

An Analysis of Octave Ségur's Translation of Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) into French

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ABSTRACT

The Anglo-Irish author Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) became very famous in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century thanks to her pedagogical works, regionalist and feminocentric novels, whose translations were eagerly awaited on the Continent. This paper analyses a hitherto totally unexplored field of research within Edgeworth studies: the French translation of Edgeworth's most important English society novel, *Belinda* (1801), from the point of view of gender and translation studies. For this purpose, we will take into account the particular context of the work, its main features in English and French, and the particular procedures adopted by the French translator to transform Edgeworth's tale into moral fiction for women. Octave-Henri Gabriel, comte de Ségur, adapts *Belinda* to the taste of French readers by sacrificing both the macrostructural and microstructural features of the source text. Despite the success of the book in France, *Bélinde* (1802) is not comparable to the author's original idea, as the textual history of *Belinda* reveals. Edgeworth's book deals with controversial issues at that time and features her most memorable female character, which is distorted in the French text. Ultimately, this paper confirms that the publication of Ségur's translation has consequences on the transmission of Edgeworth's *oeuvre* in other European literatures and on her image as a feminist writer.

Keywords: Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, translation studies, gender studies, Anglo-Irish literature

1. Introduction

Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) is better known as a regionalist novelist rather than as a writer devoted to fiction for women. Thanks to *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *Ennui* (1809) or *The Absentee* (1812), Edgeworth introduced Ireland to nineteenth-century readers, and she became a reference for later novelists, like Ivan Turgenev. The Anglo-Irish author produced pedagogical tales and essays (*The Parent's Assistant* 1796, *Practical Education* 1798), plays (*Comic Dramas* 1817), and feminocentric works, like *Belinda* (1801), *Leonora* (1806) and *Helen* (1834). Edgeworth's popularity reached the French-speaking world, and most of her productions were translated into French. This paper explores the French translation of *Belinda* (1801), one of Edgeworth's most popular feminocentric works, which can be very revealing to understand better the transmission of Edgeworth's *oeuvre* on the Continent and her consideration within gender studies as a woman novelist interested in the portrait of women's problems. For our purpose, we will describe the main features of the source text and the plot, and then we will move to a detailed examination of the target text within the framework of gender and translation studies, more specifically, Itamar Even-Zohar's theory of the literary system and Mary Snell-Hornby's approach to the macro and microtextual aspects of the text. The first ones refer to the narrative point of view, prologues, footnotes, etc; and the second include the study of units of analysis or the segments established between texts, as well as the deviations or modifications operated in them (Snell-Hornby, 1995).

2. The source text: Maria Edgeworth and her success in feminocentric fiction

After *Castle Rackrent*, *Belinda* has been Edgeworth's second best, and critical attention has focused on two points in this production: education (Kowaleski-Wallace, 1998; Yates, 1988) and colonialism (Perera, 1991: 15; Kirkpatrick, 1993: 343; Lightfoot, 1994: 119). These two topics are intermingled in *Belinda*, as Marjorie Lightfoot (1994) states: *Belinda* is a satire of colonialism, didacticism, urban society, comedy of manners, rationalism, Gothic literature and sentimentalism. Edgeworth's didacticism has already been discussed by Wilfrid Ward (1909), or Patrick Murray (1971), and the later relates Edgeworth to William Thackeray (1971: 53). For Ian Edward Topliss, in *Belinda* Edgeworth X-rayed society, like in *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1799) or in *Almeria* (1809) (1981: 29-30; see also Butler, 1972: 317), and Ria Omasreiter supports that Edgeworth humanized and applied Adam Smith's, Thomas R. Malthus's and Jeremy Bentham's theories to fiction (1984). Intertextuality and the mixture between the comic and the tragic element in women's lives have also been subject to debate (Ní Chuilleanáin, 1996: 30-3; Lightfoot, 1994: 122). Mitzi Myers points out what aspects are yet to be explored in *Belinda*:

[...] what genius Austen found in it or to unpack its political codings, its allusive narrative complexities, or its remarkable crosshatchings of the wildly romantic with the solidly

referential, the visual with the verbal —the multiple prints, paintings, miniatures, inserted letters, and reported scandals that proliferate through its pages (2000: 105).

