

When Irishness and Jewishness Meet: Maria Edgeworth's "The Limerick Gloves" (1804) and *Harrington* (1817) as Fictions of Cultural Identity

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Abstract

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) has recently attracted the interest of postcolonial studies for her portrayal of cultural stereotypes at the turn of the nineteenth century. In this paper I insist on the close connection between Edgeworth's "The Limerick Gloves" (*Popular Tales* 1804) and *Harrington* (1817). By drawing on a close reading of the stories and previous research on Edgeworth's *oeuvre*, I argue that in *Harrington* Jews share with the Irish a common landless condition and both are seen as a cultural menace. Cultural identity is here taken as the set of values that relate the individual to the world and reflects historical experiences and shared codes while Jewishness and Irishness refer to perceiving people as Jew or Irish with all the connotations that go with them. I maintain that the approach to woman in both narratives has to be associated with Irishness since both women and the Irish are discriminated in terms of prejudice and ethnic othering in relation to what was being presented as normative English society. "The Limerick Gloves" is paramount to understand Edgeworth's attack against fanaticism in *Harrington* because the latter involves evolution in technique that makes her narrative so enticing even for readers nowadays.

Keywords: Maria Edgeworth, "The Limerick Gloves," *Harrington*, Irish literature, stereotypes, nineteenth-century literature.

Cuando las identidades irlandesa y judía se encuentran: “The Limerick Gloves” (1804) y *Harrington* (1817) de Maria Edgeworth como ficciones culturales sobre la identidad

Resumen

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) ha atraído recientemente el interés de los estudios poscoloniales por su representación de los estereotipos culturales a principios del siglo diecinueve. En este artículo insisto en la estrecha conexión entre “The Limerick Gloves” (*Popular Tales* 1804) y *Harrington* (1817) de Edgeworth. Gracias al *close-reading* de las historias y la investigación previa sobre la obra de Edgeworth, sostengo que en *Harrington* los judíos están al mismo nivel que los irlandeses en el sentido de que son naciones sin tierra y ambos son vistos como una amenaza cultural. La identidad cultural se toma como el conjunto de valores que relacionan al individuo con el mundo y refleja experiencias históricas y códigos compartidos, mientras que ser judío/irlandés se refiere a percibir a las personas como judías o irlandesas con todas las connotaciones que ello conlleva. Sostengo que el acercamiento a la mujer en ambos relatos está asociado al elemento irlandés, ya que ambos son discriminados por los prejuicios y alteridad étnica en relación a lo que se venía presentando como norma en la sociedad inglesa. “The Limerick Gloves” es fundamental para entender el ataque de Edgeworth contra el fanatismo en *Harrington* porque esta última historia implica un paso más allá con un elemento técnico adicional que convierte su narrativa en atractiva incluso para los lectores de hoy.

Palabras clave: Maria Edgeworth, “Los guantes de Limerick”, *Harrington*, literatura irlandesa, estereotipos, literatura del siglo diecinueve.

1. Introduction

One of Maria Edgeworth's (1767-1849) earliest stories about prejudice is 'The Limerick Gloves' (*Popular Tales* 1804), where she explores the English attitude to the Irish. Set in Herefordshire (England), the story deals with the relationship between Phoebe Hill, the daughter of Mr. Hill, a tanner and verger from Hereford, and her lover Brian O'Neill, an Irishman who sends her a pair of Limerick gloves as a present. The main obstacle between the lovers is Mr. Hill's prejudice against the Irish, so he opposes any relationship with the Irishman. Though many events conspire against O'Neill — he is sent to jail due to past debts and is even accused of plotting to blow up the cathedral — his good actions prove that he is a good man. Eventually, Mr. Hill overcomes his prejudices and consents to Phoebe and O'Neill's union.

There are some reasons to relate this story to *Harrington*. Both were supported by Richard Lovell Edgeworth, with the only particularity that *Harrington* was composed as an answer to Rachel Mordecai's complaints about the image of the Jews in Edgeworth's *oeuvre*—she had repeatedly stereotyped and demonized Jewish characters—and Richard Lovell Edgeworth totally agreed (MacDonald 33). In *Harrington*, Edgeworth not only offers an insightful analysis of prejudice, but she also introduces some self-criticism when she refers to the portrait of the Jews as “mean, avaricious, unprincipled treacherous character” (*Harrington* 31) in *Moral Tales for Young People* (1801). *Harrington* features a protagonist who is frightened by his nurse's gruesome stories about Jews and his parents' despise for this race, which creates in him a false impression of the Jews until he takes contact with them and realizes that bias has been stronger than truth. Eventually, he falls in love with a Jewess and has to fight to get her father's approval. Though the book fared well and was published in a volume with *Ormond* in 1817, it appeared at a sad time for Maria, just after Richard Lovell's death, as Edgeworth's orphan book.

