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Sharon Smith

South Dakota State University, sharon.smith@sdstate.edu

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Juba's "Black Face" / Lady Delacour's "Mask": Plotting Domesticity in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*

Sharon Smith

South Dakota State University

"Well, Lucy," said lady Anne, "have you overcome your fear of poor Juba's black face?" The girl reddened, smiled, and looked at her grandmother, who answered for her in an arch tone, "O, yes, my lady! We are not afraid of Juba's black face now. . . . [T]he eyes are used to a face after a time, and then it's nothing."¹

In the first edition of Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*, published in 1801, Juba, an African slave, marries Lucy, an English farm girl. As the above conversation between Lady Anne Percival and Lucy's grandmother suggests, the novel is characterized in part by the colonialist impulse to assimilate Juba into English domesticity, to erase the signs of his cultural and racial "otherness" until his blackness becomes "nothing." Edgeworth's representation of marriage as a fundamental part of this endeavor made some of her readers uncomfortable; this included Edgeworth's father, who convinced his daughter to remove the marriage of Juba and Lucy from later editions of the novel. According to recent critics, a consideration of the marriage's inclusion in and subsequent erasure from the novel is essential to an understanding of Juba's role in the text.² Just as essential is a consideration of the connection that Edgeworth creates between the African slave and another Englishwoman in the text, the wealthy and dissipated London socialite Lady Delacour. In *Belinda*, this connection allows Edgeworth to explore a version of womanhood that promotes domesticity by negotiating the boundary between domestic and public life; at the same time, however, it reveals the anxieties surrounding this understanding of womanhood.

Edgeworth's novel configures Lady Delacour as a plotting woman who bridges the public/private divide, revealing domesticity to be as much a public construct as a private reality. In fact, in the novel's concluding scene, domesticity is represented as a public performance that shapes private interactions.

Early in the novel, Lady Delacour's public pursuits, which are driven by her desire for admiration and applause, are described as performative:

Abroad and at home, Lady Delacour was two different persons. Abroad she appeared all life, spirit, and good humour—at home, listless, fretful and melancholy; she seemed like a spoiled actress off the stage, over stimulated by applause and exhausted by the exertions of supporting a fictitious character. When her house was filled with well-dressed crowds, when it blazed with lights, and resounded with the music of dancing, Lady Delacour, in the character of the mistress of the revels, shone the soul and spirit of pleasure and frolic. But the moment the company retired, when the music ceased, and the lights were extinguishing, the spell was dissolved. (10–11)

As the conclusion of the novel makes clear, it is not Lady Delacour's penchant for performance that is problematic; rather, the problem lies in the way she has plotted her performance, a purely "fictitious" display which is designed to hide "domestic misery" rather than promote domestic happiness (10). For Edgeworth, an adherence to domestic ideals is key to the improvement of human relations within both private and public contexts; however, as Edgeworth's representation of Lord and Lady Delacour's marriage suggests, domestic sympathies, though natural, do not always flow naturally, and domestic roles must be learned. Even in private life, the words and actions through which these affections are expressed must frequently be performed, and public representations of domesticity function as indispensable models. The representation of domesticity that closes the novel, a representation that is as performed as it is natural, is the culmination of Lady Delacour's plotting. However, while this performance is plotted, or constructed, it is not entirely "fictitious" in the manner of Lady Delacour's earlier public displays. Rather than hiding a private reality from which it is entirely disconnected, Lady Delacour's later plotting gives rise to a public performance that functions as a stimulant to and a channel for domestic sympathies and, in doing so, shapes private interactions in a positive way. In this way, Edgeworth acknowledges the positive potential inherent in the power Lady Delacour claims.

However, by connecting Lady Delacour with the figure of the colonized other, whose domestication was frequently read as a performance that hid threatening, rebellious impulses, Edgeworth also identifies this power as a source of anxiety. She suggests that while the public performance of domesticity can indeed be positive, it is never completely stable; in fact, it is subject to disruption and (when plotted by a woman) can serve as a potential site for rebellion. Edgeworth, though she acknowledges the important social contributions women can make by exerting themselves within the public sphere, is nonetheless plagued by the persistent belief that women's public activities constitute a threat to domesticity, an ideal she adheres to and supports throughout

her body of work. The anxieties attendant upon women's increased participation in public life emerge within the context of the parallel subplots involving Lady Delacour—a hybrid figure whose performance of domesticity blurs the boundary between public and private life—and Juba—the domesticated but always potentially rebellious “other” who threatens the boundary between colonizer and colonized. Alison Harvey discusses the many connections Edgeworth creates between Englishwomen, West Indian Creoles, and African-Caribbean slaves in *Belinda*. According to Harvey, Edgeworth's exploration of the intersections between gender and race exposes the degree to which white, male colonial power “others” both women and people of color. This exploration, Harvey asserts, supports Edgeworth's critique of colonialism.³ I argue, however, that the parallel subplots Edgeworth forges between Lady Delacour and Juba reveal her examination of the connections between race and gender to be problematic. These parallel subplots allude to Edgeworth's uncertainties regarding women's public activities by representing African slaves as superstitious, irrational, rebellious, potentially violent, and incapable of managing their freedom. While Edgeworth critiques certain elements of colonialism, this critique is ultimately undermined by her own propensity to write within the terms provided by colonial discourse without sufficiently examining them.

As Edgeworth's novel suggests, late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century conceptions of women's role within public and private life were being constructed during a period in which Britain increasingly understood itself as a colonial empire. As a result, representations of English womanhood were sometimes configured within terms characteristic of colonial discourse, a discourse that represented the colonized person not as an individual speaking subject, but as a mere extension of the colonizer's identity. In *Belinda*, Juba functions not as a distinct character, but as the racialized reflection of Lady Delacour's hybridity and the embodiment of the disruptive impulses that drive her considerable, though never total, resistance to the domesticating influence exerted by the novel's heroine. Even more than the process of assimilation, which the novel ultimately rejects as impossible and undesirable, it is this troubling configuration of character that threatens to bring about Juba's “nothingness” within the text.⁴

According to Homi K. Bhabha, representations of self and other within colonial discourse are reflective not of the actual relationship between colonizing and colonized individuals but of the divided identity of the colonist. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha writes, “The ambivalent identification of the racist world . . . turns on the idea of man as his alienated image; not Self and Other but the otherness of the Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity.”⁵ The identity of the colonist is fraught with tension, Bhabha argues, because colonialism necessarily disturbs a vision of society that represents the transition from nature to culture—from the human psyche to civil society—as seamless. According to Bhabha, “The civil state is the ultimate expression of the

innate ethical and rational bent of human nature."⁶ However, the destruction, violence, and hatred that characterize colonialism threaten to disrupt the notion of civic virtue that creates a sense of cohesiveness between self and society; destruction, violence, and hatred must therefore be incorporated into a new understanding of civic virtue that rationalizes the colonial project. The devastation of the colonized culture, for example, is represented as a necessary step in the process of civilizing and modernizing "the native."⁷

