A BRITISH IRELAND, OR THE LIMITS OF RACE AND HYBRIDITY
IN MARIA EDGEWORTH’S NOVELS

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This research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to everyone who helped me along my academic journey and to my family, who has always encouraged and inspired me.

Many Thanks,
Kimberly Clarke
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INTRODUCTION

Hybridity, a blending or cross-breeding of cultures, elements or race, defines the twenty-first century, and not simply through hybrid technology in the types of cars we drive. Most notably, in November 2008, the United States elected its first biracial president who has become a conspicuous symbol of America’s growing multicultural and multiracial society. This prevalence of racial and cultural hybridity in Western society symbolizes a desire for this diversity even while it catalyzes existing fears of such multiracial mingling. These are not new fears, nor are they present only in American society. This uneasy relationship with racial hybridity appears in the nineteenth-century literature of Anglo-Irish author Maria Edgeworth in her exploration and analysis of whiteness and Irish cultural and racial identity in Britain.

The similarities between twenty-first century and nineteenth-century attitudes about hybridity elucidate Edgeworth’s racial politics and the continued relevancy of racial identity – both its fixity and fluidity – in the construction of a national identity. Her novels reflect her desire to legitimize and resolve her Anglo-Irish identity (her loyalty to England and her emotional ties to Ireland) as well as her struggle to define

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Although controversy surrounds this announcement, the June 2009 shooting at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. by eighty-eight year old James Von Brunn arguably demonstrates that even on an individual and very isolated level, there is some fear of and violence against racial diversity. Von Brunn, a far right extremist and anti-Semitic Holocaust denier, also lamented racial hybridity in the United States since the Civil Rights Movements, or as he called it “the browning of America.” See “James W. Von Brunn: Holocaust Museum Shooting Suspect is White Supremacist.” AP/Huffington Post, 10 June 2009, 1 July 2009 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/06/10/james-w-von-brunn-holocau_n_213864.html>.
British racial and cultural makeup at a time when Britain’s literary voice and national complexion became more diverse from within and from influences beyond its own borders.

My understanding of Edgeworth’s novels and her approach to race in Britain has been influenced by my understanding of the relationship between the Irish-American and African-American communities in the United States in the nineteenth century. As Noel Ignatiev explains in his 1995 *How the Irish Became White*, Irish immigrants and African-Americans were grouped together as part of America’s working and poverty classes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as they competed against each other for employment and fought the political system and each other in order to gain citizenship and acceptance in the States. Edgeworth depicts the relationship between the Irish and Afro-Caribbean community in a similar way, even if it existed on smaller scale in Britain. Historically, these groups were seen as racial outsiders who threatened hegemonic white identity in America and Great Britain. While the popularity of such modern-day figures as Tiger Woods or Barack Obama show Western society’s willingness to embrace multiracial identity, Edgeworth’s attempts to integrate Ireland into Great Britain’s social, religious, and racial consciousness reveal nineteenth-century efforts and shortcomings in tackling issues of racial hybridity that existed two centuries ago and still survive today.

Being Irish in nineteenth-century Britain was an othered cultural and racial identity that destabilized the illusion of British whiteness. The negative stereotypes of

2 Elaborating on the assimilation and political power the Irish were able to acquire in the nineteenth century and beyond, Ignatiev states that the Irish were “an oppressed race in Ireland, [but] became part of an oppressing race in America” (Ignatiev 1).
poverty-stricken, uneducated, rebellious Irish Catholic outsiders conjured fears that an Irish presence would muddy the image of pure-blooded whiteness. Despite her gestures in embracing the singularity of Irish culture as part of Britain’s diverse society, Edgeworth exhibits her ambivalence toward hybridity by limiting Irish identity and implicitly policing British racial identity.

Like Edgeworth, William McCready, Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan), and Bram Stoker also tackle themes of Irishness and racial identity in the nineteenth century, yet in ways that promote rather than suppress Irishness and interracial hybridity. Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) embraces, as Joseph Valente’s 2003 *Dracula’s Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Questions of Blood* asserts, Irishness as a hybrid identity of the vampire Dracula, who can only be defeated by the acceptance of his multiracial, mixed-blood identity. Whereas Edgeworth saw the political Union of 1801 with Great Britain as the beginning of a more culturally and racially homogeneous British identity that was inclusive of Irishness, Owenson saw it as reasserting Ireland’s colonial stance in Britain. Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) inspires Irish nationalism and nativism in response to the Union and revives the exoticism and perceived foreign aspects of Irish culture.

Edgeworth takes a contradictory position toward interracial relationships and actively works to segregate upper-class Irish identity from blackness and other forms of racial otherness; in contrast, William McCready’s *The Irishman in London, or the Happy African* (1818) places the African slave alongside the working-class Irishman, whom McCready allows to be potentially friends and even lovers, as seen in Cubba’s attraction to the Irish Murtoch, who admires Cubba’s goodness while still lamenting her skin color.
Edgeworth’s novels depict a relatively diverse cast of characters, including Spanish, Jewish, Welsh, Scottish, English, Irish, and French characters, but she also advocates the existence of a British nationhood defined by English middle class values in which Anglicized, landowning, Protestant, white characters gain agency and success.

I present my thesis in two chapters which discuss Edgeworth’s contrasting attempts to create a multi-ethnic, hybrid British identity while excluding racially othered African characters and Irish lower-class characters linked to black imagery. In chapter one, I analyze the trend of hybridity in English and British literature and political rhetoric on race during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In these early literary and historical analyses, I refer to Linda Colley’s *Britons* and “Britishness and Otherness” to contextualize the point of view that sees pre-twentieth-century Ireland as a British colony and outsider rather than an equal participant in the United Kingdom. Colley states, “Ireland was in many respects the laboratory of the British Empire,” for “much of the legal and land reform that the British sought to implement in India, for example, was based on experiments first implemented in Ireland” (“Britishness and Otherness” 327).

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3 McCready’s depiction of Cubba’s flirtation with Murtoch shows the limitations of his portrayal of African and Irish identity in Britain. Faithful to a fault to her mistress Caroline, Cubba places service to her mistress before her own freedom as she refuses to leave Caroline’s side even through slavery was unlawful in England. Mr. Frost, Caroline’s father, proclaims, Cubba “is in the land of liberty…she’s her own mistress, free as air” but she rather remain a slave in Caroline’s service (15). Also while Cubba confesses her romantic feelings for Murtoch, she also regrets their racial differences: “Me love a you dearly – but me no want you love me – dat be very wrong – Your face white, me poor negro” (28). Likewise Murtoch, seeing her perceived nobility of character, responds, “I wish she was not sooty…if her face was but as white as her heart, she’d be a wife for a Pope” (28). Despite the racial stereotypes McCready indulges in throughout his characterization of Cubba, the premise and possibility of a Cubba/Murtoch interracial relationship supports the existence of a shared class and racial marginality in British society.
Edgeworth works against such exclusion of Irish identity. Regarding Edgeworth’s approach to Irish identity and British hybridity, I conclude that Edgeworth creates a British identity that unites the cultural and linguistic differences among the British nations in her novels through proving the multiplicity – or multiple yet similar versions – of British identity. In order to illustrate this multiplicity, Edgeworth depicts Scottish, Welsh, English, and Irish characters as embodying similar ideological and physical features. In *The Absentee*, *Ormond*, and *Ennui*, these identities are interchangeable and conflated until the differences among these nationalities are erased under a shared image of British white identity. The Irish become British in Edgeworth’s texts because they share the same racial identity as the other British citizens.

The second chapter of my thesis focuses more heavily on literary explications, specifically regarding the exclusion of West Indian and African characters and those characters associated with blackness in Edgeworth’s novels. Through applying Toni Morrison’s definitions of literary whiteness, literary blackness, and Africanism from *Playing in the Dark* (1993), I illustrate how Edgeworth constructs an image of Irishness that claims British whiteness while she reserves racial stereotypes for African and the lower class Irish characters who do not fit the literary white British middle class identity. This chapter mainly examines two texts, *Ennui* and *Belinda*, as they exemplify Edgeworth’s exclusion of black identity in nineteenth-century British nationalism.

Edgeworth’s novels are often similar in message and content. As moral tales depicting the (re)education of young English and/or Irish men and women, her works link marriage and landownership as pivotal milestones in identity formation and to the preservation of one’s nationality. Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Edgeworth’s father,
influenced her in the composition of these moral tales, as he wished to “dedicate the remainder of my life to the improvement of my estate, and to the education of my children; and farther, with the sincere hope of contributing to the melioration of the inhabitants of the country, from which I drew my subsistence,” namely Ireland. Maria Edgeworth had a similar focus on education, especially in regards to the advancement of the Irish people for whom, as a part of the Anglo-Irish landowning class, she felt herself a guardian and advocate.

Edgeworth’s first Irish novel, *Castle Rackrent* (1800), satirizes Irish history over the course of eighty years, from the 1690s to the 1780s, establishing Ireland’s past as a morally negative counter example to what Edgeworth envisions as Ireland’s future in the British Empire. Thady, the Rackrent family’s steward, relates the history of the Rackrents starting from Patrick O’Shaughlin, through other male heirs, Sir Patrick, Sir Condy, the litigious Sir Murtaugh and Sir Kit, all of whom possess a weakness of character that threatens to destroy their lives and their family’s legacy. Thady becomes the counter example for all the Irish male figures in Edgeworth’s novels, for he justifies and identifies with the fictitious Rackrents’ vices and penchant for self-destruction, which Edgeworth equates with the history of actual Irish families of the past. An Essay on

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5 Marilyn Butler charts the history of the Edgeworth family and the inspiration for her novels in “Edgeworth’s Ireland: History, Popular Culture, and Secret Codes.” The Edgeworths were part of the wave of “Old Irish or Old English estates [being] reduced in size as new gentleman-farmers from further east or from England were introduced as improvers” (271). The families who resided near the Edgeworths, particularly the Catholic O’Farrells with their “incompetence, bad luck, backwardness, absenteeism…sterility,” influenced her stories (272). This family history seems to have been the basis for her novel *Castle Rackrent*, though the Rackrents were of Irish/Gaelic origin as their ancestor Patrick O’Shaughlin changed his surname to the English Rackrent
Irish Bulls (1803) confronts English prejudice against the Irish by showing that Irish bulls or blunders, the aspects of Irish speech patterns that make them spectacles among the English, are actually celebrated parts of British and European speech and society. Therefore, the Irish, despite some cultural or linguistic differences, are British, neither racially nor culturally inferior to the English.

In Ormond (1817), Edgeworth revisits the moral, pedagogic tale in her last Irish novel. Harry Ormond must reform his violent anger. Ormond’s familial relationships with cousins, corrupt Protestant Sir Ulick and the unconventional Irish Catholic King Corny, and his travels to the continent to Paris shape his reeducation. This transcontinental Bildungsroman returns Ormond to Ireland in order to insure its political future, as the novel ends with Ormond’s desire to “civilize” the rural Irish peasantry with his new wife (297).

The second chapter of this thesis turns to Belinda (1801) and Ennui (1809). Ennui, like Ormond, focuses on reeducation and moral reformation. The Earl of Glenthorn, who, recently divorced and looking for purpose in his life, escapes English high society and aristocratic dissipation to Glenthorn Castle in rural Ireland where learns that he was switched at infancy with an Irish peasant named Christy O’Donoghue. Glenthorn’s moral and English education is connected to the fate of the Irish people while O’Donoghue’s ignorance unwittingly leads to death and destruction. Belinda, a novel in which the title character must choose between two suitors, the English Clarence Hervey and the Creole Mr. Vincent, does not fall into the category of Edgeworth’s other Irish

(to inherit land, Catholic families like the Rackrents might have also had to convert to Protestantism). See Marilyn Butler, “Edgeworth’s Ireland: History, Popular Culture, and Secret Codes,” Novel; A Forum on Fiction 34 (Spring 200): 267-292.
tales, but I use it throughout the second chapter to show its implicit commentary on blackness and British racial identity and to specify how Edgeworth changes the novel’s interracial relationships in its later editions.

Throughout my analysis of these novels and other Edgeworth’s works, including *The Absentee* (1812), which follows Lord Colambre’s attempts to restore his family to Ireland after they have abandoned their rural estate for London high society, I use a diverse group of theoretical texts to elucidate Irish racial identity and concepts of race in nineteenth-century Britain. A cross-section of this list includes Linda Colley and Toni Morrison, as I’ve mentioned above, as well as Roxanne Wheeler’s *The Complexion of Race* that details the evolution of “race” as a concept in Western society, Noel Ignatiev’s *How the Irish Became White*, and Andrew Murphy’s *But the Irish Sea Betwixt Us*, in which David Beers Quinn and Nicholas Canny, disagreeing with Colley’s assessment of Ireland’s relationship with Britain, state that “[the Union of 1801] was not a forging of new ties...but a radical redefinition of traditional relationships between the two islands and between different peoples in the archipelago” (quoted in Murphy 5). Edgeworth’s novels and these various theorists provide an illustration of Irish identity that reveals the limitations of British nationhood and the complex nature of race in the nineteenth century.