Critical readings of *Harrington* have systematically focused on the extent of Edgeworth's stance towards the Jewish question, but the long tradition of British imperialist narratives racially othering the Irish dates back at least to Giraldus Cambrensis in the twelfth century, through Edmund Spenser, up to Edgeworth and beyond. For James

Shapiro, the term “Jew” served for political purposes as they were seen as somehow extrinsic to that which was English and a danger to get rid of:

Even as England could be defined in part by its having purged itself of Jews, English character could be defined by its need to exclude ‘Jewishness’. In the decades following the Reformation, the English began to think of the Jews not only as people who almost three centuries earlier had been banished from English territory but also as a potential threat to increasingly permeated boundaries of their own social and religious identities (7).

Regarding Edgeworth’s *oeuvre*, Edgar Rosenberg’s scathing appraisal of the character of Mordicai in *The Absentee* (1812) —in which that Jewish character is viewed as a Shylockian parasite— contrasts with his analysis of the Jew in *Harrington*, which is branded the first Anglo-Jewish novel with the merit of showing diversity in the perception of the Jews and presenting racial prejudice as disruptive:

[it is] the first novel to attempt anything like a meaningful social stratification of its Jewish personnel: the first to take its benevolent Jews seriously, without assuming them to be, for all their benevolent qualities, a collection of hyperborean oddities; the first to deal with anti-Semitism critically and problematically, as a destructive public force, not a whimsical form of muscular exercise (47).

Scholars have repeatedly insisted on that line, considering Edgeworth’s portrait of the Jews as negative. When Judith Page analyzes the impact of Romanticism in the view of the Jews in nineteenth-century British literature, she draws on Sheila A. Spector, who claims that the ending of *Harrington* satisfies nobody and argues that in Edgeworth’s earlier works “any perceived English shortcomings had been displaced onto the Jew, the stereotypical other whose mere existence had enabled Edgeworth to ignore the anti-Irish prejudice underlying the Union, not to mention her own fiction” (328). Yet, it must be emphasized that Anglo-Irish literature has stressed that Edgeworth was not always favourable towards the emergent Irish Catholic middle class within the context, for example, of feudal hierarchy that delineates between the Protestant

Ascendancy and Catholic Peasant classes (Dunne 116). Already in the twenty-first century critics like Natasha Tessone have moved on to relate Harrington's anti-Semitism and his enthusiasm towards English symbols with madness and have insisted on Edgeworth's embarrassment and her concern with Irish blunders: Edgeworth tried to accept "the political illegitimacy after class in a country that she sought to claim as her home, but whose political reality served as a constant reminder of the validity of such a claim" (Tessone 463). Quite a different perspective is Lionel Gossman's, who focuses on Edgeworth's limited multiculturalism as typical of her age and elaborates on Rachel Schulkins' thesis that in *Harrington* the Jew is approved of as long as he is portrayed as a good Christian: "Christianization allows the unfamiliar *other* to reside within the already established borders of Englishness, without undermining the threatening of social order" (Schulkins 478), just as Montenero's wealth allows his social acceptance. The only researchers who appreciate Edgeworth as favouring the Jews are Michael Ragussis and Susan Manly. The former maintains that the Anglo-Irish writer recognizes a tradition of discourse that she at once inherits and perpetuates and Edgeworth turns her personal self-examination into a cultural critique: "she diagnosed a distortion in 'the imaginations of the good people of England' and in so doing she issued a challenge and founded a new tradition" (114). More recently, Susan Manly goes deeper into Ragussis's examination and affirms that Edgeworth's *Harrington* "exposes the lie of English 'liberties' and questions some myths about England's exceptional liberalism and democracy" ("Mendelssohn's" 236). It is precisely Manly who highlights *Harrington*'s insistence on the need for religious tolerance. According to Manly, who argues that Edgeworth's portrayal of Harrington's fears is more decisive than what the people around tell him, *Harrington* reflects the Edgeworths' feelings when they saw themselves attacked in 1798 ("Burke" 153) —which again links *Harrington* and "The Limerick Gloves" —, and she registers a clear influence of John Toland's (1670-1722) republican and enlightened ideas.

My study considers that both 'The Limerick Gloves' and *Harrington* take place in a special historical moment: after the 1798 Rising and the Gordon Riots, which occur at the end of *Harrington*, and "November 1799," just before the publication of *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and a few months after the Rebellion, a bloody episode that the Edgeworths witnessed in County Longford. The historical background of "The