When Edgeworth introduces *Belinda* to her readers, she is very aware of the kind of fiction she is dealing with, and she relates it to prestigious authors. The novel genre still had some detractors and the connotations of not being serious literature, and authors resorted to paratexts of various sorts to defend their writings. In the “Advertisement” of *Belinda* dated the 20th of April 1801, *Belinda* is labelled a “Moral Tale”, and not a novel, and Edgeworth places her work along with Mme. de Crousaz’s, Burney’s, Inchbald’s and Dr. Moore’s ones with a clear aim to give a didactic turn to her production: “[...] so much folly, error [sic], and vice are disseminated in books classed under this denomination [novel], that it is hoped the wish to assume another title will be attributed to feelings that are laudable, and not fastidious”(Edgeworth, 1994: n.p.).

The story begins when Mrs. Stanhope, the protagonist’s matchmaking aunt decides to send her still unmarried niece, Belinda Portman, to Lady Delacour’s home in London. Belinda is an *ingénue*, the antithesis of a worldly lady, and Stanhope considers it is time that Belinda enters the *haut monde* in the hands of an admired sophisticated wit. Stanhope envisions marriage as an economic transaction and explains to Belinda that it is in her interests to avoid competition with Lady Delacour. Belinda discovers that behind Lady Delacour’s fascinating façade there is a miserable woman who feels detached from her drunkard husband and only feels happy when courted in society by Clarence Hervey, a narcissistic beau who is afraid of marriage. Lady Delacour’s maid, Marriot, exercises a dominating influence on her mistress and is in charge of Lady Delacour’s mysterious boudoir. As the narrative progresses, Belinda sees that people regard her as a “composition of art and affectation” (Edgeworth, 1994: 26). Obtaining Belinda’s heart represents obtaining a prize, and she is courted by the most dissipated men in town. Belinda is told Lady Delacour’s story in the one of the best scenes in Edgeworth’s *oeuvre*: she was a coquettish heiress whom Lord Delacour married for money though her true love was Lord Percival, the embodiment of the English gentleman in *Belinda* and now married to Lady Anne Percival, the opposite of Lady Delacour. It seems that things began going wrong in Lady Delacour’s marriage when she risked familiar economy by spending a lot. Apart from this, Lady Delacour feels she has not fulfilled her role as a mother: after having two miscarriages, she gave birth to a girl, Helena, who was brought up in the countryside and is totally estranged from her mother. To complete the picture, Lady Delacour is persuaded of having an incurable disease in her breast as a result of a duel with her political rival is Mrs. Luttridge, and her most intimate female friend, Mrs. Freke, is a masculine lady who sometimes is attired in men’s clothes.

As Belinda’s relationship with Hervey becomes closer, Lady Delacour feels jealous and sees Belinda as a rival. At the same time, Lady Delacour would like to recover Helena’s affection, and Hervey also wants to rehabilitate Lady Delacour, who needs to be examined by a doctor as a result of an accident. Both Lady Delacour and Belinda are the victims of suspicions. The woman of the world and Helena feel closer than ever, but Lady Delacour begins to think that Belinda wants to seduce Lord Delacour and occupy

her place in the family. Belinda cannot bear the situation and goes to live with the Percivals at Oakly Park. In this estate, Belinda enjoys family life and meets a Creole, Mr. Vincent, who is immediately attracted to Belinda and opens his heart to her. However, Belinda discovers that Mr. Vincent is a gambler and refuses to marry him, so he immediately flees to Germany. On the other hand, Belinda's suspicious that Hervey has a mistress are confirmed since he is in charge of a beautiful young girl called Virginia Saint Pierre. Hervey has educated Virginia at Windsor to make her his wife in the future. Unfortunately, the girl is not in love with Hervey, but is only grateful to him. At the end of the story, Virginia's wealthy father returns from the West Indies and she marries Captain Sunderland. Once Belinda is told that Lady Delacour's health has got worse, Belinda comes back to see her friend. It is discovered that Mrs. Lutridge and Lord Delacour are lovers and Lady Delacour allows his husband to read her correspondence with Hervey to show him that there was not a *liaison* between them. Lady Delacour's surgery is a success, she recovers her husband's heart, and, in the end, Belinda is married to Hervey.