But, according to Bhabha, the disruption that colonialism creates within the social identity of the colonizing culture remains in spite of that culture's attempts to validate its actions. He describes this disruption as a splitting or "perversion" and argues that the representative figure of this perversion "is the image of post-Enlightenment man tethered to, *not* confronted by, his dark reflection, the shadow of colonized man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his actions at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being."⁸ Within the discourse of the colonizing culture, representations of otherness fail to authentically describe colonized subjects. Instead, these representations emerge out of the "disturbing distance" that exists between the "colonialist Self" and the "colonized Other."⁹ The "figure of colonial otherness" that exists within colonial discourse is little more than "the white man's artifice inscribed on the black man's body."¹⁰ To a great extent, Bhabha's ideas illuminate the nature of the connection that Edgeworth forges between the characters of Juba and Lady Delacour. Far from speaking to the actual lives of former African slaves transported to England during the eighteenth century, Juba's character functions as an extension of Lady Delacour's and becomes a vehicle for exploring a conception of womanhood that blurs the boundary between public and private life. Concerns about the problematic nature of public womanhood are projected onto the figure of the African slave, or—to use Bhabha's words—they are "inscribed on the black man's body." Juba's character is the product of the "white man's," or in this case, the white woman's, "artifice."

The parallels Edgeworth draws between Lady Delacour and Juba materialize within the context of her exploration of the relationship between plotting and domesticity, specifically the antithetical plotting that occurs between Harriet Freke and Belinda Portman. Alison A. Case, who offers one of the few sustained studies of women's plotting in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction, associates plotting with narration, and the female plotters she identifies are first-person narrators. However, many of Case's observations are applicable to other kinds of fictional plotters; these include characters who are not narrators, but who nonetheless manipulate events within the narrative in order to claim control over their outcome. According to Case, plotting is a sign of agency and represents "an act of authority."¹¹ Women's plotting, however, is problematic, for it is at odds with the passivity that was generally expected of them. As Case notes, "some of the most consistent threads in Western gender

ideology concern women's purported inability to take purposive action—to be goal-oriented—and the inappropriateness of their assuming certain kinds of authority over others."¹² Case notes that female plotters during the period were often considered "unsavory."¹³ Indeed—following the precedent set by Aphra Behn, Eliza Haywood, and Daniel Defoe early in the period—eighteenth-century fiction is populated with women whose plotting is criminal or sexual in nature.

During the eighteenth century, plotting was also associated with political and social upheaval. This association was informed to a great extent by events that included the actual and supposed plots to assassinate King Charles II at the beginning of the period and the overthrow and execution of King Louis XVI of France toward the end. It was also informed by the numerous slave insurrections that terrified European colonists throughout the century. The plotting of slaves was problematic because, like the plotting of women, it entailed the rejection of a passive role and signified a desire for power and authority. In *Belinda*, Juba comes to represent the threat posed by the plotting slave. Through her association with Juba, Lady Delacour—who is repeatedly "racialized" throughout the text—comes to embody this threat as well. As a result, her plotting, in spite of its positive potential, takes on an ambiguous tone that reveals Edgeworth's own doubts about the possibility of reconciling women's domestic obligations with their desire to construct a public persona.

What Edgeworth would have considered the more ominous qualities of plotting are reflected in the character of Harriet Freke, whose cry of "I hate slavery! *Vive la liberté!*" simultaneously connects her to both slave revolt and political revolution. Notably, the next words Harriet speaks are "I'm a champion for the Rights of Women" (229). As Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick argues, Edgeworth was a supporter of women's rights and women's learning.¹⁴ Nonetheless, Edgeworth was careful to separate her understanding of women's rights from that embodied by Harriet Freke, an understanding that associates women's advancement with social upheaval. For Edgeworth, an improvement in the condition of women should enhance rather than undermine both domestic and social harmony.

While Harriet's plotting undermines social order by threatening the domestic space that helped to support it, *Belinda's* plotting strengthens this order by promoting domestic peace. Not surprisingly, *Belinda* and Harriet attempt to undermine each other's plotting throughout the narrative. Their plotting focuses largely upon the lives of Lady Delacour and Juba, both of whom are subjected to a process of domestication that is meant to culminate in their integration into a stable and harmonious family unit—Lady Delacour must reunite with her husband and child, while Juba must marry Lucy. Lady Delacour's domestication is a process of reformation that becomes necessary after her commitment to a shallow and dissipated social life leaves her not only miserable, but estranged from her husband and child; meanwhile, Juba must undergo a

process of assimilation that will prepare him to participate in the domestic, economic, and cultural activities associated with English life and with Englishness.

Harriet Freke's tireless plotting hinders the process of domestication for both Lady Delacour and Juba. Lady Delacour is already unhappy when she meets and befriends Harriet. Her marriage is failing, for her desire to dominate her husband—the oafish and habitually inebriated Lord Delacour—has been thwarted by his obstinate refusal to be “governed by a wife” (38). Lady Delacour has fared even worse as a mother. Her maternal failures are reflected in the deaths of her first two children (one stillborn, the other unable to sustain life when Lady Delacour's attempts to nurse her prove inadequate), as well as in the neglect of her third child, Helena, who is raised by a nurse until the age of three and then sent away to school several years later.¹⁵ Harriet's plotting exacerbates this already unhappy domestic situation. Two of Harriet's plots in particular render the Delacours' home life nightmarish. First, Harriet arranges for Lady Delacour to take a carriage ride with Colonel Lawless, one of Lady Delacour's admirers, knowing full well that the colonel will attempt to seduce her friend. In response to the attempted seduction, Lord Delacour kills Colonel Lawless in a duel; the guilt both Lord and Lady Delacour experience as a result of his death deepens the misery that already plagues their marriage. Second, Harriet convinces Lady Delacour to dress in men's clothes and engage in a duel with her arch-nemesis, Mrs. Luttridge. When Lady Delacour's overcharged pistol backfires, she receives an injury to her breast, an injury that comes to function as a dreadful symbol of her maternal failures.¹⁶ The pain Lady Delacour experiences as a result of the injury brings about her addiction to laudanum. Meanwhile, her belief that she is dying from the injury leads to her fascination with Methodist literature, a fascination which the novel represents as irrational and superstitious. Harriet's plotting involves Lady Delacour in a downward spiral that moves her farther and farther away from domestic happiness.¹⁷

In *Belinda*, Harriet's attempts to control the plot ultimately prove ineffectual, and this is due largely to Belinda's influence. Like Harriet Freke, Belinda attempts to plot the course of Lady Delacour's life.¹⁸ She endeavors to bring happiness and peace to the Delacour household by moving Lady Delacour closer to the ideal of domestic femininity that she herself represents. As a result of Belinda's encouragement, Lady Delacour begins to perceive her husband's good qualities. In response to his wife's increasing attention and kindness toward him, Lord Delacour spends less time drinking and gambling and more time at home. Belinda also brings Helena back into the household and introduces Lady Delacour to Dr. X—, who weans Lady Delacour from laudanum and initiates the cure of her injured breast.