In reaction to such limitations, Edgeworth conflates concepts of Irish and English identity, showing that one can attain Britishness not through blood or nationality but through education and moral reformation. She then redefines Ireland’s colonial otherness by creating a British identity based more on ideological alliances that reify middle-class English values of manhood, whiteness, and upward mobility. Edgeworth defines British
cultural identity along a collective, stable identity and a shared history that begins with the 1801 Act of Union, bridges old cultural and linguistic differences, and heals wounds of inequality and colonization. Yet it is debatable how successful Edgeworth was in painting a realistic view of nineteenth-century Ireland – its violent history with and grievances toward England – and whether the assimilation she requires of Ireland after the 1801 Union demands too much sacrificing of Ireland’s otherness to the extent of compromising an essentialized Irishness and Gaelic cultural and racial identity.
CHAPTER ONE

“At the best we [English] are but hybrids, yet, probably, not the worse for that” states John Crawfurd, Scottish physician, scholar, and British diplomat, in his 1861 “On the Classification on the Races of Man.” While Crawfurd discusses the benefits of hybridity, nineteenth-century concepts on British identity had a complex and contradictory relationship with racial hybridity. Although Britain has recognized its own multicultural and multiethnic heritage, some feared that such diversity would undermine the singularity of British whiteness. According to David Theo Goldberg’s “Heterogeneity and Hybridity: Colonial Legacy, Postcolonial Heresy,” “Heterogeneity may be read as challenge or threat, opportunity or potential problem. In the nineteenth century, especially in its racial interpretation, heterogeneity was interpreted very much in the latter vein.” Along with an aversion to hybridity and miscegenation came, conversely, an effort to embrace racial difference as Crawfurd asserts that the English are “not the worse” for their hybridity, a sentiment Daniel Defoe echoes in his 1703 political satire “The True Born Englishman.” The nineteenth-century controversy surrounding hybridity found itself rooted in degrees of racial difference.

Ethnic diversity among Caucasians was more acceptable than hybridity born from multiracial mixtures that included blackness and African identity. In 1878’s Carthage

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and the Carthaginians, R. B. Smith describes the “Negroes from the Soudan, not such sickly...hybrids as you see in Oxford Street…but real down-right Negroes half-naked, black as ebony.”⁹ The presence of similar racial hybridity was a threat, as expressed in Smith’s statement regarding “sickly hybrids” in Oxford Street, those who were children of Caucasian and African parentage. Certain scientific communities categorized racial differences as corresponding to distinct species, between whom reproduction was impossible. Or if reproduction were possible, others believed “white or European-based purity, power, and privilege would be polluted” by such a racial mixture (Goldberg 78-9).

Between these perceived binaries of pure-bred whiteness and black hybridity, the “wild Irish born… a hybride” becomes the site upon which the divide between such whiteness and blackness, Britishness and non-Britishness, is drawn.¹⁰ According to Noel Ignatiev’s How the Irish Became White, in the United States the Irish were ethnically, not racially, different. However, in Britain “a portion of the Irish diaspora became known as ‘the Irish,’ a racial (but not ethnic) line invented in Ireland” (Ignatiev 39). Due to the colonial status of Ireland, the antagonism toward Irish Catholicism, and the linguistic differences of the Irish Gaels among other factors, the Irish were frequently stereotyped as beyond the Pale that separated white Britons from the culturally othered Irish who were not assimilated into British Protestant identity.

In a general sense, the nineteenth-century Irish were simultaneously British citizens and a contagion threatening this citizenship. This blurriness between outsider

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⁹ Reginald Bosworth Smith, Carthage and the Carthaginians (Longmans, Green & Co., 1878) 383.
and insider status not only characterized Irishness but also created conflicting definitions of British identity that could distort the image of British whiteness. As Ester Wohlgemut explains in “Maria Edgeworth and the Question of National Identity,” there existed a desire to have a “national affinity exist within a larger, more universal understanding of belonging,” whereby aspirations toward cultural homogeneity grew as Britain increasingly came into contact with foreign peoples through war and imperial expansion.  

11 Maria Edgeworth illustrates Britain’s diversifying world in her novels as she introduces Jewish, Spanish, French, Scottish, and Welsh characters, focusing much of her efforts on expanding British citizenship in order to include the racially othered Irish. Edgeworth celebrates ethnic and religious differences in scenes figuring interfaith education among Protestants and Catholics and intermarriage between Christians and those of Jewish faith and/or lineage.  

12 Yet her ambivalence toward interracial relationships and her general exclusion of blackness from British nationality reveal Edgeworth’s fear that interracial hybridity would be a threat to British whiteness and national identity.

Edgeworth attempted to resolve the anxiety surrounding Irishness and racial hybridity by redefining what it means to be a white Briton. Actively working against the racialized image of Irish subjection, Edgeworth redefines the colonial relationship between Ireland and England and reconstructs Irish whiteness. Edgeworth embraces racial hybridity through conflating the stereotypical images of Irishness and Englishness,

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12 See Maria Edgeworth’s Harrington (1817) for a Judeo-Christian interfaith marriage between the young English hero, Harrington, and the ethnically Jewish, religiously Christian Berenice Montenero.
equalizing the Protestant/Catholic relationship, and de-racializing language distinctions that previously marked Irish otherness. She aligns Britishness with an Irish masculinity that manifests itself through the acquisition of English education, upward mobility, and paternalistic landlordism, through which the Irish become agents of British colonialism, not its victims. Edgeworth’s upper-class Irish characters become part of the tapestry of British white hybridity. In normalizing Irish identity within the construction of Britishness, Edgeworth displaces Irish colonial racial otherness onto Creole and West Indian characters. Instead of making Ireland a metaphor for Anglo-colonial relations, Edgeworth positions the Creole and black characters as colonial figures who cannot satisfactorily become British and who are contagions of British racial homogeneity. For Edgeworth, Irish characters become white in Great Britain because they are ethnically not racially different. Edgeworth revises the interracial marriages and interracial relationships in her works and casts out characters closely associated, by culture or class, with African/West Indian identity and blackness. Through such a cultural and racial outlook, Edgeworth constructs Britishness through what Toni Morrison calls in *Playing in the Dark* literary whiteness and blackness, where literary whiteness is representative of English middle-class values, paternalism, and marriage that reaffirms British white racial identity, and literary blackness as an othered, Africanist identity that symbolizes vice, ignorance, and lack of individual agency that lies outside the borders that surround British national identity (vii). In order for the Irish to be British, Edgeworth attempts to associate Irish identity with British whiteness.
Philosopher and anthropologist Ernest Gellner states that “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist.” Likewise, the invention of British national identity came not from a preexisting selfhood or essence of Britishness. Rather, British identity, as Linda Colley explains in *Britons: Forging the Nation* (1992) and “Britishness and Otherness,” resulted from the numerous wars with outsiders (the American colonies, Catholic France and Spain, and the Jacobites) who distinguished themselves as different from Great Britain in national and religious affiliations.

As the nation acted to repel ideological and military threats from outsiders, this banding together among British subjects in war also resulted in a rise of patriotism. Colley writes that this patriotism served “as a bandwagon on which different groups and interests leaped so as to steer it in a direction that would benefit them [and as]…a way of claiming the right to participate in British political life, and… of demanding a much broader access to citizenship” (Colley 5). A wider group of people seeking British citizenship took advantage of this access. Furthermore, Colley explains that "the Americas in the thirteen colonies, or the French in Europe and Asia, or subduing the luckless inhabitants of India, Africa, Australia, and the West Indies made it much easier

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13 Goldberg 79.
15 These wars include wars include religious and regional wars, at times between Great Britain and Catholic countries: the Nine Years War (1689-97), War of Spanish Succession (1702-13) and the War of Austrian Succession (1739-48), also wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. Jacobite support of the Stuarts’ claims to the throne exacerbated fears of foreign invasion by Britain’s Catholic enemies (Colley 25).
for men who were English, or Welsh, or Scottish, or Anglo-Irish to perceive what they
had in common" (Colley 164). Confronting these external differences among non-British
peoples across various parts of the world unified British nations despite their internal
differences within Britain.

More formally, Great Britain as an entity was invented in 1707 with the Act of
Union linking Scotland to England and Wales (Colley 11). Scotland and England had
already associated with each other politically through Stuart rule and through shared
economics goals and parliamentary representation. However, the Scottish maintained
some of their cultural differences; as Colley notes, “they still retained their distinctive
religious organization and social structure, as well as their own legal and educational
systems.” The Welsh, while having similar economic and political systems as the
English and Scottish, were distinguished by language, and Wales “had no universities or
capital city like Edinburg to serve as a focus for its cultural life” (Colley 13). Managing
the internal differences that existed within Britain was difficult even among nations that
shared bureaucratic or religious similarities. Since the sixteenth century, there was a
backlash among the English against the Welsh influence and prejudice against the
Scottish arose during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because of their
association with Jacobitism; furthermore, the English resented some Scots for acquiring
political appointments and other employment that they believed should have gone to the
English. However, among the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish, it was the Irish who
had the most problems assimilating into this idea of British whiteness, especially as
Catholicism, largely associated with Irish identity, unified Protestant Britons against a
common Catholic enemy.
Edgeworth depicts class as having a large role in the structuring of British nationality, a fact that may explain the uneven treatment she extends to her Irish characters as she attempts to prove that the Irish, despite their association with Catholicism, can be part of British whiteness. Colley states, “For many poorer and less literate Britons, Scotland, Wales, and England remained more potent rallying calls than Great Britain, except in times of danger from abroad.” While she also affirms that, “even among the politically educated, it was more common to think in terms of dual nationalities, not in terms of a single national identity” (Colley 373), Edgeworth’s novels confirm that the upper-class Irish characters rallied themselves around the idea of British citizenship more than the lower classes were able to. Historically, new landownership from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created a more diverse upper class (Colley 158). The mixture of English and Celtic elites increasingly resulted from marriage; from 1750-1800, there were more than twice as many marriages between Scottish women and Englishmen than there had been in the first half of the eighteenth century. Because more Scottish, Welsh and Anglo-Irish peers could now afford to live in London, there was a viable and growing cultural influence in the increasingly cosmopolitan city (Colley 159). Through such intermarriages, the English were able to gain more land, and the Scottish, Welsh, and Anglo-Irish were able to gain more influence and access to being a member of the British elite. Colley states that the “Celtic elites amalgamated with their English counterparts far more extensively than before, reinvigorating the power structure of the British empire and forging a unified and genuinely British ruling class that endured until the twentieth century” (156). By the early nineteenth century, Britain's ruling class would increase in power, wealth, and size, as they became a more diverse body.
However, the perceived commonality that did exist despite these differences was dependent on the otherness outside of the tenuous borders of Britishness, for as Robert J. C. Young insists in *Colonial Desire* (1995), “The sameness of the West will always be driven by difference” (1). British national identity was defined by the “other,” which according to Young exposed a flaw in British identity itself. He states, “The whole problem…for Englishness is that it has never been successfully characterized by an essential, core identity from with the other is excluded…[and] divided within itself, and this has enabled it to be variously and counteractively constructed” (3). What was British identity in itself when it lacked a clear identity? Out of what Young calls “instability and disruption, of conflict and change” came the necessity for a fixed image of Britishness as part of the goal of inventing national identity in the nineteenth century (4).

Although Edgeworth establishes Britain as a kingdom united through a shared whiteness among the Scottish, English, Welsh, and Irish, it was not, as David McCrone notes, “a ‘nation-state’…or a homogeneous cultural grouping which mobilized that homogeneity to become a state” (Colley 58). In *Britons*, Linda Colley expands on this idea of Britishness as a heterogeneous identity as she suggests “British” was a label “superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the other, and above all in conflict with the Other” (Colley 5-6). According to these descriptions, the term “British” incorporates the desire to unite internal differences that existed among the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish under one inclusive label as well as the struggle to understand and categorize the external differences indicative of the cultures that Great Britain met in its colonial expansion in India, Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean.
These internal and external differences led to an indefinable national identity and a British imagined community with indistinct borders. Esther Wohlgemut acknowledges that Edgeworth “produce[s] an understanding of the nation as neither tightly bordered nor borderless” where national identity, and even Edgeworth’s own Anglo-Irishness, is “less a category than an ongoing mediation between borders” (Wohlgemut 645). Edgeworth opens Britain’s borders to the Irish (and to some extent the Jewish) population by making them ethnically different yet racially and/or culturally white. However, she reinstates those borders as she defines Britishness through literary whiteness and non-Britishness through literary blackness. The writing of literary whiteness is not specifically perceptible through “white” imagery but rather through Edgeworth’s practice of making the differences among the Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and English indistinguishable in their shared Britishness and racial whiteness.