Attention must be paid to the editorial history of Edgeworth's *Belinda*. Together with *The Modern Griselda*, *Belinda* was included in Mrs. Barbauld's anthology *British Novelists Series* (1810) where Edgeworth was considered a model to follow. According to Kirkpatrick, Edgeworth revised the text and Johnson printed a third edition in 1811 (1994: xxxiii). The source text we are using here is Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick edition of *Belinda* for Oxford University Press (1994), and it is based on the second edition of 1802. It is closest to Ségur's source text since the most famous edition is of 1810 and is heavily superseded. According to Kirkpatrick, Edgeworth had slightly revised it from the first edition of 1801, and she summarized the changes in a letter to her sister Harriet appended as "Note on the Text":

We have explained that the picture with which Virginia fell in love was some *time* in her possession—we have detailed Lady Delacour's recovery, and we have added a few sentences to explain that Belinda would have loved Clarence better than any other person always if he had declared any attachment to her, but that she had turned her thoughts from him when he made no declaration of love to her. In the last scene he is *now* distinctly to avow passion for her—there may be other faults but we did not think it would be wise to *botch* (Edgeworth, 1994: xxvi).

Therefore, Edgeworth later developed certain elements, such as Virginia's love, Lady Delacour's recovery, the motives for Belinda's behavior towards her first suitor—which were far-fetched according to *The Monthly Review* (1801: 368-74)—, and Edgeworth made that suitor more vocal about his passion. Nevertheless, for the 1802 edition, she did not want to revise much (Edgeworth, 1994: xxvi).

3. The target text

Maria was aware that her book would soon appear in Paris, and she revealed her impressions to her relatives. According to Marilyn Butler, Edgeworth's Parisian friends sometimes assured the Edgeworths they had enjoyed reading *Belinda* and that they did not know about the extracts from *Castle Rackrent* and *Irish Bulls* which had been translated by the Pictets in *Bibliothèque Britannique* (Butler, 1972: 199; Fernández Rodríguez, 2004, 2006, 2008). Charlotte Edgeworth wrote to Harriet and Louisa Beaufort: "We have seen a gentleman who has translated *Belinda* not only into french language, but french taste for he has altered the story. He intends to publish a translation which shall be literal" (Colvin, 1979: 25; 2 Nov 1802). The Anglo-Irish author complained about Octave Gabriel comte de Segur's 1802 translation of *Belinda* in a letter to Mary Sneyd:

At the bottom of it was written *Belinda*, or else indeed I never should have guessed that it had any relation to *Belinda*. The print is in a ladies memorandum book and if it was in your hands it would infallibly put you in passion—that is into a great a passion as you can be put. Lady Delacour is a fat vulgar housekeeper and *Belinda* a stick worse a hundred times than sprawling Virginia. In many booksellers shops at Bruges, Gent and Brussels we found the translation of *Belinda* by Miss Edgewortz as they call her and print her. I have not yet had time to see whether it is well or ill translated (Colvin, 1979: 16; 20 October 1802).

Edgeworth's translator was Octave-Henri Gabriel, comte de Ségur (1779-1818), a French soldier and famous suicide. The eldest son of Louis Philippe, comte de Ségur, and Antoinette Élisabeth d'Aguesseau, he served in Italy and Spain, and, apart from *Belinda*, he translated Priscilla Wakefield's *An Introduction to Botany, in a Series of Familiar Letters* (1796) as *Flore des jeunes personnes* or *Lettres familières sur la botanique* (1801) and Horsley Curties's *Ethelvina* (1802).

Segur's translation was published in four volumes in Paris by François Maradan, one of the major publishers of the revolutionary period and former Paris Book Guild member. Carla Hesse explains that Maradan had specialized in the theater before the Revolution, and, in 1790, like many publishers, he ventured briefly into periodical publishing and went bankrupt. In 1797, three English novels in translation appeared at the *dépôt* in his name, as well as two works of contemporary political history. The newspaper *Amis des lois* reported that in 1800 Maradan's light literary publications had captured the Parisian literary market (Hesse, 1991: 196-7)

The complete title of the book is *Bélinde, conte morale de Maria Edgeworth traduit de l'anglais par l'auteur d'Ethelwina, par L.S. et par F. S.*, and the first volume is preceded by two revealing paratexts (Genette, 1987: 7-8): "Avertissement de l'auteur" and "Avertissement du traducteur". The first one corresponds with Edgeworth's English "Advertisement" with one typographical mistake: "Burnet" for Burney. "Avertissement du traducteur" is a digression about the novel with the aim to place *Bélinde* as something apart from the general novel stream: *Bélinde* is considered as a remarkable production and with this translation they have tried to "donner une utile leçon aux

coquettes, aux joueurs, et à tous ce qui ne prennent pas pour base de leur conduit une pieuse morale” (Edgeworth, 1802, I: iv). In the first chapter there is a footnote telling that some extracts have already been translated in *Bibliothèque Britannique* and that the translator wants to preserve some parts of the source text: “Nous n’avons pas voulu changer le style de ces morceaux, traduits par une plume aussi élégante que facile: c’eût été défiguré; et nous respectons trop ce qui peut plaire au public” (Edgeworth, 1802, I I: 1).