The conflict between Harriet and Belinda comes to a head when, with the encouragement of Dr. X— and the support of her family, Lady Delacour moves to a house in the country and prepares to undergo surgery on her wounded breast. While there, she believes she is visited by the ghost of Colonel Law-

less and interprets the visitation as a sign that she will not survive the surgery. As Heather Macfadyen notes, Lady Delacour's Methodist readings lead her to entertain this faulty interpretation.¹⁹ Lady Delacour's "cure" begins in earnest when the ghost is revealed to be Harriet Freke in disguise—the appearance of Colonel Lawless is yet another of Harriet's dangerous plots. Belinda is responsible for the discovery; it is she who spies the mysterious figure in the garden and sends Dr. X—and several servants to investigate. Though it is the gardener's "man-trap" that hinders Harriet's escape, it is Belinda who first recognizes her (311). When she does so, she asserts her control over the subplot focusing upon Lady Delacour and essentially exorcises the spirit of Colonel Lawless, a symbol of the Delacours' domestic unhappiness and a representative of Harriet's influence upon Lady Delacour. Soon after Belinda uncovers the truth regarding the supposed specter, Lady Delacour is weaned from both laudanum and Methodism and cured of the painful injury to her breast. She is finally free to embrace life with her husband and daughter. In an effusive speech that marks her transformation into responsible wife and mother, Lady Delacour praises Belinda and identifies her as the one to whom she owes her recovery: "She has saved my life. She has made my life worth saving. She has made me feel my own value. She has made me know my own happiness. She has reconciled me to my husband. She has united me with my child. She has been my guardian angel" (335). As Lady Delacour's speech suggests, Belinda's plotting has undone the damage caused by Harriet's.

A number of the elements that prove central to Lady Delacour's reformation—a reformation that is plotted by Belinda—are repeated in Juba's story.²⁰ It should be noted, however, that while Edgeworth creates numerous parallels between these two characters, she does not develop their stories evenly; the subplot focusing on Lady Delacour is much more elaborate than that focusing on Juba. Far from establishing the equality of these two characters, the parallels that exist between Lady Delacour and Juba underscore the extent to which the novel reduces his entire character to a reflection of several of her character's defining qualities. As a result of her association with the former African slave, Lady Delacour's character gains complexity; his, however, is rendered flat, underdeveloped, stereotypical.

The story of Juba's integration into English society is ultimately a condensed and oversimplified version of the story of Lady Delacour's domestication. Before Juba's acculturation can occur, his attachment to African culture, which is figured as irrational, must be dissolved. Just as Lady Delacour's domestic attachments are undermined by her belief in Methodism, Juba's domestication is threatened by his belief in the Obeah religion, which is represented as the product of his excessive superstition.²¹ Juba's belief in Obeah, which the novel refers to as a "species of sorcery" (221), represents a tie to his African slave culture that must be severed in order to ensure his acculturation into English society. This becomes a particularly dangerous tie in the novel because of its associa-

tion with the threat of slave rebellion.²² As Alan Richardson points out, Obeah during this period was associated “not only with the supernatural or with (in a double sense) ‘black’ magic, but with political power as well, specifically with slave rebellions and the incursions and revolts of West Indian Maroons.”²³ According to Wylie Sypher, colonists during the period lived in continual fear of slave revolt. He writes, “[T]here were uprisings every year from 1730–1740, not to mention the serious disturbances of 1690, 1760, 1795, and 1796.”²⁴ In 1791, the slaves of San Domingo organized a violent revolt and successfully wrested control of the island away from the French; the British became terrified that the same could happen in their own colonies. Slave rebellion remained a very real threat throughout the eighteenth century, and the religion of Obeah was identified as a motivating force behind it. According to Andrew McCann, Obeah ultimately served as an outlet for expressing “the always concealed resentment of the apparently submissive slave.”²⁵ As harmless as Juba seems, his continued belief in Obeah is a threat that must be neutralized; the neutralization of this threat becomes an integral part of his assimilation.

Like Lady Delacour, Juba becomes the focus of Harriet’s and Belinda’s antithetical plotting, as Harriet attempts to disrupt Juba’s domestication while Belinda attempts to promote it. In a scene that anticipates Lady Delacour’s encounter with the supposed ghost of Colonel Lawless, Juba is overcome with fear when he is visited by the figure of an Obeah woman, an “old woman, all in flames” who “appeared at the foot of his bed every night” (221). He interprets her appearance as an omen of his death and is “persuaded she would never let him escape from her power, till she had killed him” (221). Significantly, the appearance of the Obeah woman has been orchestrated by Harriet Freke. In much the same way that she will initiate Lady Delacour’s cure by “exorcising” the spirit of Colonel Lawless, Belinda initiates Juba’s cure when she recognizes that Harriet Freke is responsible for the appearance of the Obeah woman. Juba’s cure is signaled by his marriage to Lucy, which marks his introduction into domestic life. At his wedding, he sings a song in which he

described in the strongest manner what had been his feelings, whilst he was under the terrour of Mrs Freke’s fiery obeah-woman, then his joy on being relieved from these horrors, with the delightful sensations of returning health; and then he suddenly passed to his gratitude to Belinda, the person to whom he owed his recovery. (258)

Just like Lady Delacour, Juba associates Belinda’s plotting with his deliverance. For both Lady Delacour and Juba, this deliverance is marked by their integration into a peaceful, blissful domestic existence.