Lady Clonbrony’s décor in Maria Edgeworth’s The Absentee reveals what Wohlegmut calls the “rootlessness” of a heterogeneous British identity constantly mingling with the hybridity of outside cultures (651). With her Turkish drapery, Egyptian hieroglyphic paper, and Chinese pagoda, Lady Clonbrony lacks not just local attachment to her Irish home but also a connection to her British identity. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Britain excluded otherness, yet it could not articulate distinctive national identity without engaging with those who differed racially, culturally, and religiously from them. There was openness, a desire for citizenship, and patriotism, yet there was also exclusion, slavery, and a dismissal of ethnically different subjects living within the British Empire. During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, Great Britain, despite its xenophobia, was ruled by foreign Scottish and
Germanic kings through the Houses of Stuart and Hanover. In many ways, the topic of heterogeneity and hybridity was popular albeit controversial, as seen in Defoe’s pleading against England’s xenophobia in “The True Born Englishman” and in Maria Edgeworth’s own contradictory stance in depicting the heterogeneity and hybridity of the British and the Irish people.

Racial Hybridity and Internal Differences

I only infer, that an Englishman, of all men, ought not to despise foreigners as such, and I think the inference is just, since what they are to day, we were yesterday, and tomorrow they will be like us...since speaking of Englishmen ab origine, we are really all foreigners ourselves...Scots, Picts, and Irish from th' Hibernian shore/ and conq'ring William brought the Normans o'er…They blended with the Britons…From this amphibious, ill-born mob began, /That vain ill-natured thing, an Englishman. (427-441)

In his “True Born Englishman,” Daniel Defoe objects to English xenophobia and the hypocrisy of the protests against William of Orange becoming King of England, based on his foreign status, when the English themselves have a foreign, hybrid background.

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16 See David Powell, *From Nationhood and Identity: The British State since 1800* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2002). The British still suspected the Hanoverians as foreigners until the reign George II, who was known as the first from the Hanoverian line “to glory in the name of Briton,” seeming to privilege his British loyalties over his Germanic interests (Powell 4-5). One may conclude that these foreign monarchs finally gained acceptability within Britain through locating themselves within Protestant Britain for the majority of their reign.


18 While others were afraid of letting William of Orange become king because he was a Dutch foreigner, Defoe supported it. In “The True-Born Englishman,” Defoe states that
While there was a desire for cultural and national unity within England and Britain as a whole, there was also an appreciation of the hybridity born of such differences.

The concepts of heterogeneity and hybridity are similar though not identical in meaning. While heterogeneity refers to the diversity and the existence of differences, hybridity or hybridism connotes cross-breeding or the act of mixing disparate elements, species, or races. In this thesis, I will refer more to hybridity, which expresses the racial mingling in British society to which Daniel Defoe, Ben Johnson, R.B. Smith, and John Crawfurd’s allude. In 1863, German anatomist Carl Vogt argues that the “Anglo-Saxon race is itself a mongrel race, produced by Celts, Saxons, Normans and Danes, a raceless chaos without any fixed type” (Young 17). *The London Review* states that in 1861, “We Englishmen may be proud of the results to which a mongrel breed and a hybrid race have led us” (quoted Young 17), while Herbert Spencer writes in his *Principles of Sociology* that Britain was an example of “racial amalgamation.” Even in the early twentieth century, anthropologist Sir Arthur Keith writes, “it is often said, that we British are a mixed and mongrel collection of types and breeds” (quoted from Young 17).

As Young points out and as Edgeworth illustrates in her texts, “there were degrees of hybridity, between ‘proximate’ and ‘distinct’ species” (Young 11). This joining together of hybrid Scottish, English, Welsh, and Irish breeds is at the forefront of Edgeworth’s novels. She suggests that these cultures are not racially distinct as she attempts to include the Irish as a legitimate and equal member of the United Kingdom after the 1801 Act of Union even though they were racially “othered.” In the seventeenth
and eighteenth centuries, as Roxanne Wheeler discusses in *The Complexion of Race* (2000), race was seen as mutable and had a complex relationship to religion. Racial difference was not only dependent on a fixed categorization of skin color, but also on clothing, religion, and culture.¹⁹ Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Britons defined themselves according to their Protestantism, clothing, and climate, among other characteristics, and as the nineteenth century arrived, whiteness finally became a marker of Britishness as “skin color emerged as the most important component of racial identity in Britain during the third quarter of the eighteenth century” (Wheeler 9).

Race became the determinant of culture and history, a common "principle of academic knowledge" in the nineteenth century (Young 93). The correlation between whiteness with Englishness developed in the 1720s and 1730s with the assumption that racial blackness signified one’s intellectual and spiritual inferiority (Wheeler 98). Historian Winthrop Jordan has argued that in the mid-seventeenth century, colonists in confrontation with the Other went from calling themselves Christian to calling themselves English, free, and "white," a term that came to symbolize a moral and intellectual superiority against blackness and non-Britishness (Wheeler 74). Against this darker, inferior other among the nonwhite British colonies in Africa, the West Indies, and India, Britishness became emblematic of a white empire that would not be culturally or racially muddied by foreign influences (Colley 312).

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¹⁹ Wheeler’s strongest example of this is in her reference to the *Journal of a Voyage Up the Gambia* (1723), where the narrator describes the skin color of the natives "as black as coal" (Wheeler 4). But then he continues, "Here, thro Custom, (being Christian) they account themselves White Men" (4). These African men are white because of their Christianity; through conversion black men could become spiritually white.
Maria Edgeworth’s Approach to Irish Identity and British Hybridity

Maria Edgeworth incorporates British heterogeneity and multinational heritage into her depiction of Irishness, showing that the Irish, along with Welsh, English, and Scottish nationals, are hybrids: part of the heterogeneity from which the British have benefitted. In tracing the ideas of both heterogeneity and hybridity, one may say that Edgeworth was ahead of her time in her description of British diversity and yet observe that she limited herself according to her own class and race and the era’s fear of such diversity. As an Anglo-Irish writer, Edgeworth has a particular awareness of the precariousness of her own national identity as an upper class, Anglicized Protestant who sees Ireland’s union with Great Britain as an amelioration of Irish economic problems and social ills. Compared to other Irish authors of the nineteenth century, Edgeworth is less accepting of a heterogeneous, hybrid Britain.

As an Irish author with his own hybrid background, Bram Stoker recognized Ireland’s precarious position within the British Empire, as it was a place both sought after for its land and resources and rejected due to ongoing hostilities with England (Valente 3). As Joseph Valente asserts in *Dracula’s Crypt* (2002), Irish authors, like Stoker and Edgeworth, existed between two spaces, “authority, agency, and legitimacy on one side and abjection, heteronomy, and hybridity on the other”; therefore, their Irish identities are composed of a “metropolitan (Anglo) center [and]…a continued connection with the colonial (Celtic) fringe” (4,18).

Edgeworth works within these same binaries but is not as racially inclusive as Valente’s reading of Stoker’s 1897 *Dracula* suggests. *Dracula* explores the existing panic surrounding racial hybridity but it does not succumb to it as the novel ultimately
shows that “blood does not matter at all, and to think otherwise is to think like a vampire” (Valente 11). According to Valente, Dracula translates British anxiety about degeneration, its “growing ethnic communities and its evolving definitions of a consolidation of ethno-nationality/nationhood” into the horror surrounding Dracula, who represents such fears of foreign, mixed blood identity (2). While Stoker may critique anxiety about racial hybridity in Britain, Edgeworth succumbs to the desire to separate the races in ways that realign Irishness with British whiteness while excluding African, West Indian Creole, and other characters symbolic of her construction of literary darkness. In Edgeworth’s 1817 Harrington, the ethnically Jewish Berenice must confess her Christian faith before marrying her English suitor, Harrington, and in Ormond, written in the same year, Edgeworth criticizes her French characters’ moral degeneracy. However, Edgeworth attempts to exclude Jewish and French characters based on their cultural and religious differences rather than any sense of permanent racial otherness.

Edgeworth’s Irish novels Castle Rackrent (1800), Ennui (1809), The Absentee (1812), Ormond (1817) and Essay on Irish Bulls (1802), along with Belinda (1801) and the Grateful Negro (1804), express Edgeworth’s British nationalism and her desire to position Ireland within a British future by breaking the colonial link between Ireland and England. In the aftermath of the 1801 Act of Union uniting Wales, Scotland, England, with Ireland, Edgeworth tried to unify these countries as well, imagining a more inclusive British community in her novels that no longer excluded or diminished the Irish. In order

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20 According to Valente, Transylvania is a “whirlpool” of ethnic difference (53). Ireland, symbolized by Dracula, is the “threat delineated…as racialized anxiety itself” and “a racialized other infiltrating…cherished Anglo-bourgeois civilization” (5, 120). Valente concludes that “To accept the influx of Dracula’s blood, his racial otherness, is to escape the influence of Dracula’s vampirism” (141-2).
to include or assimilate the Irish under this new umbrella of Britishness, she defines Britain as embracing white hybridism and ethnic, religious and cultural heterogeneity. Internal differences among the Irish, Scottish, English, and Welsh based on difference in language, clothing, and culture became universalized as part of British and European identity.

Irishness had its own precarious identity as equal partner in the British Empire and, conversely, as a subjugated colony of the British Empire. The Irish were, in Andrew Murphy’s terms, “proximate (or approximate) others not absolute Others” or as Homi Bhabha would state, “almost the same, but not quite” British (Murphy 7). Ireland was not part of a new, unknown world as the Americas were; Ireland had a place in Britain’s national past and its national identity. This shared history dates back to the twelfth-century Norman settlements in Ireland and English control of the part of the isle by the seventeenth century, and Defoe establishes racial similarities between the Irish and other British nations in his description of a hybrid white identity that includes the Celts, Gaels, and Anglo-Saxon. With these preexisting similarities already asserted, Edgeworth could construct a believable British identity that included Ireland, particularly the Irish landowning upper class who more obviously shared cultural and class concerns similar to those of Edgeworth’s English readers. As the British defined themselves against othered outsider, Edgeworth defines Ireland’s British whiteness by constructing it against African, West Indian, and other characters marked by literary blackness and racial marginality.
Multiplicity in The Absentee, Ormond, and Ennui

The growing diversity of the British coupled with their own sense of hybridity created a fluidity and multiplicity of identity in British society and within Edgeworth’s novels. Edgeworth resolves the differences among these various ethnic identities by demonstrating the cultural, physical and linguistic similarities that exist among the Welsh, English, Scottish, and Irish. David Scott, the MP from Forfar in Perthshire constituency articulates this point in the House of Commons in 1805:

We commonly when speaking of British subjects call them English, be they English, Scotch, or Irish; he, therefore, I hope, will never be offended with the word English being applied in future to express any of His Majesty's subjects, or suppose it can be meant as an allusion to any particular part of the United Kingdom… (quoted in Colley 162-3)

Scott speaks of a fluid British identity while also commenting on the pervasiveness of Englishness in defining such a national identity. While Scott states that the term “English” does not refer to a supremacy of Englishness over other British nations, he nonetheless unwittingly alludes to the centrality of Englishness in constructing a cosmopolitan British nationality. Edgeworth’s novels The Absentee, Ormond, and Ennui embrace this centrality of Englishness within British hybridity. However, they also expand on Scott’s description of the confusion, conflation, and interchangeability of nationalities and national labels by showing that there are a multitude of cultural, ethnic, and racial similarities among the Welsh, Scottish, English, and Irish peoples. Scott mentions “English” as a label that applies to the non-English members of the Empire; it is a term not just reserved for the trueborn Englishman, but for those who, through
education and upward mobility, have acquired a certain national identity that is not literally part of their original nationality or heritage. These British subjects are English and Scottish, Welsh, or Irish, a duality of identity that affirms the British white hybridity that Edgeworth depicts.

*The Absentee* begins with a characterization of Lord Colambre as having a hybrid, dual English/Irish identity that David Scott discusses above. As an Irishman who has an Oxford education and lives with his family in London, Edgeworth describes Colambre as having “the sobriety of English good sense mixed most advantageously with Irish vivacity… English prudence governed but did not extinguish, his Irish enthusiasm” or his “Irish heart” (6). Irishman Lord Colambre has a fluid British identity as he disguises himself as a Welshman and investigates the conditions the Irish peasants live upon his family’s estate. He is frequently mistaken for an Englishman in scenes that indicate the conflation of Irish, English, and Welsh nationalities and multiplicity of British identity.