For Even-Zohar, six interrelated factors are involved in the production of a text: a CONSUMER, to whom a PRODUCT is addressed; a PRODUCER, who creates the text for a MARKET; and the INSTITUTION, which determines the usability of the product considering the existing REPERTOIRE in a given polysystem (1990: 34). This paradigm is here applied to *Bélinde* regarding Ségur’s translation, which became quite popular. During Edgeworth’s visit to Paris in 1802, she found everyone reading it and “elderly ladies recommending it to their nieces and granddaughters as a model of what a young lady of the world ought to be” (Inglis-Jones, 1959: 71). Edgeworth was also supported by the institution in France, that is, the critics, publishing houses and journals. The rationalist philosopher André Morellet noted: “À Paris on lit votre livre sur l’éducation —à Genève on l’avale— à Paris on admire vos principes —à Genève on les suit” (Butler, 1972: 190). British fiction was in fashion at the time and domestic novels similar to Edgeworth’s tale were translated into French. It is the case of Elizabeth Inchbald’s and Frances Burney’s, to name just a few. Even so, Wil Verhoeven points out:

Until the 1750s, roughly, the dissemination of French translations of English novels suffered from the marginal status that the domestic novel had in France. Being a hybrid form of prose writing, the novel was generally regarded as an undesirable form of literary expression and was only deemed fit for idle entertainment. That said, the English novel had a formidable sponsor in Voltaire. As a result, the ‘genre anglais’, as it was known, attracted a steadily growing readership in France (2015: 581).

3.1. *Bélinde* and French poetics

Editorial constraints probably account for the remarkable difference in the presentation of volumes. The source text is divided into three volumes containing 12, 11 and 8 chapters while the French translation comprises four volumes with 10, 8, 7 and 6 chapters, respectively. Besides, both the beginning of some chapters and their titles do not correspond with English: “L’horoscope” becomes “Sortes Virgilianae”.

The translator tries to accommodate the work to the French taste in some points, namely by introducing sentimental details and erasing those aspects that would shock polite readers. The aim is to present texts that are pleasing to read, as the French critic Élie-Catherine Fréron stated:

On ne considère pas le roman étranger comme un objet d’art qu’on tente de reproduire avec tout le respect et tout le soin qu’il mérite, mais comme une carrière d’où il s’agit de tirer le

plus des pierres possible pour les vendre au meilleur prix [...] Il n'est question que de trouver une main assez habile pour lever l'écorce, c'est-à-dire pour établir l'ordre, retrancher les superfluités, corriger les traits, et ne laisser voir enfin ce qui mérite effectivement de l'admiration (qtd. in Van Tieghem, 1966: 17, see also Fernández Rodríguez, 2014).

Ségur prefers to tell the story of the relationship between Hervey and Virginia as an intradiegetic first-person narrative (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 14). This part is transformed into a memoir or repentant criminal's confessional narrative which is placed at the same level as Lady Delacour's one. Virginia Saint-Pierre is named after J.H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788) and this subplot becomes relevant because it is based on Thomas Day's attempt to educate the foundling Sabrina Sidney and mould her into his perfect wife (Butler, 1972: 309; see also Moore, 2013). In the French translation Virginia's speeches are tinged by the effusion of feeling, for instance, when Mr. Hartley immediately approves of Virginia's marriage:

M. Hartley approuva Virginia, et lui exprima le désir de jouir de la satisfaction de M. Hervey.

Je voudrais le voir content, s'écria Virginie; mais, hélas! Il est toujours mélancolique avec moi, toujours distrait; une peine secrète semble opprimer son cœur; et ce n'est que lorsqu'il me croit triste qu'il me dit qu'il m'aime (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 104).