The story of Juba’s domestication seems, at least on the surface, to reinforce the domestic tale at the core of the novel, a tale that focuses on Lady Delacour’s integration into a harmonious domestic sphere. But Juba’s story is permeated

by the anxiety that his acculturation can never be complete. This anxiety was characteristic of the assimilationist impulse that often informed abolitionist sentiment throughout the eighteenth century. According to Srinivas Aravamudan, the assimilationist endeavor is inevitably accompanied by a certain degree of skepticism. By way of illustration, he points to a trope that, before and during the eighteenth century, denoted the impossibility of any given enterprise: the image of “washing the blackamoor white”—in other words, the image of actually washing the blackness off of an African’s skin until it appears white, what Aravamudan refers to as “epidermal laundering.”²⁶ This trope simultaneously expresses both the desire to bring about the assimilation of the African and skepticism that such an undertaking is possible. This skepticism undermines the stability of Juba’s story and, in turn, calls attention to the instability of Lady Delacour’s own domestic tale.

The attempt to assimilate Juba into English culture is characterized by an effort to “whiten” him. This is most apparent in the conversation Lady Anne Percival has with Lucy and her grandmother. When Lucy’s grandmother asserts that the blackness of Juba’s face has become “nothing,” her words appear to point to the success of the process of assimilation to which the text has subjected Juba. But Juba’s assimilation is never complete; signs of his “otherness” continue to surface in the text. For example, at his wedding, the event that should mark his full integration into white English domesticity, the words Juba sings are a “mixture of English and of his native language” (258). Later in the novel, Mr. Vincent calls attention to Juba’s otherness when he fails to fully distinguish his former servant Juba from his dog, also named Juba. When he tells Belinda, “Juba is the best creature in the world,” Belinda points out his “foible” and asks him if he refers to “Juba, the dog, or Juba, the man” (346).

As the narrative proceeds, there is, indeed, confusion regarding Juba’s identity, for even though he has married Lucy and become a farmer, he still acts as Mr. Vincent’s servant. A scene late in the novel shows Juba returning to Mr. Vincent’s bedchamber after running an errand for him. Instead of tending to his wife and farm, Juba is tending to Mr. Vincent, a fact that is emphasized when Juba begins reading a letter that his wife sends to him at Mr. Vincent’s residence. It is also during this scene that Juba argues with Solomon, a Jewish lender who has come to transact business with Mr. Vincent. Juba and Solomon reflect each other’s otherness. This is revealed by the parallel syntax the narrator employs when naming and identifying them—“It was Juba, the black, and Solomon, the Jew”—as well as by the manner in which they argue—“each went on talking in their own angry gibberish as loud as they could” (446, 447). The text’s continued insistence upon Juba’s otherness is at odds with its attempt to represent his assimilation as successful.

Juba’s assimilation is further undermined by the fact that he is configured in these later scenes not just as a servant, but as a slave. As McCann suggests, many abolitionists who advocated the assimilation of slaves into English cul-

ture during the eighteenth century were driven as much by economic motives as by humanitarian impulses. During this period, economists such as Adam Smith were beginning to argue that it cost more for a master to maintain slaves than it did for wage laborers to maintain themselves.²⁷ McCann writes, "Many abolitionists accordingly argued that the economic benefits of colonial production could only be guaranteed by converting the master-slave relationship, which now appeared as a feudal relic, into a contractual relationship between employer and employee."²⁸ When Juba marries Lucy, the transformation of the relationship between Mr. Vincent and Juba from that of master-slave to that of employer-employee appears complete.²⁹ However, after Mr. Vincent is nearly ruined as a result of his gambling addiction, Juba wishes to abandon his wife and farm and go into exile with the man whom he still considers to be his master. During his last appearance in the text, Juba—reluctant to return home to his wife and cottage—is undoubtedly configured as an African slave rather than an English husband/worker. Sobbing "like an infant," Juba says, "But massa will not be there—massa is gone!—When shall we see massa again?—Never—never!" (449). The scene, which suggests that the process of "washing the blackamoor white" has failed, emphasizes the text's skepticism regarding the possibility of assimilation.

At the same time, the text questions the desirability of this process, which—as Juba's story suggests—results not in the individual's complete rejection of one culture and absorption into another, but in hybridity. This hybridity is racial to the extent that, while the subject of assimilation might adopt some of the stereotypical characteristics associated with the dominant race, he or she will necessarily maintain some of the stereotypical characteristics associated with his or her own race, characteristics related not only to appearance but also to speech and temperament. Ideas concerning racial hybridity were inextricably linked to ideas concerning cultural hybridity; even though the subject of assimilation begins to engage in the symbolic rituals associated with the dominant culture, he or she will almost certainly maintain a connection to the symbolic rituals associated with his or her own culture.

Recent gender and race theorists represent the transgressive potential of hybridity, or "border crossing," in positive terms. Judith Butler, for example, discusses the liberatory possibilities inherent in drag, which points to the way in which gender is performed; in other words, it is not a "natural" expression of essential categories that are rooted in biological sex.³⁰ In her discussion of "passing"—which occurs when an African American, for example, is able to pass as white—Amy Robinson uses Butler's ideas to explain how race is also performed rather than essential.³¹ In gender, race, and postcolonial theory, hybridity frequently serves as a means for

unsettling the border, for breaking out of the prisonhouse of oppositionalist logic into some kind of radically emancipated, free floating condition where the subject

is free to move between the great dualities inherited from the enlightenment—mind and body, culture and nature, rationality and emotion, self and other, and so on—as well as the great dualities emerging from the history of colonialism—colonizer and colonized, settler and native, active and passive.³²

But as Annie E. Coombes and Avtar Brah suggest, the concept of hybridity must be subjected to scrutiny; critics must “take account of the multiple uses and meanings of the term depending upon the configuration of social, cultural, and political practices within which it is embedded at any given time.”³³ In eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain, the transgressive possibilities inherent in the concept of hybridity were represented largely as a source of anxiety.³⁴

In *Belinda*, the anxieties regarding hybridity that are embedded in Edgeworth's representation of Juba become explicit in her representation of Juba's master, Mr. Vincent. Mr. Vincent's hybridity is tied to his identity as a “Creole,” an individual of European descent raised in the West Indies.³⁵ Though the text does not identify Mr. Vincent as racially mixed in the technical sense—he is apparently a full-blooded European—he is described as a hybrid figure by virtue of the fact that he has spent so many years immersed in the West Indian culture. He is, then, a cultural hybrid, but his hybridity manifests itself in descriptions of his physical features that are unmistakably racialized. As in Juba's case, the signs of racial and cultural hybridity become almost indistinguishable. Mr. Vincent's nose is “aquiline” and his hair is “fine,” but his eyes are “large” and “dark,” his complexion darkened by the sun (217). That his face has been darkened by sunlight rather than by a biological pigmentation of the skin does not serve to distinguish him from his African slaves; during the eighteenth century, Africans' skin was generally believed to be darkened as a result of excessive scorching by the heat of the sun.³⁶ Mr. Vincent's hybridity is further exemplified by his excess of feeling. He is “totally deficient” in the “power and habit of reasoning” and is characterized by an “epicurean zest” and a “never-failing flow of animal spirits” (217). As Felicity Nussbaum points out, natives of the “torrid zone” were often believed to be characterized by an excess of passion—often sexual passion—that they were ill-equipped to regulate.³⁷