As Colambre travels to Ireland he repeats, “My purpose in travelling incognito has been fully answered: I was determined to see and judge how my father's estates were managed; and I have seen, compared, and judged” (167). At first Colambre passes as “an Englishman and a stranger,” and, upon discovering the corruption and rackrenting among his tenants, confesses that “I know even I, who am a stranger, cannot help feeling for both of you, as you must see I do” (126-7, 132). He then disguises himself as Welshman, Mr. Evans, but that assumed identity is frequently confused for other ethnic identities. Upon meeting Mr. Evans the Welshman, several Irish characters tell him “I heard you're a Welshman, but, whether or no, I am sure you are a jantleman, any way, Welsh or other” and that “you're an Englishman - that is, a Welshman - I beg your
honor's pardon” (134-6). The image of a Lord Colambre with his English/Irish identity disguised as a Welshman who passes for an English stranger supports Edgeworth’s goal of establishing a fluid British identity where the differences that distinguish the Welsh, English, Scottish, and Irish from each other are erased. By illustrating that an Irishman can pass for a Welshman, and both identities can be confused for embodying Englishness, Edgeworth questions how stable these national identities are.

Grace Nugent distinguishes herself by her nominal and familial relationship to both Englishness and Irishness. Lord Colambre asks if “Grace” is a common Irish name, signaling the symbolism of her name in relation to her national identity (145). She occupies a liminal position between English and Irish identity. Lady Clonbrony, an Irishwoman desperately trying to pass for English, discusses how she at first encouraged Grace to change her name to “Nogent,” which has a French origin, for, as Clonbrony states, “Nogent…would have taken off the prejudice against the Iricism of Nugent” (15). While Clonbrony believes she is an “Henglishwoman” who must deride everything Irish to emphasize her identification with the superiority of England, Grace Nugent hoped that articulating the value of Irish identity “might dispose her aunt [Clonbrony] to listen with patience to all Lord Colambre might urge in favour of returning to her home” in Ireland (57). Grace celebrates her Irish identity as much as Irish Lord Colambre does, but she is revealed as having English parentage; her father was an English officer in Austrian service named Reynolds who secretly married young English woman (218). After meeting her English grandfather who her relates the English heritage at the end of the novel, she becomes Grace Nugent Reynolds and is revealed to be the heir to the Clonbrony estate (Butler, “Edgeworth’s Ireland” 284-285). With this inheritance, Miss
Nugent Reynolds legitimizes Lord Colambre and his parents’ ownership of their Irish estate. She also becomes a conflation of English and Irish dual identities through her name (the Irish-sounding Nugent and her English surname Reynolds), her English lineage and marriage to an Irishman, and her status as heiress to the Clonbrony Irish estate.

Edgeworth also shows this fluidity and conflation of Irishness with cultures in a small note regarding *Castle Rackrent*’s Thady and his trademark Irish cloak. Thady says that he is called “poor” because of his old cloak: “I wear a long great cloak winter and summer, which is very handy, as I never put my arm into the sleeves; they are as good as new, though come Holantide next I’ve had it these seven years” (65). Thady presents this cloak as personal and as essential to his caricatural Irishness as his Irish bulls and blunders are. However, the Editor, a character who comments on and places Thady’s account in context, reveals Thady’s cloak is no longer particular to him or his Irishness. The Editor shows this cloak as belonging to other cultures and other eras – similar to Edgeworth’s description of language in the *Essay on Irish Bulls*, proving the universality of Irish bulls while stripping it from its Irishness and connections to Irish nationalism.

The Editor notes that the cloak is not particular to the Irish, and “it is not derived from the Scythians [or Greeks], but that [according to Spenser] ‘most nations of the world anciently used the mantle’” (65). These cloak wearers include the Jews, the Chaldees of Babylon, Egyptians, Greeks, the Latins and Romans and such mythical figures as Venus, Evander. Just like Thady’s Irish cloak, Irish identity is part of British and European civilization and history; universalizing qualities that once distinguished and separated Irish culture from British culture allows Edgeworth to equalize Irishness with English, Welsh, Scottish, and other white, British Anglo-Celtic identities.
These scenes of Irish characters representing or being confused for multiple national identities continue in *Ormond* (1817). Towards the end of the novel, Irishman Harry Ormond is in Paris and notices that “He must wear off his English or Irish awkwardness a little, before he should…appear in French society” (239). In a foreign environment Ormond’s Irish and English identities are identical, interchangeable and equal, and they define his British nationality when confronted by the alterity of Parisian high society. In Paris, he is called “monsieur l’Anglois,” an old form of Anglais, or the “froid Anglois” and is introduced as “Anglois – Irlandois – an English, an Irish gentleman” (242-4). He is also called a “milord anglais” and “le bel Anglois” and “mon bel Irlandois” (254, 265). In *Ormond, Castle Rackrent* and *The Absentee*, the Irish characters are able to pass as Welsh, Irish and English most notably in order to emphasize the similarities between Irishness and Britishness and universalize what was deemed particular characteristics of Irish identity. This fluidity of identity speaks to the equality of all British nations that Edgeworth tries to establish among the characters in her novel.

In *Castle Rackrent* and *Essay on Irish Bulls*, Edgeworth also resolves the hybridity of speech among the Irish, as Edgeworth creates what Robert Young calls a “novelistic hybrid” language or “an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another, a system having as its goals the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language” (Young 22). Edgeworth works to describe the similarities between English and Irish dialect and culture for an English audience. As Robert Lee Wolff notes in the Introduction to *Essay on Irish Bulls*, Edgeworth drew upon her own steward John Langan in the depiction of Thady Quirk’s brogue. Edgeworth knew the dialect so well that she
confesses, “I could think and speak in it without effort; so that when, for mere
amusement, without any ideas of publication, I began to write a family history as Thady
would tell it, he seemed to stand by me and dictate, and I wrote as fast as my pen would
go...” (vii). Throughout Castle Rackrent, in notes and in the Preface and Glossary,
Edgeworth interprets, generalizes, and illuminates Thady’s speech and clothing and Irish
history in general so that it is relatable to English readers. She makes a similar attempt in
her Essay on Irish Bulls, which dispels English prejudice against the Irish “irresistible
propensity to blunder,” pointing out that “the belief that all the rest of the world are
barbarians, and speak barbarisms, is evidently a very useful prejudice” (4-19).

While Irish bulls may be of foreign extraction, some of what people term as
“bulls” are actually used in famed literary devices in other countries. In the chapter “Irish
Bulls Disputed,” Paddy Blake hears an English gentleman speaking of the echo that
repeats forty times at the lake of Killarney; he says, “Faith that's nothing at all to the echo
in my father's garden, in the county of Galway; if you say to it – ‘How do you do, Paddy
Blake?’ it will answer, ‘Pretty well I thank you, sir’” (26). This is not a unique Irish tale
that shows Irish ignorance and lack of understanding the nature of echoes, but one that
Edgeworth observes resembles a tale told by lord Verulam in his “Natural History:
Century III.” In another tale, an Englishman writing a letter sees a Hibernian (an
ancient Roman name for the Irish) behind him reading his letter. The Englishman writes,
“I would say more, but a damned tall Irishman is reading over my shoulder every word I
write” (29). He replies, “You lie, you scoundrel.” This Irish bull also appears in the

21 For more on “Natural History,” see Francis Bacon, The Works of Francis Bacon,
Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Alban, and Lord High Chancellor of England (London:
1826) 317
literature of what Edgeworth terms “Eastern Nations” in Arabic, Persian, Turkish languages. All blunders can be found from different countries, indicating the universalism of these literary devices and that other countries deal with foreign languages in similar ways. Edgeworth states, “We cannot appreciate the talents or characters of foreigners, without making allowance for their ignorance of our manners, of the idiom of our language, and the multifarious signification of some of our words” (55). These bulls reflect the mistakes most other countries have made and that indicate the metaphorical language that has often been celebrated in literary texts throughout the world.

Edgeworth equates Irishness with Welsh, English, and Scottish identities in the chapter “Bath Coach Conversation,” which involves a conversation among an Englishman, Scotsman, and Irishman. One of the passengers states, “whatever our political opinions may be, there is one wish in which we shall all agree, that the union may make us better acquainted with one another,” a claim that speaks to Edgeworth’s own political point of view (209). In this chapter, Edgeworth continues to equate Irish bulls to universal linguistic and literary trends as she draws similarities between bulls and the Hebrew language and normalizes bulls in general. Irish identity does not define itself by its linguistic or intellectual inferiority but by Irish wit and state of mind (301). While Ireland’s own hybridity is important, Edgeworth argues, “It is a matter of indifference to us whether the Irish derive their origin from the Spaniards, or the Milesians, or the Welsh...we are more interested in the fate of the present race” (313), and, for Edgeworth, the state of the Irish race can only be improved by associating it with British whiteness due to its cultural and linguistic similarities with Britain and Europe in general.
In *Ennui*, which still more elaborately and clearly shows Edgeworth’s goal of uniting and incorporating Irish and English cultures into one shared British identity, Edgeworth destabilizes foster-brothers Christy O'Donoghoe and Lord Glenthorn's lineage, nationality, and socio-economic positions in Anglo-Irish society in order to weaken the polarizing representations of Englishness and Irishness. Irish nurse Ellinor's act of switching her son, the original O'Donoghoe, with the wealthy heir Glenthorn in their infancy at once confuses and then combines the two foster-brothers’ English and Irish origins, linking them both to the exoticism of rural Ireland and dissipation of English aristocracy. The revelation of both Christy O'Donoghoe's infant scar and the scars he received as a peasant youth in Ireland, which act as conflicting racial markers, conflate his cultural Anglo-Irish origins and upbringing. Finally, Glenthorn's reaction to his true lineage and his abdication of his wealth and estate to O'Donoghoe steer the brothers away from being solely defined by their English and Irish nationalities and aristocratic and/or lower class status. Instead this scene suggests that meritorious behavior, rather than just birthplace and bloodline, are essential in the creation of this unified, multinational British identity; however, as I will argue in the following chapter, this “multinational British identity” is limited by class and degree of whiteness.

In her narration of the foster-brothers exchanged at infancy, Ellinor introduces the conflation of English and Irish nationalities and their cultural similarities by first suggesting that the English aristocratic Glenthorn family had some Irish origins that sheltered them from the influence of English high society. Glenthorn recalls Ellinor’s tales about the Glenthorn ancestors that links them to the old Irish kings, that she spoke of “long and long before they stooped to be lorded; when their names, which it was a pity
and a murder, and moreover a burning shame, to change was O'Shaughnessy...I was only a lord in England; but could be all as one as a king in Ireland” (160). Ellinor states that the elder Earl of Glenthorn sent his infant son to be “nursed by a wholesome woman in a cabin, and brought up hardy, as he, and the old lord, and all the family, were before him” (274). In the hands of an Irish surrogate mother, the infant Glenthorn has been transplanted to “a house at the sea, for the salt water” and isolated from English aristocratic society. One might assume that the elder Glenthorn was following a family tradition – one that corresponds to their Irish pasts as O'Shaughnesseys – when he took his son away from the Dublin nurses, unable to take care of his ailing wife and child, and brought the infant instead to an environment that fostered a kind of strength that Dublin nurses and doctors could not nurture. The hardiness that the "old lord" and his ancestors acquired came more from engaging in the wild Irish countryside than from indulging in the indolence prevalent in English aristocracy in which the Glenthorns were born.

Edgeworth problematizes the racial markers distinguishing O'Donoghoe and Glenthorn's cultural heritage, for Christy's scars point to both his English blood and his Irish upbringing, a fact which again follows the novel’s overall fusion of English and Irish identity. Ellinor tells Glenthorn that it was easy to switch the two infant foster-brothers since "your eyes and hair were both of the very same colour” (275); their physical resemblance reflects English and Irish racial similarities. Glenthorn needs physical proof to understand how his familial and national identity differs with Christy’s. Christy's cut on his forehead acts as a racial mark delineating his English identity, but his infant scar is conflated and integrated with the other scars that he acquired during his life with the O'Donoghues. He states, "they are scratches got when I was no wiser than I
should be, at fairs, fighting with boys of Shrawd-na-scoob" (278). While the telltale scar marks his English aristocratic heritage, the scars from his childhood battles mark an Irish upbringing. O'Donoghoe's Irish and English racial markings symbolize the multinational markings both Glenthorn and O'Donoghoe share. Glenthorn, bred in the environment of English high society, with the manners, appearance, and language of the aristocracy, is born of an Irish mother, while O'Donoghoe, part of the English aristocratic bloodline, emulates the lifestyle, speech, and values of his Irish surrogate family.