Limerick Gloves” is the confrontation between the Orange Order and the United Irishmen in Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century. The latter had become a revolutionary group on the rise who formed a coalition with the Defenders (a Roman Catholic agrarian secret society) (Wilson 24; Litton 47). As for the Gordon Riots, they took place in London in June 1780 and were sparked by resistance to the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 which removed the requirement to condemn the Catholic Church when taking an oath of allegiance to the British crown and some restrictions on land ownership, preaching and publishing were also lifted. Novelists like Frances Burney or Charles Dickens chronicled the events (Haywood 2-3) and one of the towns where rioting was feared was precisely Hereford (Haydon 215). The date that appears at the end of the Irish tale is quite significant: Mitzi Myers explains that in September 1798 rebels devastated Ballinamuck, a few miles from Edgeworthstown. The Edgeworths’ home was twice spared “in gratitude for the family’s lack of sectarianism and their good relations with their tenantry” before Edgeworth’s father and brother were brutally attacked by Protestant loyalists (Myers 29; see also Richard L. and Maria Edgeworth 209-38). Violent stereotyping and paranoias about the recent rebellion underlie and inform the unfounded English prejudices against O’Neill and the rebellion is a vital context for understanding the grounds of prejudice in the story: as an Irishman, O’Neill is suspected of plotting to blow up the Cathedral. This supposed plot of which O’Neill is accused is assumed as “evil design”, presumably against religion and the community, a terrorist attack.

Edgeworth’s fiction does not only contain a powerful criticism against the oppression of the Irish, but against other communities too. In this paper I argue that Edgeworth clearly developed her ideas on the stigmatization of Jewishness and Jewish identity from what she had already achieved in her meditations on anti-Irish prejudice and the effects of stereotype on Ireland and Irish identity. Both the Jews and the Irish occupy a critical position in the English imagination, and in the English national character in general, and both menaced the British stability. If the Jew is an invention of the Anti-Semites —as Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1945)—, the Irish is an invention of the racist English. *Harrington* (1817) indebtedness to “The Limerick Gloves” can be examined mainly in the portrayal of cultural stereotypes and the approach to woman in the stories. I draw on Catherine

Gallagher's analysis (307, 323) and argue that in *Harrington* the Jews are at the same level as the Irish in that they are nations without a land. Both are discriminated in terms of ethnic othering and prejudice in relation to what was being presented as normative English society. Also, in both "The Limerick Gloves" and *Harrington* it is the English who are ultimately ridiculed. Following Manly's argument that in *Harrington* we do find a vision of race and religion that is "more nuanced, much more pluralistic, than it has hitherto been thought" ("Mendelssohn's" 247), I show that this trend can be traced earlier.

2. Stereotypes

When Edgeworth entered the literary realm, there was a long tradition of negative portraits of both the Irishman and the Jew in England. The image of the stage Irishman and Teague had been familiar with English audiences since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in popular culture. Paddy opposed the Englishman as John Bull and suggested that Irish people were lawless, unstable, emotional, childlike, superstitious, lazy, clannish, backward, and hard-fighting Catholic peasants. In the Irish tale these features are reinforced by the belief that the Irish are violent and O'Neill is a destabilizing force who certainly threatens the division of the community and England in many ways. Rather than a scapegoat, O'Neill's is a Scott-like hero whose worth shows all the time, but, paradoxically, he is discredited for being an Irishman. Courageous and full of humanity, O'Neill is committed to improving the lives of those around and he assumes his arrest as another way to combat prejudice. The Irishman also epitomizes the Irish perfect pride and perfect contempt for the English nation, so, for him, an individual is not the representative of a nation and his arrest is unfair: "No, I am not the king's prisoner! I am the prisoner of that shabby rascally tanner, Jonathan Hill. None but he would arrest a gentleman, in this way, for a trifle not worth mentioning" (Edgeworth, "Limerick" 270). Also, the linguistic misunderstanding between O'Neill and Phoebe echoes the breach between England and Ireland and the girl considers O'Neill too proud: "when her Irish admirer said *I expect*, he meant only in plain English *I hope*. But thus it is that a poor Irishman, often, for want of understanding the niceties of the English language, says the rudest when he means to say the civilest things imaginable"

(Edgeworth, “Limerick” 255, my italics). Similarly, in *Harrington*, the Jewish dialect and pronunciation are ridiculed to the point of turning them into “objects of perpetual derision and detestation” (Edgeworth, *Harrington* 31) and the portrait “The dentition of the Jew” that Mowbray wishes to purchase testifies the hatred for the Jews which were simultaneously stereotyped between 1290 and 1700 as aliens, anti-Christians, bribers, clippers and forgers, crucifiers, demons, desecrators, hypocrites, outcasts, regicides and usurers (Felsenstein 25) and also seen as intelligent, ambitious and sly. Eighteenth-century secularization and mercantilism brought a better vision of the Jews who were increasingly accepted as a part of the British society and this features in *Harrington*. Interestingly, the painting shows a Jew getting his teeth extracted, a punishment that brings back *Harrington*’s worst memories of the figure of the Jew with the terrible eyes at the synagogue. Montenero’s cutting the painting into pieces before a company of people becomes an attempt to eradicate intolerance and exorcize the protagonist’s demons.