There is an attempt made within the text to convince Mr. Vincent of the superiority of a particularly European brand of rationality, which is embodied by characters like the Percivals and Belinda. Mr. Vincent makes some strides in this direction: he comes to prefer European women to West Indian women and the European climate to the West Indian climate (237, 254). But Mr. Vincent finally fails to regulate his passions with reason: “Thus persisting in his disdain of reason as a moral guide, Mr. Vincent thought, acted, and suffered as a man of feeling” (424). Mr. Vincent's failure to regulate his feelings ultimately leads to his downfall, as his fondness for gambling proves to be the end result of his too-passionate nature: “Emotion of some kind or other was become necessary to

him; he said that not to feel, was not to live; and soon the suspense, the anxiety, the hopes, the fears, the perpetual vicissitudes of a gamester's life, appeared to him almost as delightful as those of a lover's" (424). After he gambles away his entire estate, he tells Clarence Hervey, "I am not master of myself" (432), implying that he has relinquished the role of master for that of slave—in this case, slave to his passions.

As a representative of the figure of the cultural and racial hybrid, Mr. Vincent raises questions within the text regarding the efficacy and desirability of assimilation. Tainted as a result of his immersion within the colonized culture, Mr. Vincent represents the threat of contamination a system of assimilation poses to the culture-at-large. This contamination is presented as having distinctly economic consequences. Because of the qualities he has developed as a result of his ties to the "torrid zone," Mr. Vincent becomes incapable of managing his wealth. It is for this reason that Belinda breaks off their engagement. She writes to him, "The hopes of enjoying domestic happiness with a person whose manners, temper, and tastes were suited to my own, induced me to listen to your addresses. Your unfortunate propensity to a dangerous amusement . . . puts an end to these hopes forever" (448). To many during the eighteenth century, the assimilation of Africans into the English social system seemed the logical response to the economic uncertainties surrounding slave labor. *Belinda*, however, suggests that the inherent qualities of individuals with roots in the "torrid zone" are incompatible with the regulation of a rational economy. The doubts concerning racial and cultural hybridity that color Mr. Vincent's story intensify those at the heart of Juba's tale. Just as Mr. Vincent remains a slave to his uncontrollable passions, Juba remains a slave to his Creole master. Even though his loyalty to his master appears to hold him in check, the continuance of Juba's identification as a slave means that the threat of rebellion remains.

Edgeworth maintains a close link between hybridity and rebellion—both of which entail the crossing of established or accepted boundaries—throughout the text. As the representations of Juba's and Mr. Vincent's cultural and racial hybridity and Harriet Freke's gender hybridity make clear, the terms in which these concepts are configured are profoundly problematic if not negative. In the case of Lady Delacour's character, however, the concept of hybridity—though still configured in terms of its transgressive potential—is presented as having positive consequences. In fact, it is possible to read Lady Delacour's hybridity within the terms provided by theorists such as Butler and Robinson, as a celebratory performance that reveals the constructed nature of overly restrictive, socially established boundaries—in this case, a gendered boundary that associates women's activities with domestic space and men's activities with public space. At the conclusion of the novel, Lady Delacour's hybridity is manifested when her public performance of domestic femininity allows her to reveal the instability of this boundary; hybridity becomes the defining characteristic of a positive, pragmatic, and socially beneficial understanding of womanhood.

Certainly, Lady Delacour exhibits qualities—especially in the first part of the novel—that seem incompatible with such a representation. Lady Delacour's participation in public life—a life emphasizing little more than display and distraction—is represented as shallow, dissipated, and even dangerous. Toward the end of the novel, however, Lady Delacour learns to channel her desire for public significance in ways that are beneficial both for her and her “audience.”

This transformation is marked by her usurpation of Belinda's role as the character responsible for “plotting” domesticity in the text. Edgeworth explores the representational quality of domesticity at various instances in the novel—a notable example is the picturesque moment that occurs when Mr. Percival takes Clarence Hervey home to meet his wife for the first time: “They found Lady Anne Percival in the midst of her children; who all turned their healthy, rosy, intelligent faces towards the door the moment that they heard their father's voice” (98). In moving such representations of domesticity into the public sphere, Lady Delacour does what Belinda cannot. Belinda represents the thoroughly domesticated woman. Though she is not entirely removed from public life like the unfortunate Virginia St. Pierre,³⁸ she is nonetheless devoted to private life and void of public ambition. Meanwhile, though she comes to embody certain elements of domesticity, Lady Delacour is not simply transformed into another Belinda. Unlike Belinda, she is able to negotiate the boundary between public and private life and, in doing so, is able to explore the possibilities inherent in public constructions of domesticity. This enables her to bring the novel to its proper conclusion.

Lady Delacour gains control of the plot after her reformation, when Belinda discovers Mr. Vincent's gambling addiction and determines not to marry him. Sensing that Belinda still has deep feelings for her first love, Clarence Hervey—a natural inclination that Belinda refuses to acknowledge—Lady Delacour determines that she must take control of the situation by putting an end to the unfortunate engagement between Clarence and Virginia and by bringing Clarence and Belinda together. The reader of Edgeworth's novel knows that this is the correct course of action. Both Clarence and Virginia are secretly in love with other people and clearly do not belong together. By finding Virginia's true love, Captain Sunderland, as well as Virginia's long-lost father, who sanctions their marriage, Lady Delacour frees Clarence to marry Belinda. In doing so, she essentially carries out Edgeworth's intentions as novelist within the context of the novel itself. This is made particularly clear by the words Lady Delacour speaks to her companions before she orchestrates the closing scene. “And now, my good friends,” she asks, “shall I finish the novel for you?” (477).