Edgeworth blurs the cultural and racial borders dividing Englishness and Irishness and makes it difficult to differentiate the O'Donoghoe and Glenthorn foster-brothers since the identity of these two brothers – and the representation of Irish and English people in general – cannot be differentiated by heredity, socio-economic status, and physicality. Edgeworth explicitly asserts that honorable behavior is what constitutes the content of one's character and how one defines oneself as a British subject, a message that similar to that of Defoe's 1707 “The True Born Englishman.” Lord Glenthorn does not debate the origins of his cultural identity or ask whether he is really English or Irish but rather whether he should decide to be "Lord Glenthorn, or, in other words, to be or nor to be a villain" (278). He bases his choice not on identifying with one culture over another; his conflict is "between my love of ease and my sense of right-between my tastes and my principles" (279).

Glenthorn's choices reflect the nature of Edgeworth's pedagogical work, which states that meritorious behavior and laborious perseverance in moral and professional
matters is the key to happiness and finding one's own identity. Both O'Donoghoe and Glenthorn differentiate between deserving to be a gentleman and being bred a gentleman, with the suggestion that men and women are not separated by Irish and English identities; they may instead be measured by how well they achieve the British ideal of domestic and professional happiness through labor and moral fortitude.

One might say that by ending *Ennui* with Christy's tragic tale of dissipation, death, and loss of family and sense of self through acquiring wealth, Edgeworth sides with the values and preservation of working class life of the lower class, Irish peasant. Christy reclaims his identity as a Glenthorn, but it compromises everything that characterized the stability and simplicity of his Irish peasant lifestyle. At the end of his letter to Glenthorn toward the end of the novel, Christy attempts to recuperate what is left of his former Irish life while rejecting a part of his Anglicized identity. He states that since his son's death, "I am no good...I am as good as dead" (322). As he signs his letter, he separates himself from his aristocratic lineage. Unlike Christy's previous letter, which he signed as simply "Your ever-loving foster-brother, and grateful servant," he signs this last letter "Christy O'Donoghoe." He has reassumed what is left of his Irish identity, forsaking the name with which he was born, reclaiming the Irish name that he was raised with, and deciding to "go back to my forge, and, by the help of God, forget at my work what has passed."

The last words of Edgeworth's conclusion mark not the supremacy of Irish identity and stereotypical Irish peasant lifestyle, but the survival and prevalence of

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22 *Ennui*’s Lord Y-, who encourages Glenthorn to become a lawyer, embodies this sentiment in his motto, “Persevere-deserve success.” As Edgeworth emphasizes in *Ennui* and her other novels, such perseverance and success lead not only to gainful employment and landownership, but marriage as well. See *Ennui*, 317
Glenthorn's hybrid English and Irish identity that allows him to reclaim Glenthorn Castle. Glenthorn, at the conclusion of the novel, takes the name Delamere from his wife who inherits the castle, and he now knows "that a man may at once be rich and noble, and active and happy" (323). The fact that Edgeworth writes Glenthorn/Mr. Delamere as re-acquiring such wealth means that upward mobility is the highest goal, but it is only restored because Glenthorn embodies his mentor Lord Y-’s British motto, applicable to Irish, English, and Scottish people, of "Persevere-deserve success" (317).

*Ennui*’s ideological message of British unity through the incorporation of Irish, English, and Scottish identity, through the character of Mr. M’Leod, seems to subtly conflict with Owenson’s ideological message at the conclusion of *The Wild Irish Girl*, which focuses less on a moral unity of the inhabitants on the British Isles and more on promoting a political message advocating for the coexistence of English landowners and their Irish gentry. Where Owenson says love your differences, one may at first conclude that there really aren't any differences between Englishness and Irishness except those in character. Owenson’s message perhaps is a bit more partisan than this as she argues for maintaining a particular Irish identity that is separate but equal in comparison to Englishness. Owenson does not try to blend the two identities, for she argues for a nationalist Irish existence that has survived English injustice; her Irishness is decidedly more nationalistic in comparison to Edgeworth’s Irish identity that is not nationalistic but embraces Britishness.

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23 *The Wild Irish Girl* concludes with the marriage of Glorvina and Horatio, the symbolic union of previously inimical English and Irish families, and the hope that "the distinctions of English and Irish, of protestant and catholic, [will be] for ever buried" (250).
LIMITATIONS OF EDGEWORTH’S BRITISH HYBRIDITY

Edgeworth establishes a British hybridity that is born ab origine of the Union in 1801. Her texts paint Irish, English, Welsh, and Scottish identities as not specific or special but interchangeable in their whiteness. Edgeworth acknowledges differences that exist among Scottish, English, Welsh, and Irish nationals but that do not seem to compromise British national identity. Andrew Haas, in his analysis of Hegel’s 1812 Science of Logic asks, “How does the possibility of pluralism lie in multiplicity?” Edgeworth’s illustration of British multiplicity lacks pluralism and is limited to the hybridity of British white identity. There are multiple images of British whiteness that Edgeworth tries to make acceptable to her English readers, but this multiplicity of white Britishness and hybridity is not inclusive of literary or symbolic blackness.

Ormond is not mistaken for being French, and Christy O’Donoghoe, though linked to blackness as will be discussed in the next chapter, is not misidentified as being of West Indian or African descent and vice versa with the West Indian and African characters. If there is no pluralism of cultural or racial difference, one may argue that this is not multiplicity at all and there is no fluidity of identities since the Irish, Welsh, English, and Scottish characters are so similar that they are indistinguishable. This is particularly evident if we take pluralism to mean the tolerance and existence of multiple ideas and diverse peoples. Hybridity in Edgeworth’s texts has its limitations, especially in terms of history, race, language, and class. Edgeworth has created only a surface hybridity and image of British inclusion. Though she radically blurs the lines dividing Catholic and Protestant and celebrates the mixture of overlapping cultures that compose Britishness.

24 Quoted in Andrew Haas, Hegel and the Problem of Multiplicity (Northwestern University Press: 2000) xiv
and Irishness, she unveils her anxiety about hybridity and her fear that too much racial mixing complicates and contradicts nationality and race in her novels.

Edgeworth, despite her acceptance of British hybridity, submits to a fear of the raceless chaos that the Stoker’s *Dracula* represents. She expresses this anxiety by giving agency to the upper class and preference to point of view that limits hybridity and British citizenship by excluding literary black characters. In an increasingly diverse nineteenth-century Britain, citizenship depended on degrees of difference, especially racial ones. As I will explore more fully in my next chapter, the Irish and black characters share a special relationship to each other in Edgeworth’s novels, for her establishment of Irish whiteness was dependent on codifying and excluding blackness.
CHAPTER TWO

He’s a great proprietor, but knows nothing of his property, nor of us…He might as well be a West India planter, and we negroes, for anything he knows to the contrary—has no more care, nor thought about us, than if he were in Jamaica, or the other world. Shame for him! – But there’s too many to keep him in countenance. (Edgeworth, *The Absentee* 125)

As Lord Colambre travels in disguise to his family’s Irish estate, he meets one of the landlords who, in the above response, speaks of the proprietor of the town, Lord Clonbrony, Colambre’s father. The oppression and poverty of the Irish was often compared to the suffering of the slaves and of Britain’s black population in the nineteenth century. British literary whiteness is largely invisible in Edgeworth’s texts until we see the literary blackness of the Irish, West Indian, and African characters who are excluded from whiteness and British identity. Did this identification with the West Indian and African populations thwart Edgeworth’s goal of framing the Irish in terms of the literary whiteness that characterized British identity and citizenship?

In this chapter, I will analyze Edgeworth’s approach to the metaphorical connection between Irishness and Blackness and racial “otherness.” As my first chapter briefly explains, Edgeworth depicts Irish identity in terms of both literary whiteness and blackness. While chapter one explores this whiteness through Edgeworth’s goal of equalizing the internal differences among the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish, this second chapter will discuss what parts of the Irish image Edgeworth sacrifices in novels
in order for the Irish to be British. Primarily, they have to sacrifice their symbolic blackness, that which symbolizes their peasantry class, cultural otherness, and religious differences, and particularly that which marks their contentious history and centuries-long colonization by England. To forfeit this darkness symbolizing the history of suppression and difference, however, is also to surrender a part of a collective Irish identity in Britain.

While chapter one described white hybridity as partly defining British identity, the idea of hybridity also threatened the whiteness that Edgeworth wanted the Irish to acquire. Edgeworth’s conveys her “anxiety about hybridity [that] reflected the desire to keep the races separate” in several of her novels (Young 25). Edgeworth conveys this apprehension toward racial amalgamation in *Ormond* as Sir Ulick sends a letter that insults the hybridity of Mdme. O’Faley, whom Ulick describes as “that thing, half mud, half tinsel, half Irish, half French, miss, or mademoiselle, O’Faley...” (151). Along these lines, in his 1774 *History of Jamaica*, Edward Long writes, “for my own part, I think there are extremely potent reasons for believing that the White and the Negro are two distinct species” (7). Edgeworth tries to maintain these racial distinctions.

However, Alison Harvey argues in “West Indian Obeah and English Obee; Race, Femininity, and Questions of Colonial Consolidation” that for Edgeworth, “the races themselves have no inherent differences” because the search for the essential differences between what is “‘indigenous’ and what is ‘exotic’ is itself a spurious one, for the differences that England attributes to the Irish are differences which England arbitrarily supposes (and imposes).”25 According to Nash’s assessment, Edgeworth tries to dispel

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25 Harvey 17-8.
the myth of these racial and cultural distinctions, as she seems to do in drawing the similarities among the Welsh, English, Scottish and Irish. However, Edgeworth does see differences between literal and symbolic blackness and whiteness according to early nineteenth-century thinking. Edgeworth establishes these differences in order to preserve British identity against hybridity that conflates whiteness and blackness.

RACIAL AND AFRICANIST ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE IRISH

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Irish were seen as a symbolic manifestation of a biracial, Caucasian/African hybridity. There are stereotypes that confirm the outsider status of the Irish both before and after the 1801 Act of Union, some of which continue to paint the British as white and the Irish as nonwhite, or at least not white enough to be British. Richard Lebow’s White Ireland and Black Ireland (1976) mentions the “racist attitudes toward the Irish in Victorian Britain” (14). He argues that “racist expressions were merely the age old anti-Irish prejudice couched in the jargon of the day” (15). In The Times in 1836, Benjamin Disraeli claims the Irish “hate our free and fertile isle. They hate our order, our civilization, our enterprising industry, our sustained courage, our decorous liberty, our pure religion. This wild, reckless, indolent, uncertain, and superstitious race has no sympathy with the English character” (quoted in Lebow 61). Andrew Murphy quotes Charles Kingsley, who visited Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century, writing to his wife that, “I am daunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country...to see white chimpanzees is dreadful: if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours” (Murphy 12). Furthermore, disgusted at Irish poverty and
how it contradicts his British image of whiteness, Kingsley writes, “Can you picture in
your mind a race of white men reduced to this condition? White men! Yes the highest
and purest blood and breed of men” (Murphy 44). These quotations demonstrate both the
racial whiteness and “otherness” or non-whiteness that Irish identity connotes in
Edgeworth’s literature. Irish otherness was fueled stereotypes of racial, cultural, and
intellectual differences that “the Irish” as a generalized group endured before and
throughout the nineteenth century and onward.

Irish attitudes toward racial hybridity and blackness reflect this liminality. In
Ignatiev’s How the Irish Became White, Ireland is described as having an anti-slavery
tradition; the Council of Armagh in 1177 prohibited Irish trade in English slaves (7). But
attitudes changed in America with Irish repealers; in one letter from the Repeal
Association in Albany, New York, American-Irish repealers said that slaves were
actually “not only happier than the emancipated blacks in the free States, but thousands
of nominally freemen in England and misgoverned Ireland would gladly exchange places
with them” (Ignatiev 20). Some Irish immigrants in America became more loyal to
American causes than Irish ones. A pro-slavery repeal association in South Carolina,
threatened by Daniel O’Connell’s condemnation of Irish supporters of American slavery,
stated that "as the alternative has been presented to us by Mr. O’Connell, as we must
choose between Ireland and South Carolina, we say South Carolina forever!” (26). The
Irish in Britain and the Irish-Americans took contradictory stances in how they saw their
racial alliances, identifying with the West Indian African slaves yet depending on the
subjection of that black population to define their whiteness. Edgeworth draws these
connections, too, between the Irish characters and West India, African, and Africanist
characters.