The main difference between “The Limerick Gloves” and *Harrington* is a technical transformation that makes the latter a highly attractive story for any reader. *Popular Tales* was addressed to a younger audience while *Harrington* is formally closer to the series of *Tales of Fashionable Life* (1809-1812). The type of narrative voice used in the earlier story is an ironic pro-Irish third-person narrator who condemns phobia and is able to detach himself from Hereford ignorant inhabitants. The narrator’s comments are tinted by didacticism and cover criticism, so the reader notices that O’Neill’s involvement in the plot is never properly investigated: “Upon putting all these things together, it was resolved, by these overwise [sic] politicians, that the best thing that could be done for Hereford, and the only possible means of preventing the immediate destruction of its cathedral, would be to take Mr. O’Neill into custody (Edgeworth, “Limerick” 262). Likewise, Mr. Hill’s bigotry is repaid with Mrs. Hill’s gossip and Mr. Hill’s ethics are questioned by the narrator: “How Mr. Hill made the discovery of this debt to the grocer agree with his former notion, that the Irish glover had always money at command, we cannot well conceive; but anger and prejudice will swallow down the grossest contradictions without difficulty” (263).

What we find in *Harrington* is an enticing first person narrator who refers to past events and is very close to the narrative voice in *Castle*

Rackrent. Not coincidentally, Carol Margaret Davidson labels the opening of *Harrington* a “phantasmagoric primal scene [that] is nothing short of a Gothic germ” (10). This narrator serves Edgeworth for a purpose, as Davison states: “[l]ike a transgressive Gothic protagonist, Edgeworth brazenly and shamelessly enters the closet of British middle-class consciousness to expose the dark and dirty secret of anti-Semitism and to speculate upon its psychopathology” (10). Harrington sees things from the distance, but he offers enough temporal tips and references to historical events, like the naturalization of the Jews and the Jew Bill which were being discussed, the London Gordon Riots that took place in June 1780 and the 1753 Naturalization Bill. Also, the slogan “No papists! – no priests! – no Jews, no wooden shoes” specifically points to the correlation between Catholics and Jews. In “The Limerick Gloves” the narrator carefully chooses the vocabulary to refer to the Irish while the intensity of insults to the Jews escalates in *Harrington*, where direct speech is reserved for prejudiced high-class characters, like Mr. Harrington, Mowbray and Lady Brantfield.

Instead of a self-confident hero, the protagonist that Edgeworth introduces in *Harrington* is an easily impressed man who wonders about so many issues and experiences an inner conflict between silence and openness. Harrington’s thoughts resemble an interior monologue: “A Jewess — her religion — her principles — my principles. And can a Jewess marry a Christian? And should a Christian marry a Jewess?” (*Harrington* 274). His indignation is similar to O’Neill’s when it is questioned whether an Irishman cannot be a good man. Besides, neither Jacob nor Cambridge scholar Israel Lyons look like typical Jews. Harrington meets the former at school while “the Wandering Jew” is bullied. It is Jacob who introduces Harrington to Lyons, the son of Polish Jews, and a man who has written several books. His description is far from what Harrington considers a Jew. Michael Ragussis links *Harrington* to the “novel of Jewish identity” which aims to articulate, investigate and subvert the function of *The Merchant of Venice* as a key text to represent the Jew (116), but I would rather redefine *Harrington* as a novel of racial prejudice. Ragussis maintains that Montenero’s postponed discovery of the truth is a typical device to rewrite the texts about the Jews, for instance Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (1819) (143). Nonetheless, stereotypes serve other purposes, too. Thus, non-Jews

pass for Jews to take advantage of Mrs. Harrington's generosity and get money because in *Harrington* prejudice masks economic struggle.

The antihero in *Harrington* is a fallible man who will have to overcome his fears and does not realize that his weakness will become an obstacle to his relationship with Berenice since it discredits him before Montenero—who had already explained to him that excessive sensibility is “a dangerous, though not a common vice of character” (204)—and Berenice. The attitude of the narrator reveals the influence of *Practical Education* and later narrators, like the one in *Ennui*, where the protagonist, Lord Glenthorpe, transitions from an idle countryman to a responsible landlord and also becomes psychologically stronger. Still, in *Harrington*, the hero is also committed to justice. As a matter of fact, one of the strengths of the first person narrator in *Harrington* is his capacity to sympathize with others. The protagonist puts himself in the Jewess's shoes and imagines both how Berenice feels and how Shylock feels too: “I felt the force of some of his appeals to justice” (149), so history acquires a new meaning for him as he becomes more mature. Michael Scrivener accurately states that “Harrington sees Shakespeare's play through ‘Jewish’ eyes” (120) and adds that “[a]s Shakespeare became the national poet in the eighteenth century, Charles Macklin's version of *The Merchant of Venice* stabilized English identity as not Jewish, not-Shylock; the play in effect supported repeal of the Jew Jewish” (12). Another circumstance facilitating the identification between the protagonist and the Jews is that Jacob had a nervous disease when he was a child. Aware of “the foolish prejudices of [his] childhood” (*Harrington* 71), the protagonist of *Harrington* detaches himself from a past that he rejects. Harrington notices now the inhuman treatment that the English have given to the Jews and experiences an awakening. The private history or his earlier vision of the Jews confronts a new one:

Shall I be pardoned for having dwelt so long on this history of the mental and corporeal ills of my childhood? Such details will probably appear more trivial to the frivolous and ignorant, than to the philosophic and well informed. Not only because the best informed are usually the most indulgent judges, but because they will perceive some connexion [sic] between these apparently puerile details and subjects of higher importance. (19)

Darkness and suspicion are associated with both the Irish and the Jews and they are difficult to reconcile with generosity. Though very generous and a bit gullible, the Irish in “The Limerick Gloves” are seen as guilty of every evil affecting Hereford, so Mr. Hill automatically relates O’Neill to the hole under the foundation of the Cathedral and he supposes that O’Neill is a wicked Roman Catholic who should be watched since the ball could be the perfect excuse to perpetrate his evil design. Also, the Irish tale registers the prosperity of the linen industry in south Ulster in the 1800s, when so many young men could establish their independence and religious hatred arose (Jackson 75), but in Hereford no Irishman could be allowed to lead a gentleman’s life. In fact, ‘Essay on Irish Bulls’ (1802) was partly motivated by the disadvantage to Irish prosperity and the development of Irish trade and industry since the Act of Union affected the prosperity of those who were not among the Anglo-Irish landed classes. As Gary Kelly writes, the “new economy of money and merit” (in which “the former was supposed to accumulate in proportion to the latter”) both legitimized the values of the newly influential middle class while “preserving the hierarchical social order which they could take over from within” (89). Like the Jews in *Harrington*, O’Neill is doubly othered by his religion and his class since he lives like a gentleman, which relates him to the paranoias surrounding the upward mobility of naturalised Jews. Perhaps O’Neill’s fault is simply his stubbornness to be treated as gentleman and still be Irish, but his attitude is also as uncomfortable as Harrington’s weakness.

Like O’Neil in “The Limerick Gloves,” in *Harrington* Montenero is socially accepted and excluded at the same time. Judged for having a pistol at home after the evidence has been manipulated, Montenero shows his generosity when he helps the Coates and he gives his picture collection so Mr. Harrington can pay his creditors, which makes Mr. Harrington see Berenice’s father in a new light. Curiously, there is an intertextual reference to Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* in “The Limerick Gloves” when Widow O’Neil resorts to a pawnbroker to obtain ready money for her son’s release. The man pledges “goods to treble the amount of the debt” (“Limerick” 272). O’Neill learns a moral lesson after this episode and tries “to retrench his expenses in time, to live more like a glover, and less like a gentleman [...] He found, from experience, that good friends will not pay bad debts” (273). According to Davidson, through

the contrast between Montenero and Mowbray, Edgeworth destabilizes the established division between an English Christian gentleman and a Jewish criminal (49). In fact, in *Harrington* roles are inversed, so it will be a Jew who pays for the Englishman. Another negative portrait of the Jews is voiced by Harrington's companion, Mowbray, who boldly declares that he would become a Jew for money (*Harrington* 290). Mowbray's duplicity and cynicism lead him to marginalize Jacob in Gibraltar and destroy his master's business to the point of ruining his wife and children at the same time that he praises Montenero when the Jew is reading in English. Poetic justice works at the end of the story: Mowbray receives his punishment and has to leave London due to his debts since, in the Edgeworths' stories, those who cannot respect wealth do not deserve to be in England.

Edgeworth destabilizes her stories by including more examples of what can be called positive Irishness and Jewishness. With this strategy she subverts prejudicial stereotypes rather than her "stories" *per se*. In "The Limerick Gloves" Paddy and the hay-makers are also representative of the Emerald Isle and have the positive connotations of humility and humanity. The Defenders are alluded to in the tale as ignorant and poverty-stricken houghers and rick-burners when Paddy M'Cormack confesses pulling down Mr. Hill's rick of bark for "resentment for the insulting arrest of his countryman in the streets of Hereford, had instigated his fellow haymakers to this mischief: he headed them and thought he was doing a clever spirited action" ("Limerick" 285). Though their actions are not supported by the narrative voice, their motivations are explained in the tale. While in *Harrington* the strength of the community is deeply felt, the rebellious spirit in "The Limerick Gloves" is translated in *Harrington* into the mistreatment of Jacob. The protagonist feels like a toy in other English people's hands and admits that he would not have taken part in it if it had not been for the rest of children, and it is Widow Levy who defends Mr. Montenero against the mob. Her discourse is definitely marked as Irish:

"Keep ourselves to ourselves, for I'll tell you a bit of a sacret — I'm a little bit of a ca'olic myself, all as one as what they call a papish; but I keep it to myself, and nobody's the wiser nor the worse they'd tear me to pieces, may be, did

they suspect *the like*, but I keep never minding, and you, jewel, do the like" (*Harrington* 370-71).