The theatrical quality of the novel's conclusion emphasizes the public nature of Lady Delacour's identity. As the novel draws to a close, all the proper couples are brought together—Belinda and Clarence; Virginia and Captain Sunderland; and Lady and Lord Delacour, together with their daughter Helena. Lady Delacour marks the occasion by organizing a kind of *tableau vivant* that

captures each character in an attitude of domestic felicity. Stepping outside of the domestic scene she has created, she takes charge of the moment, which she represents as one occurring upon the stage:

Now I think of it, let me place you all in proper attitudes for stage effect. What signifies being happy, unless we appear so?—Captain Sunderland—kneeling with Virginia, if you please, sir, at her father's feet—You in the act of giving them your blessing, Mr. Hartley. . . . Clarence, you have a right to Belinda's hand, and may kiss it, too—Nay, Miss Portman, it is the rule of the stage. . . . Enter Lord Delacour, with little Helena in his hand. . . . Stand still, pray, you cannot be better than you are—Helena, my love, do not let go your father's hand—There! quite pretty and natural! (450–51)

What is striking about the happy ending to this domestic tale is, of course, its overtly constructed quality. Even more significant, however, is the way in which this closing scene underscores Lady Delacour's emergence as the controlling force not just *in* the novel, but also *of* the novel.

As Lady Delacour concludes the narrative, she steps forward, away from the domestic tableau she has constructed, and directly addresses her audience. She promises them a moral, but instead of delivering it, she calls upon the audience to figure it out for themselves. She does so in the form of a couplet, a common way to end a scene in eighteenth-century drama: "Our *tale* contains a *moral*, and no doubt, / You all have wit enough to find it out" (478). Lady Delacour's control of this moment of representation is so complete that she is able to completely shift genres from narrative fiction to sentimental comedy. Macfadyen argues that the theatrical ending of *Belinda* indicates that Lady Delacour has fully embraced her new domestic role; in contrast to her earlier theatrical displays, "the tableaux she creates are not designed to display her person, but rather to display the harmony made possible by domesticity" (438). However, as several critics have noted, when Lady Delacour steps away from the domestic circle she creates and addresses her audience, she reveals domesticity to be a public construct that does not fully contain her and that she only loosely embraces.³⁹ Lady Delacour's power resides in her ability to construct, revise, broaden, and move beyond conventional representations of domesticity as she herself transgresses the boundaries of domestic space in order to develop a public identity—as she becomes, in other words, a public/private hybrid.

Though it is indeed tempting to read this moment as a celebratory one, such a reading is rendered unstable by Edgeworth's insistence upon associating Lady Delacour's potentially positive public/private hybridity with Juba's potentially threatening racial/cultural hybridity, an association she forges throughout the novel not only by embedding the characters in parallel subplots, but by "racializing" Lady Delacour. Lady Delacour is repeatedly connected with "the native"; she is represented as "dark" and as "other." This is indicated,

for example, in her reference to herself as “the princess Scheherazade” and in her comparison of herself to the sunburnt women of Antigua (51, 353) and the Amazons (34, 194).⁴⁰ Within the context of her identification with the Amazons, Lady Delacour’s injured breast becomes not simply a symbol of her maternal failures, but also a sign of her otherness.

Lady Delacour’s use of cosmetics further likens her to the racial “other.” Though Belinda, like all of Lady Delacour’s acquaintances, knows that she “paints,” she has no idea what the make-up hides until she sees Lady Delacour without it. In a passage loaded with Gothic imagery, Lady Delacour reveals her true face to Belinda:

She . . . wiped the paint from her face, and . . . held the candle so as to throw the light full upon her livid features. Her eyes were sunk, her cheeks hollow—no trace of youth or beauty remained on her deathlike countenance, which formed a horrid contrast with her gay fantastic dress. (31)

In hiding the traces of her illness, Lady Delacour’s cosmetics disrupt the otherwise clear distinction between sickness and health. According to Tassie Gwilliam, women’s cosmetics generated anxiety during the eighteenth century largely because they were believed to make supposedly “natural” distinctions unreadable.⁴¹ While Belinda’s emotions are registered throughout the novel by a natural blush that perpetually comes and goes, Lady Delacour’s emotions, hidden under layers of make-up, remain a mystery. In one scene, the narrator writes of Lady Delacour, “Through the mask of paint which she wore, no change of colour could be visible; and as Belinda did not see the expression of her ladyship’s eyes, she could not in the least judge of what was passing in her mind” (202). In her description of Lady Delacour’s face as a surface upon which emotions cannot be read, Edgeworth employs a racist rhetoric that, during the eighteenth century, was frequently used to describe black faces. Gwilliam writes, “The fear that a stabilization of color could mask fundamental distinctions reappears in another form in eighteenth-century thought: in the belief that black skin, like makeup, stymied interpretation of the face.”⁴² Lady Delacour’s use of cosmetics both connects her to the colonized other and points to anxieties regarding the rebellious impulses that potentially lurk beneath the unreadable countenance of even the most docile slave.

Lady Delacour’s domestication can be read as an attempt to “whiten” her. Ultimately, however, the trope of the “blackamoor” speaks to Lady Delacour’s story as much as it does to Juba’s; like Juba, Lady Delacour is never fully “whitened.” Even after her “cure,” she tells Lord Delacour that she will not “wash off her rouge, and lay aside her airs, and be as gentle, good, and kind as Belinda Portman” (314). In other words, compelling Lady Delacour to wash off her rouge, or turning her into a paragon of domesticity like Belinda Portman, proves as impossible as “washing the blackamoor white.” Lady Delacour does

come to exhibit some degree of sensibility. She is not, she tells Lord Delacour, a “brute” after all, and kindness proves to have a powerful affect upon her (314). But she is never fully mastered. Lady Delacour tells her husband,

My actions, the whole course of my future life, shall show that I am not quite a brute. Even brutes are won by kindness. Observe, my lord . . . I said *won*, not *tamed!*—A tame Lady Delacour would be a sorry animal, not worth looking at. Were she even to become domesticated, she would fare the worse. (314)

Her sensibilities are awakened, but she is not “tamed.” Rather than being mastered by the role of domestic woman, she masters it. Though Edgeworth explores the positive potential inherent in such mastery, she also configures it as a source of anxiety. As Lady Delacour masters domesticity, she also steps outside of it, a move that allows her to claim a public identity that contributes to the improvement of social relations, but that simultaneously threatens to disrupt the relations upon which the existing social order depends. In this way, she is connected to the potentially rebellious African slave whose story parallels her own, and her plotting takes on an ambiguous, if not a menacing, tone.

Perhaps even more problematic than the ambiguity of Lady Delacour’s character is the way in which Juba’s character is reduced to little more than a sign of this ambiguity. As Lady Delacour emerges as a powerful force within the novel, Juba’s character recedes, as if her character absorbs his. Critics whose discussions of Juba focus on his marriage to Lucy disagree whether Edgeworth’s novel renders the African slave visible or invisible. Kirkpatrick asserts that by making an African visible within the English social hierarchy, the marriage exposes the relationship between English commercial wealth and the enslavement of West Africans.⁴³ McCann, however, argues that the marriage represents the impulse to render an African *invisible* at a time when Britain’s dependence upon slave labor was increasingly viewed as economically unsound.⁴⁴ In actuality, the novel comes to represent Juba as hovering somewhere in between these two states. Even after his character disappears from the text, traces of Juba remain—in the rouge Lady Delacour refuses to wash off her face, for example, or in the reference Virginia’s father makes to slave rebellions in Jamaica (476).