While Nash declares, “The analogies Edgeworth draws between the situations of the Irish in Ireland and the slaves in the West Indies suggest a more liberal view of both groups than critics tend to grant her,” Edgeworth explores these analogies in *The Grateful Negro*, though not in a way that shows such liberalism (Nash 16). According to Elizabeth S. Kim, *The Grateful Negro* is a site upon which Edgeworth examines Irishness and rebellion and where she shows her true “alliance with her class interests [as] her writings, in total, fail to question the colonialist system itself, both its roots and moral soundness” (106).26 Anglo-Irish spokesman for Irish independence, Henry Grattan, asserted to the Irish House of Commons in February 1782 that “The Irish Protestant will never be free while the Catholic is a slave” (quoted in Kim 108). While Grattan might not have been speaking of African slaves, Edgeworth’s maintenance of slavery and defense of paternalism show that she saw a colonial link between West Indian slaves and the Irish peasants, but one that did not guarantee or advocate for their freedom or individual agency.

Mr. Edwards, a slaveholder in *The Grateful Negro*, treats his slaves “with all possible humanity and kindness. He wished that there was no such thing as slavery in the world, but he was convinced...that sudden emancipation of the Negroes would rather increase rather than diminish their miseries” (1). As Kim notes, Edgeworth shows the strengths in continuing paternalistic slavery, or at least a paternalistic relationship with slaves as she “fails to question the colonialist system itself...the Jamaican plantation setting serves as a veiled context for the real colonial drama that Edgeworth is seeking to

26 Also see John George MacCarthy, *Henry Grattan: a Historical Study* (E. Ponsonby: 1876) 46
address” (Kim 106). By showing the Jamaican slave rebellion in *The Grateful Negro* as unsuccessful, she reduces and rewrites the threat of rebellion in Ireland. Rebellion among the slaves and the Irish can be handled, for if a paternalistic slavery can be maintained in the distant West Indies between two different races, a paternalistic colonial relationship between the Anglo-Irish middle classes and Irish peasants can be achieved. Edgeworth seems to advocate abolition, but she does not extend that freedom to the colonial spaces of Jamaica and Ireland. England is the site of freedom; “the instant a slave touches English ground he becomes free...why should it not be extended to all her dominions?” (3). By linking these two colonial spaces, muting the violence of slaves in her texts, advocating the improvement of slavery over abolition, and solidifying paternalism and lack of agency for these two colonial spaces, Edgeworth limits British identity for blacks and metaphorically for the Irish peasantry (Kim 109).

In *The Grateful Negro*, Caesar’s rejection of the slave rebellion and his loyalty to his master Mr. Edwards show “rejection of the alternative social model that the rebelling slaves envision” (Kim 119). Edgeworth’s conservatism and advocacy of paternalism in slavery reveal her support of a similar relationship existing between Anglo-Irish landowners and the Irish peasantry, where landowners would govern, instruct, and regulate the lives of Irish peasants. *The Grateful Negro* is the site upon which Edgeworth implements Anglo-Irish “paternalistic landlordism” (Kim 120). Mr. Edwards assigns small plots of land to his slaves, as R.L. Edgeworth wanted landowners to do for their Irish tenants. Particularly, Edwards follows R.L. Edgeworth’s goals as he “encouraged investment and improvement by tenants, increased arable land by such measures as draining bogs, and developed infrastructure” (Kim 120). Mr. Edwards, motivating the
peasants to improve their land through farming and paying for their labor becomes a model for the Anglo-Irish landlord to emulate.

The metaphorical colonial link between Jamaica and Ireland and between paternalistic slavery of West Indians and Africans and paternalistic landlordism of the Irish peasant does not necessarily signal an equality between these two spheres but rather that the Irish peasant should maintain a subjected position like the slave. This association with colonialism also reveals Edgeworth's class bias regarding the social role of paternalistic landowners and her anxiety about the racial liminality of the Irish. Although she links Irish characters, or at least the middle and upper class characters, to literary whiteness (as I have detailed in my previous chapter), Edgeworth still struggled with the racial stereotypes directed at the lower class. *Ennui*’s Earl of Glenthorn and Christy O’Donoghoe symbolize the residual literary blackness influenced by racial prejudice against the Irish peasantry that Edgeworth might have internalized and that Edgeworth struggles to resolves in Irish national identity.

**AFRICANISM AND IRISH LITERARY BLACKNESS IN EDGEWORTH’S ENNUI**

In *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison defines “Africanism” as “the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learnings about these people” (7). This Africanism is not just related to characters of African origins but also to those linked symbolically to blackness. Morrison states, "Africanism has become…both a way of talking about and a way of policing matters of class, sexual license, and repression, formations and exercises of power, and meditations
on ethics and accountability" (7). She adds that an Africanist character “provides a way of contemplating chaos and civilization, desire and fear… [as a] mechanism for testing the problems and blessings of freedom” and that Africanism represents the “strategic use of black characters to define the goals and enhance the qualities of white characters” (53). Following this theme, Edgeworth’s Africanist characters are those who symbolize vice and the necessity of policing interracial marriage, as Belinda’s West Indian Mr. Vincent and African servant Juba illustrate. While Christy is not of African origin, he is a model of an Africanist character used to define the goals and enhance the qualities of Glenthorn as the literary white character. Edgeworth’s biases against Irish peasantry and blackness reveal themselves in her depictions of Irish people of lower class status who, despite Edgeworth’s attempts to uplift and restore their dignity for an English audience, still lack agency and are characterized by racial stereotypes.

In her article “Maria Edgeworth in Blackface,” Susan B. Egenolf claims that blackface resembles minstrelsy in its way of taming the threat of African-Americans and people of African origin. The history of blackface in a literary and theatrical sense begins with Queen Anne, wife of James I, who performed with courtiers with blackened faces to represent Moorish appearance and that “the blackened minstrel could in a single evening perform several ethnic roles with dialect being the only distinguishing feature” (848). Egenolf argues that this linguistic difference is Ireland’s main distinguishing feature as well, and that Edgeworth performs a linguistic blackface when she writes Irish bulls and blunders for her characters. However, Egenolf also mentions that the Irish were depicted with simian features related to the physicality of primates, and although Egenolf does not expand on this idea, one may conclude that during the nineteenth century the Irish were
stereotyped not just according to perceived speech patterns but by their physical features which depicted them as a different race and species.

Edgeworth associates Irish peasantry with physical blackness in a letter to her Aunt Ruxton in which she expresses her fears of the sort of Irish rebellion that was frequent in the late eighteenth century and which her family twice before had endured. Edgeworth confesses, “All I crave for my own part is, that if I am to have my throat cut, it might not be by a man with his face blackened with charcoal” (Egenolf 849-50). She later says that she “shall look at every person that comes here very closely, to see if there be any marks of charcoal upon their visages” (850). This blackness results from working with charcoal and other materials associated with manual labor. However, in these lines, Edgeworth is not commenting on Irish working class life but rather the threatening gaze of those faces blackened with charcoal and the fear that blackness represents for Edgeworth and her family as the Irish rebel, reclaiming his own agency, destabilizes the power of the upper class families in Ireland. Therefore, keeping in mind the Africanist image of the danger associated with Irish blackened faces, one may read Christy’s physical blackness as not a result of work but some inherent racial trait the Irish were thought to have and that reflected anxieties about the power native Irish against middle and upper class whiteness (859-60). Adapting a few of Morrison’s questions about Africanism and whiteness to Edgeworth’s texts and questions for Britain, one may ask,

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27 According to Elizabeth Kim, the Edgeworths were familiar with rebellion, which Edgeworth might equate with the dangers of Irish nationalism. As evidenced in the family’s *The Black Book of Edgeworthstown*, 1585-1817 written by Maria Edgeworth’s father, Richard Edgeworth, there was a peasant rebellion in 1641 (civil unrest in England) and 1689 (Jacobean uprising that was later crushed by King William in 1690) (114). In 1798, the Edgeworth family was again in danger at their home in Longford due to an uprising with the French and Irish Catholics, then when Protestant mobs accused Maria’s father of collaborating with the rebels (Kim 117).
"What parts do the invention and development of whiteness play in the construction of what is loosely described as," in this case, British identity in comparison Edgeworth’s construction of blackness? What are Edgeworth’s “notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability and availability on non-blacks who held, resisted, explored, or altered those notions” (11)?

One may conclude that Edgeworth’s construction of literary whiteness affirms the hegemonic white British national identity that was being formed in the nineteenth century. While Edgeworth constructs Ireland as part of Great Britain, not a just colony of it, she imagines a Britain that continues territorial and hierarchical relationships between the wealthy landowners and the Irish tenants. Her Irish characters do not liberate themselves from the influence and power of England. Edgeworth suggests that the Irish need England as various characters like Glenthorn and Lord Colambre go to England to get an education or marry into families somehow representative of the English/Irish connection. The marriage between Colambre and Grace Nugent Reynolds in *The Absentee* represents such a union. A character’s literary whiteness depends on this connection to Englishness. Maintaining an Anglicized center of British national identity limits the autonomy and individuality of Irish people of all classes and excludes those Irish characters who do not easily fit into this partially Anglicized white British identity.

Edgeworth constructs literary blackness as the site of rebellion and lower class status, as well as linguistic, educational, and cultural divergence from Anglicized, literary whiteness. *Ennui*’s Glenthorn represents this literary whiteness, while Christy symbolizes literary blackness as he is not able to govern his family or himself when he is in the position to become successfully British. *As Ireland and Empire*’s Stephen Howe
asks, “Was home rule then to be a means, not of fulfilling a distinct Irish destiny, but of strengthening a wider sense of Britishness, making Ireland at last a contented province of Britain?” (41). Whereas Howe describes Irish destiny and Britishness as two different goals, Edgeworth sees Irish destiny as part of strengthening this sense of British identity in Ireland. Edgeworth entrusts the British Glenthorn, born from an Irish family and educated in England, with the melioration of his Irish tenants, while O’Donoghoe, Irish born but lacking Anglicization in culture or education, is powerless and unable to improve the life of his own family. However, Edgeworth also hints that education and breeding are not all that is needed to be British; there is a racial divide that O’Donoghoe cannot cross. While Edgeworth tries to eradicate the differences that previously separated Irishness from Britishness and to promote a sense of British white hybridity, she also reinforces British cultural, religious, and racial hegemony.

Mr. Devereux tells his friend, the insecure Glenthorn, that despite his lack of confidence in his own intellect, one may not know one’s natural abilities, for “You can no more judge of a mind in ignorance than of a plant in darkness” (230). Edgeworth shows that ignorance is a forgivable offense if one, like Glenthorn, tries to correct that fault through enlightenment, reform, and education. However, in this instance, Glenthorn is set up in opposition to his foster brother Christy O’Donoghoe in language, class, agency, and especially ignorance, due to Christy’s own literary blackness as an Africanist character. Both foster brothers are ignorant of their lineage and of the life that has been denied to them since Ellinor switched both infants so many years ago. However, while Glenthorn escapes the darkness of ignorance, Christy, trapped in the ignorance of his Irish peasant upbringing, becomes a symbol of darkness, ignorance, and lack of agency.
Although Christy O'Donogho e does not possess simian features, descriptions of racial difference become part of Edgeworth's depiction of Christy and his working class status. Christy’s darkness appears literally, as Edgeworth describes his physical features as colored by blackness. When Ellinor confesses Christy’s actual lineage, she describes him as one who is now slaving at the forge, to give me the earnings of his labour; he that lives, and has lived all his days, upon potatoes and salt, and is content; he who has the face and the hands so disguised with the smoke and the black, that yourself asked him t'other day did he ever wash his face since he was born--I tell ye, he it is who should live in this castle, and sleep on that soft bed, and be lord of all here--he is the true and real Lord Glenthorn, and to the wide world I'll make it known.