Levy specifically advocates tolerance in the face of religious difference by stating to the Jewish Montenero, "we were all brothers and sisters once — no offence — in the time of Adam sure, and we should help one another in all times" (371). Thanks to her "intrepid ingenuity and indefatigable zeal" (373), the rioters are cheated and she even faces Lady de Brantefield's and Lady Anne's insults. More importantly, Widow Levy is instrumental in *Harrington* since she delivers Mr. Montenero's letter to General B. and keeps the Jews away from the mob.

Levy's generosity contrasts with the English hypocrisy which extends to the domestic realm. If the family stands for the political sphere, Edgeworth presents families where parents have no authority. Both Mr. Hill and Mr. Harrington are treated like puppets because they lack determination and are governed by their prejudices. When Mr. Hill's and Mr. Harrington's speeches are mocked, Edgeworth directs her satire to ineffectual grandiloquence and the manipulation of language. It is left to the reader to consider what discourse is most valuable, either the patriarchs' or the protagonist's. Mr. Hill's enforced conversion hides his attempt to swear examinations against an innocent man. Though he feels ashamed, his deceitful words can hardly be credible at this point:

"I know we are all born where it pleases God; and an Irishman may be as good as another. I know that much, Mr. Marshal; and I am not one of those illiberal-minded ignorant people that cannot abide a man that was not born in England... an Irishman born may be as good, almost, as an Englishman born." ("Limerick" 301)

Prejudices, such as anti-Semitism and anti-Irish attitudes, are so problematic because they are ingrained through normalization and, of all the fictions about the Jews that we can find in *Harrington*, Mr. Harrington's is the worst and the most inconsistent. For him, the Jews are bastards and devils, so he forbids Harrington to talk to them and organizes dinners to convince country people to vote against the naturalization of the Jews. His bigotry reveals the wider prevalence of anti-Semitism and that is why Edgeworth is self-accusatory about

her own representation of Jews. First, the Anglo-Irish author presents anti-Semitism as endemic with Mr. Harrington and then deconstructs it with the Monteneros. *Harrington* also chronicles more conversions: Mr. Harrington becomes more receptive and supports Harrington's marriage hiding an enforced conversion promoted by economic interest. For Sicher, anti-Semitism is a means of control and authority and Edgeworth opposes the prejudice and violence in English history and xenophobia to the rational notion of a nation that Montenero has inculcated in Berenice (Sicher 172) who has been educated in a different vision of nationhood that has Edgeworth's approval.

In this regard, Edgeworth registers some evolution in terms of gender and intergenerational relationships reflecting new times for women too. Regina Hewitt accurately posits that *Harrington* registers the protagonist's growing wish to free himself, his family, and his society from religious and ethnic biases (Hewitt 293). In *Harrington* the parents' hatred for the Jews parallels classism in "The Limerick Gloves" while the young generation is much more open-minded. Also, in the latter the women around Phoebe are featured as eager to engage in the marriage market, but they are as dim-witted as men, which does not happen in *Harrington*. Mrs. Hill's changeable attitude to O'Neill shows that the Irishman is regarded as an uncomfortable challenge that has to be skipped despite its appeal. Unlike Phoebe, Jenny Brown has been sent a pair of Irish gloves and thus has been invited to the O'Neills' ball. Mrs. Hill's reaction recalls Jane Austen's matrons' as she feels "a good deal piqued and alarmed by the idea that the perfumer's daughter might rival and outshine her own" ("Limerick" 259). Mrs. Harrington aligns with Mrs. Coates to attack the Jews; she cautions Harrington against the Jews, but she avoids arguing because that is unfeminine. Likewise, Mrs. Hill connects the gloves to a plot against the cathedral and her fiction about O'Neill is strong enough to influence her weak-willed husband, who immediately decides that Phoebe has to take off the gloves. It is Phoebe—whose name suitably evokes phobia and remains as dispossessed and surveyed as O'Neill—who cannot accept discrimination. She questions irrational repression and her query "Cannot an Irishman be a good man?" (248) is never answered, just as Berenice wonders why she cannot marry Harrington.

3. 'She is worth all the fine ladies in Lon'on': the Gendering of anti-Irish and anti-Semitic prejudices in Edgeworth

Since the twentieth century both women and the Irish have been related to Jews as signifiers of the Other, which applies to Edgeworth's stories. In 1947 Fred Manning Smith compared the Jews and women in *The Merchant of Venice* (1598) and *Othello* (1603) (33) and Catherine Gallagher assimilates the position of the Jews to the Irish in her book about Edgeworth's literary partnership with Richard Lovell Edgeworth (307). *Harrington* includes the portrait of very different female characters, not being Berenice the most important one, but Fowler, whose name can equally refer to "fool" and "fault". The protagonist bases his fiction of the Jews on his nurse's gruesome tales. Fowler is responsible for young Harrington's alacrity for the Jews. Nevertheless, because his nurse becomes his sole affective bond, Harrington prefers not to betray Fowler.