We might read this as the colonized subject’s stubborn refusal to be erased from the text and conclude that novels as well as characters lend themselves to the trope of “washing the blackamoor white.” This reading must be asserted with caution, however. In his influential work on European and American imperialism, Edward Said defines “Orientalism” as a Western discourse designed to describe colonized cultures and individuals. According to Said, this discourse says more about the culture that constructs it than it does about the culture it purports to describe. In Orientalist discourse, “the Orient” functions as the other against which Western culture describes, defines, and understands itself.⁴⁵ Juba plays a similar role in *Belinda*. As we recognize the transgressive

potential inherent in his character's resistance to erasure, we must also acknowledge that the transgression of the colonized individual in this case serves a subordinate function in the text, as it underscores, heightens, and problematizes the transgressive potential embodied in the figure of female power represented by Lady Delacour.

NOTES

1. Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, ed. Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick (Oxford, 1999), 244. Subsequent references are to this edition and will appear in the text.

2. Suvendrini Perera argues that the marriage points to the existence of revolutionary challenges to empire by revealing connections among women, menials, Africans, and other non-Europeans (*Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens* [New York, 1991], 32). Meanwhile, Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick and Andrew McCann discuss the ways in which the marriage reveals the economic realities of slavery during the period (Kirkpatrick, "'Gentlemen Have Horrors Upon This Subject': West Indian Suitors in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 5, no. 4 [1993]: 331–48, 342; McCann, *Cultural Politics in the 1790s: Literature, Radicalism, and the Public Sphere* [London, 1999], 56–57).

3. The parallel Edgeworth creates between Lady Delacour and Juba comprises just one part of Alison Harvey's larger discussion, which also explores connections among characters and figures such as Belinda, Harriet Freke, Virginia St. Pierre, the Obeah woman, Mr. Vincent, and Belacour from Richard Cumberland's play *The West Indian* ("West Indian Obeah and English 'Obee': Race, Femininity, and Questions of Colonial Consolidation in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*," *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Julie Nash [Aldershot, 2006], 1–29).

4. Mary Jean Corbett explores the equally troubling perpetuation of colonial discourse in *Castle Rackrent*, in which humor and irony are generated as a result of the distance Edgeworth creates between the "us" represented by the English and the "them" represented by the Irish ("Another Tale to Tell: Postcolonial Theory and the Case of *Castle Rackrent*," *Criticism* 36, no. 3 [1994]: 383–400).

5. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York and London, 2006), 62–63.

6. Bhabha, 61.

7. Bhabha, 62.

8. Bhabha, 62.

9. Bhabha, 64.

10. Bhabha, 64.

11. Alison A. Case, *Plotting Women: Gender and Narration in the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Charlottesville, 1999), 13.

12. Case, 13.

13. Case, 15.

14. As Kirkpatrick points out, numerous critics have read these words and Harriet Freke's character as an attack on the feminist ideas of Edgeworth's contemporaries Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays. Both Kirkpatrick and Deborah Weiss reject this reading and assert that Edgeworth actually shared many of Wollstonecraft's ideas, including the belief that women's behavior was shaped by cultural rather than natural influences and that women could and should be educated to become knowledgeable and rational human beings. For Kirkpatrick, Harriet represents a false brand of feminism that is irrational and uneducated and that, rather than sharing in rational pursuits that were mistakenly identified as "masculine," simply mimics insubstantial masculine behaviors (Introduction, *Belinda*, ix–xxv, xix–xx). According to Weiss, Harriet's character exhibits an understanding that is more stereotypically feminine than masculine and thereby serves

to critique both her culture's understanding of the "female philosopher" and negative representations of Wollstonecraft that were circulating at the time. Weiss asserts that *Belinda* comes to represent Edgeworth's revised notion of the female philosopher, an introspective and independently thinking woman who acts on the basis of judgment rather than feeling and who exhibits generosity, courage, and self-control ("The Extraordinary Ordinary *Belinda*: Maria Edgeworth's Female Philosopher," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19, no. 4 [2007]: 441–61).

15. For a discussion of the way in which Lady Delacour's domestic failures are represented by her failure to adequately nurse her child, see Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity* (Oxford, 1991), 101–4, 128–37. For a discussion of breastfeeding in Edgeworth's *Ennui* [1809], see Julie Costello, "Maria Edgeworth and the Politics of Consumption: Eating, Breastfeeding, and the Irish Wet Nurse in *Ennui*," *Inventing Maternity: Politics, Science, and Literature, 1650–1865*, ed. Susan C. Greenfield and Carol Barash (Lexington, Ky., 1999), 173–92. According to Costello, Edgeworth uses the representation of the Irish wet nurse to confront the issue of consumption among the Irish lower classes.

16. While Heather Macfadyen connects Lady Delacour's diseased breast to her domestic failures in general, McCann and Kowaleski-Wallace associate it more specifically with her inability to mother; see Macfadyen, "Lady Delacour's Library: Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* and Fashionable Reading," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 48, no. 4 (1994): 423–39, 425; McCann, 187; and Kowaleski-Wallace, 128. Meanwhile, Teresa Michals asserts that the consumption of Lady Delacour's body by disease and addiction represents her own irrational and uncontrolled economic consumption ("Commerce and Character in Maria Edgeworth," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 49, no. 1 [1994]: 1–20, 17–20). According to Leah Larson, Edgeworth intends for us to read Lady Delacour's breast-related illness as psychosomatic, a representation that would have been in keeping with medical thinking of the period ("Breast Cancer and the 'Unnatural' Woman in Edgeworth's *Belinda*," *Explicator* 67, no. 3 [2009]: 195–98).

17. Susan C. Greenfield discusses the homoerotic nature of Lady Delacour's friendship with Harriet Freke and argues that *Belinda* represents this homoeroticism as analogous to the threat of miscegenation elsewhere in the novel. The demarcation of gender difference upon which heterosexuality depends, Greenfield argues, interconnects with the desire to establish a British nation free from the threat of contamination by its colonial subjects. Lady Delacour, once her homoerotic tendencies are suppressed, becomes a central agent in this process ("'Abroad and at Home: Sexual Ambiguity, Miscegenation, and Colonial Boundaries in Edgeworth's *Belinda*," *PMLA* 112, no. 2 [1997]: 214–28).