(272)

“The smoke and the black” that colors Glenthorn’s face and hands comes from his work, where one might be reminded of the image of laborers such as miners who were similarly darkened by the nature of their work. The word “disguised” suggests that Christy’s darkness is not natural, hereditary, or permanent as one’s skin color would indicate; he is naturally white but due to his work he passes for black, leaving Christy symbolically like the Irish: white but not white and passing as the “other.” This physical blackness, however, is not just connected to his work but also to a lifetime spent among Irish peasantry, whereby the blackness of his hands and face represent dirtiness, his poverty, and his upbringing. One is left to assume that his natural whiteness would show if he entered a different class status, got a job that did not resemble manual labor, and lived in Glenthorn Castle as the real Lord Glenthorn would.
However, Christy’s blackness appears again as Edgeworth depicts his shock at hearing that he is the heir of Glenthorn Castle; he is described as standing "astonished; and, his eyes opening wide, showed a great circle of white in his black face” (281). Once again, Christy is shown to be a conflation of blackness and whiteness. Edgeworth describes the whiteness of his eyes and the blackness of his face as natural to his appearance in this description, as Edgeworth does not place this blackness in the context of Christy’s labor. Finally, Glenthorn himself says, “when I declared that I relinquished to him his hereditary title and lawful property, my auditors looked alternately at me and at my foster-brother, seeming to think it impossible that a man, with face and hands so black as Christy's usually were known to be, could become an earl” (289). Christy is described as embodying a symbolic blackness that marks him more than the scar on his scalp from his Irish childhood or the cut on his head that marks his relationship to the Glenthorn lineage. Glenthorn, in all his literary whiteness, defines himself, his education and his success against Christy’s blackness.

Slaves, Irish peasants, Africans and Gaels were often excluded from Edgeworth’s bourgeois image of British whiteness. In But the Irish Sea Betwixt Us, Andrew Murphy states that the English distinguished the Indians “of the better sort” from others to see who would interact and integrate best into English society. Edgeworth does this as well as she distinguishes between what Murphy terms the “ordinary” Irish and the Irish of a “better sort.” The latter “will be transformed to become English,” and the former will be distinguished as racially different and “will simply be banished from the world of the court and the world of English or British identity” (Murphy 141).
This blackness is symbolic of the darkness “of a mind in ignorance” that Devereux discusses with Glenthorn. Though Christy has the chance, through returning to the class of his birthright, to improve his family’s lot as heir to Glenthorn castle, he and his family are still victims of their own ignorance. After hearing of Christy’s failures, Glenthorn realizes, “My poor foster-brother…had not sufficient prudence or strength of mind to conduct his own family” (309). While Christy wrestles with his own ignorance, he writes that Glenthorn is finding his own enlightenment; “my dear foster-brother…is going away too, beyond sea to England, to finish making a lawyer of himself in London” (310).

Christy’s blackness is a physical representation of ignorance, poverty, and static identity. Although the novel preaches the equality of opportunity for everyone, this vision of British upward mobility excludes those, like the Irish peasant, who are characterized by literary blackness. When asked how Glenthorn’s agent Mr. M’Leod has improved the lives of his tenants, he explains his compassionate paternalism through which he educates the lower class Irish and instructs them on how to live more productive lives. He says, “we led them where we could not have driven; and raised in them, by little and little, a taste for conveniences and comforts…the taste and ambition were excited, to work the people went to gratify them” (215). However, he does admit, “we could not expect to do much with the old, whose habits were fixed” and that instead “if we have done any thing, it was by beginning with the children: a race of our own training has now grown up, and they go on in the way they were taught” (216).

Edgeworth applies this system of assimilation and exclusion throughout her novels as there are Irish characters who can access Britishness, while there are other Irish
characters of a different sort who, due to their lack of education and upbringing, cannot. This lack marks these Irish characters as racially different from their British counterparts.

The literary blackness of his Christy and his family symbolizes their inability to break through the darkness of ignorance. At first he seems content living as he has been; he says, “I’ve al I want in the world, a good mother, and a good wife, and good childer, and a reasonable good little cabin…and work enough always, and not called on to slave” (281). While this appears to be a celebration of working class Irish peasantry, M’Leod and Glenthorn, as paternalistic landlords, encourage them to improve this kind of life. Ellinor’s house is “a wretched-looking, low, and mud-walled cabin…a dunghill was before the only window…and close to the door was a puddle of the dirtiest water” (186). She, like Christy and the older population that M’Leod has left to their old ways, refuses to change neither through wealth or education; Glenthorn realizes, “I did not consider, that there is often, amongst uncultivated people, a mixture of obstinate and lazy content…that it must take time to change local and national habits and prejudices” (200). The O’Donoghues’ poverty is part of Edgeworth’s representations of blackness. The lack of education, the ignorance about wealth, and working class lifestyle as a blacksmith literally and figuratively blacken Christy’s face and exclude him and his family from participating in the same British whiteness that Glenthorn and his Irish upper class compatriots, Lady Geraldine and Mr. Devereux, do.28 Literary blackness represents the exclusion of not just cultural and class differences but racial ones as well. Not every

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28 Lady Geraldine is a figure of Irish independence, as she says that the country does not need to be lorded over (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 223). But she and Mr. Devereux marry and head to India under appointment, whereby one assumes that this is in service of the British Empire. While the Irish will not be lorded over, Edgeworth’s upper class Irish characters, as part of the British elite, lord over others.
novel that speaks of blackness signals this exclusion, but it does when it is presented in
such a way that aligns those described as black with “otherness” and lack of that which
the British are shown to have and that correspond to a stereotypical primitiveness that
British “civilization” defines itself against.

BELINDA AND THE EXCLUSION OF BLACK HYBRIDITY

Paul Gilroy asserts, “Notions of the primitive and the civilized which had been
integral to premodern understanding of ‘ethnic’ differences became fundamental
cognitive and aesthetic markers in the processes which generated a constellation of
subject positions in which Englishness, Christianity, and other ethnic and racialized
attributes would finally give way to the dislocating dazzle of ‘whiteness’ (Gilroy 57).
Gilroy lists just a few Britons of African origin who participated prominently in British
society: Olaudah Equiano, Jacobin Robert Wedderburn, William Davidson, hanged for
his involvement in the Cato conspiracy to blow up the cabinet in 1819, and other
controversial figures who were not outside the pale socially (59). However, in
Edgeworth’s texts, especially Belinda, black characters aren’t allowed to fully participate
in Britishness as these men were. Belinda illustrates Edgeworth’s practice of excluding
characters associated with blackness; in this case, her later editions of Belinda reject
Africanist characters associated with blackness and who are of African origin.29
Characters representing literary blackness are left at the fringes of British society, as
Edgeworth shows through the characters Mr. Vincent and Juba, who are especially

29 Also compare Edgeworth’s treatment of Virginia, described as a “foreign beauty” and
her father Hartley, a West Indian planter, engaged to English captain who saved Hartley
from slave rebellion, although they are not racially excluded as Mr. Vincent and Juba are.
marginalized in the later versions of this novel as Africanist characters. Young argues, “sexuality was the spearhead of racial contact” (5). Mr. Vincent’s courtship of Belinda and Juba’s marriage to Lucy in Edgeworth’s *Belinda* represent this racial contact that Edgeworth at first seems to celebrate in her first version of this novel and then avoids in later versions. As I conclude, I will briefly examine Edgeworth’s novel *Belinda* and its complicated treatment of Creole and Black characters as she shows her goals of excluding their Blackness from Britain’s hybrid whiteness and as she establishes her desire to police interracial contact and sexuality.

In *Belinda*, Edgeworth continues to represent a character’s blackness as “other.” In comparison with her first version of *Belinda*, Edgeworth’s second version more explicitly exhibits her exclusion of her Africanist characters as she thwarts these black characters from marriage and sexual contact with her white British female characters, Belinda and Lucy. The original version of *Belinda* excludes the West Indian Creole Mr. Vincent because of his emotional weaknesses more than any particular racial difference; one may say Edgeworth’s text is even more progressive than typical literary representations of Creoles in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This original version also incorporated Mr. Vincent’s “negro” servant Juba, who marries Lucy and is accepted by the other characters as a new member of British society. However, in order for Edgeworth’s *Belinda* to be considered a British novel by both the literary community and Edgeworth’s own father, it had to extract the black characters from her image of British society.

Edgeworth portrays Juba and Mr. Vincent in the first version of this text as included in British identity to some extent. Juba is explicitly and frequently described as
"negro" or “black,” the "black servant of the name Juba,” Mr. Vincent's “black,” one of the “Jamaica negroes,” and “the ignorant negro” (219-223). Juba is so subservient that Mr. Vincent names his obedient dog after him. Mr. Vincent says, “Well, Juba, the man, is the best man - and Juba, the dog, is the best dog, in the universe” (346). Edgeworth exoticizes Juba’s English as she calls it “gibberish” (446-7). He succumbs to the Obeah superstition, and as a “poor fellow out of his sense” Juba comically exclaims, “O, massa, Juba die! If Juba go back, Juba die!” (220).

Despite some of these derogatory terms that establish him as an object of ridicule, Juba is accepted as a noble and subservient black character who finds love and dignity in marrying a white woman in his own working class. Edgeworth describes him as an “industrious, ingenious, good natured youth,” and she presents Juba in this first edition as part of Britain’s racial hybrid national identity (244). When Lady Anne asks Lucy, Lady Delacour’s servant, if she had “overcome [her] fear of poor Juba's black face,” Lucy blushes, displaying her affection for Juba. Her grandmother responds, “we are not afraid of Juba's black face now” (244). Lucy shows her devotion for Juba by wearing the Angola necklace he gave her as a gift, a visual conflation of her English identity and Juba’s African heritage. Juba’s language, while depicted as comical, also corresponds to British linguistic hybridity of English/African identity. During their marriage ceremony, Juba sings a song “in his broken dialect, a little song in honour of his benefactor” (258). Furthermore, his lyrics embody a linguistic hybridity, as they are a “mixture of English

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30 Edgeworth characterizes the speech of the Jewish character Solomon as “gibberish” as well, and she says Solomon’s words “scarcely intelligible” to Juba (446-7). Edgeworth treats both Solomon and Juba as unintelligible foreigners in this scene; however, unlike Solomon, Juba does not exist on the fringes of British society, due in part to his relationship with Lucy, a white British servant.
and of his native language; they described in the strongest manner what had been his feelings” (258). In conversation with Belinda, Mr. Vincent mentions the banjore, “an African instrument of which the negroes are particularly fond,” and the instrument is featured more with Juba and marks him as both African and English (239). In this first edition, Juba becomes an image of multiracial British hybridity through his marital relationship with Lucy.

With Mr. Vincent’s character in this early edition, Edgeworth breaks a literary trend of villainizing the West Indian Creole character. Wylie Sypher’s Guinea’s Captive Kings (1969) argues that the tradition of criticizing the Creole characters illustrated “the hatred of the West Indian [that] must have mounted when the British read how Creole women supervised the whipping of slaves...” (18). Various writers in the seventeenth century spoke of “the carefree ways of the Creoles, the treacherous behavior of Negro slaves, and the perfections of the Caribs,” showing that opinion varied on the lifestyle of the West Indies, but for the most part “the West Indian himself, the ‘Creole’ as he was called, was an odious figure in the eyes of most” (Sypher 39, 86). Edgeworth’s constructs a more forgiving image of the Creole in Mr. Vincent, who is described as "perfectly at ease in company, and all that was uncommon about him appeared foreign" (Edgeworth, Belinda 217). His foreign temperament rather than his foreign appearance forces Mr. Vincent to the fringes of British identity. Unlike Edgeworth’s image of the “negro” Juba, Mr. Vincent’s racial makeup is not as clearly defined as he maintains a liminal position between literary whiteness and blackness, although Belinda does not
reject him for this reason in this first edition. The description of Mr. Vincent’s appearance, his “large dark eyes, an aquiline nose, fine hair, and a sun-burnt complexion, which gave him a manly appearance,” may mirror this liminality, yet it does not define Mr. Vincent as a black character (217).

Nash points out that although Vincent is “loosely positioned as white,” he is also associated with the black characters in the novel with whom he was raised and from whom he acquired his gambling habits (Nash 4). Edgeworth writes, “Mr. Vincent was a Creole,” and the explanatory notes at the end of this (first) edition of Belinda says that a Creole, according to the sixteenth-century definition, is "a person born and naturalized in the West Indies but of European...or African negro race" (217, 495). However, the note ends with the observation that, "Mr. Vincent suggests that however 'pure' the lineage, once in the setting of the aboriginal, the racial boundaries began to blur." Like Juba, whose language and interracial marriage mark his English/African hybridity, Mr. Vincent is a racially ambiguous character through his association to the West Indies and literary blackness.

Yet the text focuses on Mr. Vincent’s moral weaknesses rather than the perceived inferiority based on his skin color. According to the narrator, Mr. Vincent the Creole has a temper and “moral instinct” that is “fallacious…unenlightened or uncontrolled by reason or religion” (428). In the first version of Belinda, Mr. Vincent is shunned because of his temperament, not his racial association with Juba and black characters in general. Mr. Vincent’s emotional weaknesses may seem to be based on his racial ambiguities and

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31 Harvey believes that Vincent was unable to marry Belinda because of his “racial ambiguities as a Creole” and his resulting status as “racial taint” (Harvey 4). This is not shown in the first edition as much as it becomes a prominent theme in Edgeworth’s later, revised versions of Belinda.
stereotypes about West Indians and their improper associations with their African slaves. Yet Edgeworth depicts her French characters exhibiting similar moral weaknesses, particularly in *Ormond*, due to their cultural liberalism not because of their race.