If Harrington's nurse is the victim of prejudice and false visions of the Jews, Phoebe is also conditioned in the same way towards O'Neil. In "The Limerick Gloves" lovers fight the cultural stereotypes of the Irishmen as fortune-hunter and the English as ones "who could change her opinion point blank, like the weathercock" (255). Phoebe states "Brian O'Neill is no Irish fortune-hunter, and scorns them that are so narrow-minded as to think that no other kind of cattle but them there fortune-hunters can come out of all Ireland" (253). Her love for the Irishman grows when a little girl comes to tell her that O'Neill has been good to a poor Irish haymaker. Who "goes out a haymaking in the day-time, along with a number of others. He knew Mr. O'Neill in his own country, and he told mammy a great deal about his goodness" (266). The battle between Phoebe's daughterly duty and love is represented by her spreading some leaves of a rose on the gloves and keeping them until the end of the story when she appears "in the Limerick gloves; and no perfume ever was so delightful to her lover as the smell of the rose-leaves, in which they had been (307-8). Renouncing the gloves—now Phoebe's fetish standing in for and substituting her sexual desire O'Neill—also means renouncing a part of herself. Eventually, Edgeworth shows that the Self cannot be renounced whatever it is.

Just as women are sacrificed for patriarchal interests, so are men subjected to the will of others. Sexual stereotypes are destroyed in *Harrington*, where men are as vulnerable and hesitating as women.

The Monteneros demythologize Jewishness by the way they are presented; they exorcize negative images of the Jews as mean and vindictive early in the story. Berenice's background is the opposite of Harrington's. Her father is a Spanish Jew who fled to America trying to avoid persecution and tyranny and turned into a prosperous man in London. Eager to combat prejudice against the Jews, Montenero cannot tolerate Shakespeare's manipulation of real events in *The Merchant of Venice*: "In the *true* story, from which Shakespeare took the plot of the Merchant of Venice, it was a Christian who acted the part of the Jew, and the Jew that of the Christian; it was a Christian who insisted upon having the pound of flesh from next the Jew's heart" (*Harrington*, 163-4) because originally the ruthless man was the Christian. Therefore, he buys the picture "The dentition of the Jew" to destroy it and end up with "every record of cruelty and intolerance" (263). Nonetheless, Montenero's conservative views of Berenice as the weaker sex are clearly exposed: though he considers woman at the same level as man in terms of rationality, he maintains that a woman is not invulnerable to other people's opinions. The Jewess helps to test Harrington, who does not want to declare his feelings to her to avoid exposing her to ridicule and to follow Montenero's advice to just self-control ("command your own mind"; 356).

While Harrington is focused on such a goal, Berenice proves her singularity. A major point of departure between the two stories is that female psyche is much more developed in *Harrington* than in "The Limerick Gloves". In the former the protagonist sees that Berenice is not frivolous, she has a delicate temper without artifice and she inspires him with new life: "I had now a great object, a strong and lively interest in existence" (*Harrington* 211). A most interesting creature, according to Mr. Harrington, Berenice becomes "A character of genuine simplicity" (316), which coincides with Widow Levy's opinion "[s]he's worth all the fine ladies in Lon'on, feathers and all in a bag" (399). Berenice resembles Harrington in one aspect and yet is othered because she comes from the American paradise and is ignorant of the prejudices towards Jews as greedy and violent. Here Edgeworth refers to Rachel Mordecai's birthplace suggesting that in America Berenice could do what is simply not possible in Great Britain: to mix with varied people thanks to the country's tolerance and freedom.

However, like in Shakespeare, there is one condition for the story to end well and, in fact, many scholars have skewed *Harrington* due to the last twist of the plot (Yates 360-7). Berenice's mother was an English woman of a good family who had been brought up as a Protestant and Berenice had romantically resolved never to marry a man who had had to sacrifice his religion or principles for love or a man who could not accept her father. For Efraim Sicher, the fact that there is no conversion in *Harrington* showcases Edgeworth's respect for difference:

as in the case of the Anglo-Irish, the novel does not contemplate the Jewish shedding their separateness or advocate any fusion of the Jews into Protestant Christianity, notwithstanding Montenero's demonstration [...] that the widely perceived threat of assimilated Jews was unfounded and that they were actually beneficial to the English economy and culture. (172)

Edgeworth suggests that the Jews and the English can live in mutual respect. What makes Berenice acceptable to the eyes of the English society is her wealth. It facilitates her marriage to Harrington, but Berenice is not the only false Jew in *Harrington*. Categories mix, as "Jew" is broadly applied to anyone who contradicts others: Mowbray considers Harrington as a Jew by heart and Harrington says he is as Jew as Jacob and asks him to be as he would like others to be to himself.