18. Though *Belinda*'s plotting has not been discussed in previous criticism, Toni Wein does emphasize her artfulness and asserts that the image of female propriety *Belinda* represents is something she herself crafts and manipulates. As the novel progresses, however, she increasingly comes to exemplify a form of moral prudence that Edgeworth strongly endorses for women, one that emphasizes rationality, honesty, and self-possession ("'Dear Prudence': The Art of Management and the Management of Art in Edgeworth's *Belinda*," *Women's Studies* 31, no. 3 [2002]: 299–322).

19. Macfadyen, 436. For a discussion of the way in which eighteenth-century Methodist literature emphasizes the contribution of the affections, or "passions," to religious experience, see Isabel Rivers, "Dissenting and Methodist Books of Practical Divinity," *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Isabel Rivers (New York, 1982), 127–64, 128–34.

20. Harvey identifies several parallels between Lady Delacour's character and Juba's: both believe they are dying from a mysterious disease, both are tormented by Harriet Freke in disguise, and both are profoundly affected by their religious beliefs (6–8).

21. Harvey explains that Methodism functions as more than just a parallel belief system to Obeah. It is associated with Obeah also by virtue of the fact that, under the in-

fluence of Christian missionaries, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Jamaican slaves formed a belief system that was a hybrid of Obeah and Methodism (7).

22. Edgeworth explores this connection more explicitly in her tale, "The Grateful Negro" [1804], in which Obeah is represented as a driving force behind a thwarted slave rebellion ("The Grateful Negro," *Popular Tales*, vol. 2 of *Tales and Novels* [New York, 1967], 399–419). According to Elizabeth S. Kim, Edgeworth uses the representation of this slave rebellion to mask anxieties surrounding the Great Rebellion of 1798 in Ireland and to represent rebellion as "temporary and containable" ("Maria Edgeworth's *The Grateful Negro*: A Site for Rewriting Rebellion," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 16, no. 1 [2003]: 1–24).

23. Alan Richardson, "Romantic Voodoo: Obeah and British Culture, 1797–1807," *Studies in Romanticism* 32, no. 1 (1993): 3–28, 6. Richardson's essay traces representations of Obeah in British literature of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, including both *Belinda* and "The Grateful Negro."

24. Wylie Sypher, *Guinea's Captive Kings: British Anti-Slavery Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1969), 40.

25. McCann, 195.

26. Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688–1804* (Durham, 1999), 2.

27. See Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* [1776], ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford, 1998), 80–81; and Sypher, 83–86.

28. McCann, 182.

29. Moira Ferguson discusses how "The Grateful Negro" asserts the superior profitability of wage labor over slave labor in *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670–1834* [New York and London, 1992], 231–34.

30. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990), 33, and "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York and London, 1997), 300–15, 306.

31. Amy Robinson, "It Takes One to Know One: Passing and Communities of Common Interest," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 4 (1994): 720–72.

32. Gerry Smyth, "The Politics of Hybridity: Some Problems with Crossing the Border," *Comparing Post-Colonial Literatures: Dislocations*, ed. Ashok Bery and Patricia Murray (New York, 2000), 43–55, 43.

33. Avtar Brah and Annie E. Coombes, "Introduction: The Conundrum of Mixing," *Hybridity and Its Discontents*, ed. Avtar Brah and Annie E. Coombes (London, 2000), 1–16, 1.

34. Positive representations of racial and cultural hybridity during this period rarely emphasized its transgressive potential, but—as noted above—represented it as a possible response to economic uncertainties regarding the expense and inefficiency of slave labor. Meanwhile, representations of hybridity that did emphasize its transgressive potential were generally negative and were usually perpetuated by individuals concerned with maintaining the purity of the white race and the integrity of English culture. According to these individuals, a strategy of integration would create social disorder by leading to sexual unions among individuals from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Some of these critics argued that interracial unions would prove dangerously fertile. The progeny of such unions might ultimately come to outnumber the colonizers, contaminating both their "genetic stock" and their "cultural legacy"; see Avtar and Brah, 3–4. Meanwhile, other critics of integration cited diminishing fertility as the result of hybridization; see Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (London, 1995), 8. The specter of infertility as the end product of assimilation does materialize in *Belinda*, most notably in Edgeworth's portrayal of Mr. Vincent; however, the anxiety that emerges here has more to do with economic productivity, which is threatened by Mr. Vincent's gambling addiction, than with sexual reproduction. It is possible, of course, to read the former as a representation of the latter.

35. For discussions of Mr. Vincent's status as a Creole, see Greenfield, 219–22; Harvey, 4–6; and Beccie Puneet Randhawa, "Penitent Creoles, Failed Hostesses, and the Impossibility of Home in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*," *Transnational England: Home and Abroad, 1780–1860*, ed. Monika Class and Terry F. Robinson (Newcastle, 2009), 185–207.

36. Sypher, 50–51.

37. Felicity Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century Narratives* (Baltimore, 1995), 7–9.

38. Clarence has installed Virginia within a solitary rural enclosure, where—following the plan for female education outlined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau—he limits her education to those subjects that he believes will make her a perfect wife. Edgeworth was apparently critiquing a similar plan undertaken by her father's close friend Thomas Day, who raised a young girl he christened "Sabrina Sidney" in seclusion with the intention of eventually marrying her. His plan ultimately failed. See Mitzi Myers, "My Art Belongs to Daddy? Thomas Day, Maria Edgeworth, and the Pre-Texts of *Belinda*: Women Writers and Patriarchal Authority," *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement*, ed. Paula R. Backscheider (Baltimore, 2000), 104–46, 106–7; and Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (New York, 1986), 161.

39. See, for example, Greenfield, 224; Harvey, 4; and Susan Bolet Egenolf, "Edgeworth's *Belinda*: An Artful Composition," *Women's Studies* 31, no. 3 (2002): 323–48.

40. Laura Brown describes how eighteenth-century travel narratives often made reference to a race of warrior women who existed just outside the boundaries of colonial space, a formidable and threatening presence that remained beyond the control of colonists. These narratives locate the Amazons sometimes in South America, sometimes in the West Indies, and often in Africa, especially Ethiopia (*Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century Literature* [Ithaca, 1993], 159).

41. Tassie Gwilliam, "Cosmetic Poetics: Coloring Faces in the Eighteenth Century," *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Veronica Kelly and Dorothea Von Mücke (Stanford, 1994), 144–59.

42. Gwilliam, 148.

43. Kirkpatrick, "'Gentlemen Have Horrors,'" 342.

44. McCann, 56–57.

45. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979), 2–3.