices', he re-names himself "Saladin the Prudent", thus resisting an overdetermined, controlling and superstitious discourse and trusting instead to the lessons learned from 'the sensible foreigner'.

Both Murad and Saladin encounter the Jewish merchant Rachub; Murad is gulled by him into buying a trunk of contaminated clothes which unleashes an outbreak of plague. Saladin, when he encounters Rachub with the same trunks, reads both the situation and the blurred but tell-tale inscription 'Smyrna' on the trunk and avoids making the purchase. Significantly, however, it is prejudice and the propensity for stereotype which leads to Murad's disastrous 'contamination'. For Murad, Rachub is simply the 'Jewish dog'; conversely, for Rachub, Murad is typically Turkish in his opium

¹⁷ These cautions, explicitly gendered but nonetheless akin to those correctives concerning romantic novels and the sensibilities of young women, could be discussed at some length but I want rather to look at some features of the story itself including the problematic characterization of the Jew Rachub in the tale. In his 'Select Bibliography' Mack refers to Edgar Rosenberg's *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction* (1960) which 'contains an analysis of Edgeworth's unflattering portrait of the treacherous Jew Rachub in the tale'. I have not myself seen this book, but it interests me that a stereotype persists in a text which, I would argue, is attentive to, and aims at, discomposing, stereotype.

addiction and lethargy and of course, there is Murad's own static self-estimation as doomed to failure. Saladin, when he encounters the Jew, deliberately ignores his initial prejudice and mistrust:

There was something mysterious in the manner of this Jew, and I did not like his countenance; but I considered that I ought not to be governed by caprice in my dealings, and that,... I ought not to neglect his offer merely because I took a dislike to the cut of his beard, the turn of his eye, or the tone of his voice. (p. 250)

In the tale it is precisely this putting aside of prejudice which leads Saladin to perceive the vendor's real motives. In fact, it is a gesture of mutuality that reveals the situation:

The Jew shewed me a chest, from which he said I might chuse whatever suited me best. I observed that, as he unlocked the chest, he stuffed his nose with some aromatic herbs. He told me he did so to prevent his smelling the musk...musk, he said, had an extraordinary effect on his nerves. I begged to have some of the herbs which he used himself; declaring that musk was likewise offensive to me... The Jew, either struck by his own conscience, or observing my suspicions... pretended he had not the right key, and could not unlock the chest... (p. 251)

The whole tale, indeed, is dedicated to the discomposition of stereotype - French, Turkish, monarchical and conjugal stereotypes are overturned here and the story concludes with Saladin winning the hand of the Sultan's daughter but refusing the offer of being made a Pasha or governor of a province; it is as a merchant that he is happy and as a merchant, who enjoys a 'mutual affection' with his bride, that he wishes to remain. A 'moral tale' on a number of levels, it could also be read as a parable for politics and commercial relations closer to home.

The emphasis on mutuality and mercantilism brings me to the enigmatic question which concludes *Castle Rackrent* and the Editor's postscript: 'Did the Warwickshire militia, who were chiefly artisans, teach the Irish to drink beer, or did they learn from the Irish to drink whiskey?'¹⁸ While we cannot

¹⁸ Marilyn Butler provides a footnote which explains: 'The Warwickshire militia were part of the large extra detachment of troops (some 80,000) diverted from the war with France to police Ireland in the 1790s. The Irish produced both beer and whiskey, but during the 1790s brewers successfully pleaded that beer was nutritious while the effects of whiskey were almost all negative. In 1795 the Irish parliament abolished the tax on beer, which may have assisted its sales...' While this provides a historical context it nonetheless seems to me to miss the rhetorical, metonymic import of the question which alerts us more to the exchange of cultural forms and practices. In metonymic terms, Butler's 'the effects of whiskey were almost all negative' lends an interesting anti-English inflection.

take the Editor's views as identical to Edgeworth's, it is in this context of 'exchange' that Maria Edgeworth seems to situate her own project. With the emphasis on both mutuality and mercantilism in 'Murad the Unlucky' and this finale to *Castle Rackrent* Maria Edgeworth seems to be recommending commerce. Commerce in these terms, while valorizing the middle, mercantile class nevertheless seems to see commerce not as an inevitable adjunct to conquest and capitalist imperialism but more in the sense of its derivation in 'mutual merchandise'. Commerce in this sense does not insist on the homogenization and colonization of all elements of difference; rather, this is the aim of imperial conquest.¹⁹ Her ardent belief in mercantile progressivism, that is, that it is the developmental power of commerce, makes sense of her resistance to stereotype while at the same time arguing for the value of difference and identity. Utopian the notion may be, early evidence perhaps, of what Marilyn Butler calls 'the writer the Union made her, the utopian prophet of a new nineteenth-century commercial empire.'²⁰ Of course, it must also be remembered that it was trade and Irish manufacture which had been prohibited and ruined by English protectionism and trade which would make Ireland prosper in its own right. Importantly, it is not hybridity or effacement of 'identity' which is being recommended by this rhetorical analogy of libation in *Castle Rackrent* or the conjugal one in 'Murad the Unlucky'; component parts of exchange are kept distinctive if the hyphen is seen as 'trans-active' rather than conflative. Linguistically too, she argues for transaction rather than translation; the discourses and dialects co-exist in *Castle Rackrent* despite the lampooned Editor's transliterative aims. Perhaps then, it is not that Maria Edgeworth is simply the proponent of a mediating 'middle way' or of a hybrid hyphenated condition in which one term is inevitably subsumed by the other. At least in these two works Maria Edgeworth seems less intent on celebrating a 'union' which would diminish or abolish difference and more intent on claiming 'worth' for the 'edge' and the mutual exchange of 'goods'.

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¹⁹ The Editor's question also alerts us to caste and class and to ways in which cultures and sub-cultures with soldiers, artisans, stewards, domestics, lackeys and others as its constituents, will persist despite or in spite of hegemonic and controlling strategies.

²⁰ 'Introduction', p. 15

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