The most striking words about prejudice come from a female voice. Once Fowler she has been expelled from England, Mr. Montenero thinks that Harrington should pardon her and Berenice hints that pardoning is non-exclusive of Christians. Berenice's question anticipates Mr. Montenero's doubt in *Harrington*: "Do you think we have not an Englishman good enough for her?" (259). What is significant is that, in "The Limerick Gloves", the question is in the heroine's mouth and that she is as outspoken as O'Neill himself. According to Ragussis, with such questions the novelistic tradition "explores, and ultimately seeks to control, the authority by which 'printed books' construct paradigms that nurture racial hatred and perhaps even racial desire" (117), which is a permanent feature of Edgeworth's *oeuvre*. For instance, when she parodies the traditional representation of Ireland in *Ennui* (*Tales of Fashionable Life*, First Series, 1809) through Lady Geraldine, who lies

to Lord Craiglethorpe, a man intent on becoming an ethnographer of Ireland:

“...he shall say all that I know he thinks of us poor Irish savages. If he would but speak, one could answer him: if he would find fault, one might defend: if he would laugh, one might perhaps laugh again: but here he comes to hospitable, open-hearted Ireland: eats as well as he can in his own country; drinks better than he can in his own country; sleeps as well as he can in his own country; accepts all our kindness without a word or a look of thanks, and seems the whole time to think, that, ‘Born for his use, we live but to oblige him.’” (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 148)

The Anglo-Irish author is here defending an approach to culture which is not based on false portraits, but on direct contact with people. That is the way to achieve proper cultural understanding and to get to know cultural identity free of prejudice.

4. Conclusion

Both “The Limerick Gloves” and *Harrington* are studies of prejudice: they deal with mysterious Others, the Irish and the Jews, and both depict class struggle since the *parvenue* is represented as a menace to the well-offs. Both works also share many common points. “Irish” and “Jew” acquire multiple connotations in the stories, but the heroes show their inner goodness; they help the English financially and Edgeworth insists on their generosity despite the negative images and criticism of those around.

Nevertheless, “The Limerick Gloves” is a tale for young people with a positive, yet troubling, ending while Edgeworth’s orphan book lacks the didacticism and irony of her previous *oeuvre* which sometimes is the origin of her fascinating later works. In her Irish tale the Anglo-Irish author shows the effects of prejudice on a couple, and O’Neill affirms himself as a hero. The main difference is that in *Harrington* there is some individual growth and detachment from past events and this device helps Harrington to become more critical to oneself and more rational. As a consequence, the reader confronts a hero who is more human than O’Neill. If examined

together, the two narratives show the two dimensions of prejudice: as an individual evil created in our mind, as happens in *Harrington*, and as the collective disease presented in “The Limerick Gloves.”

Notes

¹ The collection *Popular Tales* includes “Rosanna”, “Lame Jervas”, “The Will”, “Out of Debt, Out of Danger”, “The Lottery”, “Murad the Unlucky”, “The Manufacturers”, “The Contrast”, “The Grateful Negro” and “Tomorrow.”

² *Castle Rackrent* (1800), in particular, features Lady Rackrent, the “stiffnecked Israelite” (Edgeworth, *Castle* 19) and wife of Sir Kit, who feels alienated and is even deprived of food and freedom for five years because she keeps on defending her faith. Spector puts forward the argument that Jason Quirk is in fact the “figurative Jew” of the novel, which is very close to Edgeworth’s portrayal of Brian O’Neill in “The Limerick Gloves”. Other stories depicting Jews are “The Prussian Vase” and “The Good Aunt” (*Moral Tales* [1801]), “The Little Merchants” (*The Parent’s Assistant* [1796]) and “Murad the Unlucky”. For a detailed analysis of Edgeworth’s portraits of the Jews in her earlier fiction, see Manly, “Introduction,” 7-9.

³ Toland’s pamphlet *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews* (1714) denies any essential difference between Jews and natives of their adopted countries, so Jews were then already natural citizens (Manly, “Burke,” 157).

⁴ Yet, the translation of “The Limerick Gloves” into French distorted Edgeworth’s original aim and offered a much more refined vision of Ireland (see Fernández).

⁵ Sir Walter Scott declared his indebtedness to Edgeworth as a source of inspiration for her heroes (see the introduction to *Waverley*; Scott 523).

⁶ In 1753 the Jew Bill offered to foreign Jews who had lived in Great Britain and Ireland for at least three years the possibility to naturalize without abandoning their religion (Felsenstein 188), which stimulated the economy and reduced public debt. However, the Tories and London merchants opposed the idea on the basis that the Jews had supported the Hanovers and the Bill would be a menace to English artisans and landowners (Felsenstein 189, 212, 251).

⁷ According to Manly, there is some inaccuracy on Edgeworth’s part here since the biggest enemies of the Jews were the merchants from the

City, and not the landowners like Mr. Harrington because the latter had the political power (“Introductory Note” xxxi).

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