Edgeworth comments not only on the weakness of Mr. Vincent as a Creole man, but of Creole women as well. As Mr. Vincent speaks of Mrs. Freke’s bad qualities, he says, "Our creole women are all softness, grace, delicacy -" to which Mr. Percival adds, "And indolence" (233). When Belinda asks what Mr. Vincent thinks of West Indian ladies, he responds, "West-Indian ladies!...Surely Miss Portman cannot imagine that I am this instant thinking of any West Indian lady!...I have learnt to admire European beauty, European excellence" (237). Mr. Vincent fails in his courtship of Belinda because while he appreciates European aesthetic, he is unable to obtain Anglicized British values and succumbs to stereotypical West Indian weaknesses.

In the 1810 edition of *Belinda*, Edgeworth rewrote the romantic relationships between Mr. Vincent and Belinda and between Juba and Lucy; the roles of these Africanist characters were diminished dramatically (xxii). Katherine Kirkpatrick concludes, “it suggests that in order for *Belinda* to merit inclusion in a series defining the British novel, Edgeworth had to make her colonial characters less visible” (xxii). The new version appeared in Mrs. Barbauld’s British Novelists Series. Kirkpatrick argues that *Belinda* could not, in its original form, be included in this British series because “To be British was to be English, and to be English was to be at least middle class and white” (xxii). Although Edgeworth attempts to paint a more inclusive image of British hybridity and to change the discourse about British whiteness that previously excluded the Irish, she ultimately submits to a middle class, white, Anglicized version of British identity that
excludes a blackened, working class Christy O’Donoghoe and that rejects the literary
blackness of Juba and Mr. Vincent. In Edgeworth’s first version of Belinda, Juba’s
marriage to the English farm-girl servant assigned him to her English class and to British
society in general. Though in English society such mixed marriages were not unheard of,
Belinda writes to Mrs. Barbauld that she has changed the marriage between Juba and
Lucy, because “My father says that gentlemen have horrors upon this subject, and would
draw conclusions very unfavorable to a female writer who appeared to recommend such
unions; as I do not understand the subject, I trust to his better judgment” (quoted in
Harvey 3).

In this 1810 revised edition of the Edgeworth's Belinda, Edgeworth sets the
Creole and colonial West Indies against British identity rather than incorporating it as
part of Britain’s hybridity. With Ireland no longer tied to colonial identity, Edgeworth
creates a colonial other in the black/Creole character who is barred from being British. In
the revised edition, Mr. Vincent and Juba are excluded Africanist characters. In a letter
to her aunt, Edgeworth writes that she revised Belinda so that Lucy marries a character
named James Jackson “because my father has great delicacies and scruples of conscience
about encouraging such marriages…poor Juba has only the pleasure of playing the
Banjore and dancing at the wedding” (xxvii). Edgeworth replaces the passage describing
Lucy’s affinity for Juba’s black face with a scene in which Lucy speaks of her attraction
for the white Englishman James Jackson while black Juba is left to resume his
performative stance, working for English society rather than being a part of it. The rest
of the passage is purged of any words pointing to blackness.
Kirkpatrick also shows a change in the text in which the exclusion of black Juba also explains the racial exclusion of Mr. Vincent. Edgeworth writes to her aunt that in the novel’s third volume, the courtship between Mr. Vincent and Belinda does not get as far as it does in the first edition, in which Belinda forms an emotional attachment to Mr. Vincent and contemplates marrying him; she has no feelings for him or inkling to marry him in this later version. Edgeworth censors scenes in which there previously were modest displays of affection between Belinda and Mr. Vincent or in which a particular character encouraged a relationship between the two of them. In earlier versions, Lady Anne encourages Belinda to marry Mr. Vincent, but whereas in the first version of *Belinda* she laughs at the idea of Caliban representing the threatening specter of the bestial West Indian, in the second version, Belinda is the one to mention the threat of Caliban as a legitimate symbol of the dangerous racial ambiguity of Creole identity (xxxii). Edgeworth rewrites Mr. Vincent’s courtship and Juba’s marriage to Englishwomen and policies interracial sexual contact in these later versions of *Belinda*. Kirkpatrick states, “readers of the 1810 edition were assured that the alliance between this English lady and her West Indian suitor was never very probable” (xxx). There would be no threat of a marriage between an Englishwoman and her Creole suitor or of a hybrid, biracial offspring perverting the British whiteness.

In both *Belinda* and *Ennui*, Edgeworth constructs Africanist characters, Mr. Vincent, Juba, and Christy O’Donoghoe, whose literary blackness is the site of exclusion

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32 In the earlier versions of *Belinda*, it is Lady Delacour who says, in a conversation about love and one’s attraction to good qualities in a romantic partner, people can “grow accustomed to disagreeable things…But at this rate, my dear, I do not doubt, but you might become accustomed to Caliban.” Belinda laughs and replies, “My belief in the reconciling power of custom does not go quite so far…It does not extend to Caliban, or even to la belle et la bête” (34).
from British identity. Christy’s blackness symbolizes his poverty, ignorance, powerlessness, and static identity; he is unwilling to change and unable to embrace English middle class values. As a poor Irishman with no standard education, Christy is not white enough or worthy enough to fulfill Irish destiny and preserve British national identity. Mr. Vincent and Juba’s connection to West Indian blackness excludes them from marrying into and thereby polluting the purity of British whiteness, which embraces an image of hybridity as long as it does not include the inferiority of blackness and African identity.

In 1834 Edgeworth expressed some disillusionment about Ireland: “It is impossible to draw Ireland as it now is in a book fiction – realities are too strong, party passions too violent…Really, though I wrote a story called The Absentee I begin to think that it is but reasonable that a country be rendered fit to live in before we complain more of Absentees” (xx-xxi). However, Edgeworth fails to admit that in her earlier works, she ignored these strong realities and violent party passions in order to create a more harmonious image of Ireland and its place in British identity. In constructing a Britishness that embraced English middle class values, English education, and limited the extent of its racial diversity and multiculturalism, Edgeworth imagined a certain segment of the Irish population becoming British without tackling Irish history and the anger that came from British colonization. While her goals of creating a heterogeneous British identity that recognized its own racial hybridity and diversity were pioneering, Edgeworth created a British national identity that was exclusive according to class, education, and race.
CONCLUSION

In 1829, Sir Walter Scott wrote regarding Maria Edgeworth that through her rendering her Irish characters accessible to an English audience, she “may be truly said to have done more towards completing the Union than perhaps all the legislative enactments by which it has been followed up” (Scott 352). Scott accurately sees Edgeworth’s novels to be both literary and political endeavors. Within her coming of age, moral tales, Edgeworth imagines a British community that is inclusive to Irish identity and an Irish identity that, free from its corrupt and nationalistic past, embraces white, middle class British values.

However, Edgeworth’s flaw in her novels lies in her cavalier attitude toward the political history she attempts to document and in her emphasis on finding historical significance in personal morality over the public events that affect a great number of people. Edgeworth shapes her history of Irish-British relations, the political and moral message that this union represents, according to personal, private actions of her British characters rather than the larger historical events that affect the public. She asserts, “it is only by a comparison of their actual happiness or misery in the privacy of domestic life that we can form a just estimate of the real reward of virtue, or the real punishment of vice” (Rackrent 61). Edgeworth privileges her role as biographer of a family’s personal history over her role historian, often overlooking or distorting the real problems thwarting an amelioration of Anglo-Irish affairs and thereby failing to rewrite the racial stigma or Irish identity.

Edgeworth focuses her history on displays of one’s moral character as representative of national character. Through this approach, Edgeworth can purge
Ireland of its association with its tumultuous, colonized past as characters engage in their own moral reform. This tactic, as morally relevant as it may be, blinds Edgeworth from seeing the scope of Irish history and the concerns of the underprivileged Irish peasantry who have been the subject of injustice and abuse from the British empire as a colony, as some politically active Irish people would claim at the time.

When Edgeworth speaks of Irish history, as she does extensively through Thady and the Rackrent family, she stigmatizes Irish history and shows that Irish liberation lies in Ireland extricating itself from its past and pursuing a future with Britain. As the Rackrents symbolize this Irish past, Edgeworth explains in that “The race of Rackrents has long since been extinct in Ireland”; they are characters “which could no more be met with at present in Ireland” (63). Syndey Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* mythologizes Irish culture and elevates the importance of national history, while Edgeworth denigrates the Rackrents in order to dismiss the Irish past, pre-1801 Union, as nothing more than what Kathryn Kirkpatrick calls “ancestral baggage.”

By ignoring the past, she also imagines an Irish identity that becomes more dependent on British, Anglo-centric identity.

While Owenson reestablishes Irish culture and history – Gaelic, Irish kings, and Catholicism – as the origins of Irish identity, Edgeworth suggests that the Irish can

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34 For other examples, see *Castle Rackrent’s* The Glossary: Edgeworth discusses the rituals involved in funerals, but then writes, for example, "We are told, that formerly the feet (the metrical feet) of the Caoinan were much attended to; but on the decline of the Irish bards these feet were gradually neglected, and the Caonian fell into a sort of slipshod metre amongst women" (125). Then she states, "It is curious to observe how customs and ceremonies degenerate…but it is my opinion it is all idle talk, and people are after being wiser now..."
sacrifice memories and legacies of such a past, even as it means sacrificing their nationalism and identity. The Irish may now look back at this past like those who “have acquired new habits, and a new consciousness.” Edgeworth maintains that “Nations as well as individuals gradually lose attachment to their identity” through separating themselves from the legacies of their ancestors as "Ireland loses her identity by a union with Great Britain.” At the end of Castle Rackrent, Edgeworth articulates her desire to separate the Irish from their past as she imagines their future lying in a union with Britain.

In Ormond, Maria Edgeworth emphasizes the transitory nature of history once again. Whereas Castle Rackrent addresses the importance of private morality and family affairs, Edgeworth uses the pomp and circumstance of French high society to prove the transitory impermanence of national history. Ormond visits pre-revolutionary France during the reign of Louis the Fifteenth (253). While the crowd at Versilles in which he stands is, at that moment, consumed by monarchal pageantry, "all the French national eagerness about the health, the looks, of le roi, all the attachment, le devouement...for the reigning monarch...should in a few years pass away, and be no more seen" (254). Edgeworth describes how well loved Antoinette became: "the people erected to her honour a vast pyramid of snow - Frail memorial! - "These marks of respect were almost as transitory as the snowy pyramid"" (259). Edgeworth’s view of history in general does not give much value to the past, at least the past of those countries whose national histories have yet to be shaped by a relationship to Britain.

In Ennui, Edgeworth continues to view Irish history as mainly inconsequential to British identity. When he learns about his actual birthright as the heir to the Glenthorn
estate, Christy O’Donoghoe, confused, says, “your honour's jesting me about them kings of Ireland, that they say the O'Donoghues was once: but that's what I never think on, that's all idle talk for the like of me, for sure that's a long time ago, and what use going back to it? One might as well be going back to Adam, that was the father of all, but which makes no differ now” (281).

At the conclusion of *Ormond*, Edgeworth declares, "To those who think the mind is a kingdom…it may be agreeable to hear, that Ormond continued to enjoy the empire which he had gained over himself..." (297). Ormond’s British identity depends on imagining a place and nation to which he can relate and in which he can locate himself. However, Edgeworth only gives this autonomous self-determination and self-definition to the wealthy, educated, landowning Harry Ormonds, Lord Glenthorns and Colambres of the world. By privileging their place in history, Edgeworth silences the struggles of the Irish peasantry that challenge the idea of the 1801 Union and of British supremacy and upward mobility. According to Elizabeth Kim’s “Maria Edgeworth’s The Grateful Negro: A site for Rewriting Rebellion,” the Act of Union of 1800 “ultimately reinforced Anglo-Irish Protestant authority in the early nineteenth century” (118). But it also solidified Catholics in a fight for independence that would derail the image of British/Irish identity Edgeworth attempted to create in her novels. Edgeworth’s confession in 1834 that “It is impossible to draw Ireland as it now is in a book of fiction” reveals that the Unionist Ireland that she tried to draw in her novels perhaps only existed in fiction. The Ireland she depicted may have been possible to draw in her books, but impossible to find in real life.


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“James W. Von Brunn: Holocaust Museum Shooting Suspect is White Supremacist.”