Other examples of cultural adaptation show how the text is catered for the taste of the French audience. Clarence wants to find a Julie (Edgeworth, 1801, IV: 15), not a Sophia (Edgeworth, 1994: 362). Both the idea of getting rid of Virginia with money (Edgeworth 1994: 379) and the paragraph about female virtue and chastity (Edgeworth, 1994: 380) are missing, and the happens with Mrs. Ormond's words about Virginia falling in love: "Ah! thought Mrs. Ormond, she has not forgotten how I checked her sensibility some time ago. Poor girl! she is become afraid of me, and I have taught her to dissemble; but she betrays herself every moment" (Edgeworth, 1994: 381).

The *British Catalogue* disapproved of the character of Virginia, whose final ending was said "to outrage all probability" (1801: 85). As a matter of fact, in French this subplot is reversed: after contemplating a man disguised as Paul in a picture, Virginia confesses she is not in love with Clarence, but with Captain Sunderland whom she met some years ago and whose portrait she has seen. In French, it is the portrait of a child (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 30), not of Captain Sunderland (Edgeworth, 1994: 369). The original text features Clarence and Sunderland as former friends in Jamaica, and the first feels free to declare his love to Belinda in England. While Lady Delacour closes the narrative explaining that all the couples were happy at the end, in the target text Virginia insists on Clarence and Belinda's marriage and sacrifices her happiness for theirs: "Les affaires de mon père l'appellent dans les Indes. Je serai sa compagne de voyage. Il ne tiendra qu'à vous, chère Bélinde, ainsi qu'à Clarence, d'adoucir pour moi l'amertume de l'absence. C'est en me donnant souvent de vos nouvelles, en

m'apprenant que votre union rend aussi heureux que je le desire" (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 184-5).

French poetics required the suppression of secondary characters, especially if they belonged to the lower classes or were servants. In a relatively long narrative like *Bélinde*, this does not only imply compressing information, but also some displacements, which is revealed in many different ways. For instance, the explanation about Lady Delacour's operation which is graphically delivered by Marriott (Edgeworth, 1994: 313) is reported by Belinda in the target text (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 110). Also, the gossip about Clarence as being already married passes through lots of filters: "Positive! as I said before, positive! Madam, my woman had it from Lady Newland's Swiss, who had it from Lady Singleton's Frenchwoman, who had it from Longueville, the hairdresser, who had it from Lady Almeria's own woman, who was present at the ceremony, and must know if anybody does" (Edgeworth, 1994: 456). This corresponds with French "La chose n'est pas douteuse, madame; c'es le suisse de lady Newland qui l'a dit à la femme-de-chambre de lady Singleton" (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 169). Interestingly, it is women's speeches that are modified, especially Marriot's, for example, after Lady Delacour's duel:

'She must, —to be sure, she must, ma'am,' cried Marriott, putting her hand upon her bosom. 'But let her be ever so much hurt, my lady will keep it to herself: the footmen swear she did not give a scream, not a single scream; so it's their opinion she was no ways hurt —but that, I know, can't be— and, indeed, they are thinking so much about the carriage, that they can't give one any rational account of any thing; and, as for myself, I'm sure I'm in such a flutter. Lord knows, I advised my lady not to go with the young horses, no later than—' (Edgeworth, 1994: 127)

Elle doit l'être, répondit Mariette en montrant son sein. Les domestiques assurent qu'elle n'a pas jeté un seul cri; mais je connais son courage.—Dieu sait comme je l'avais priée de me point se servir de ces maudits chevaux! (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 208).

The same applies to parts relative to children and science. Like *Helen*, *Belinda* tells the story of a frustrated marriage and motherhood: both works focus on the disruption or absence of affective ties in the family unit and the unhappiness that this engenders (Fernández Rodríguez, 2012: 15). There is a considerable part missing about Helena's fishes eating together (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 66), which refers to the conciliation of the Delacours reported by Marriott: "Miss Portman, they're eating it! Ma'am they're eating it as fast as they can!" (Edgeworth, 1994: 285). The conversation about fishes between the old gardener and Helena is later reported and has more nuances in the source text:

Helena, who did not know the share which Belinda's aunt and her own mother had in the transaction, began with great eagerness to tell the story of the poor gardener, who had been cheated by some fine ladies out of his aloe, &c. She then related how kind lady Anne Percival and her aunt Margaret had been to this old man; that they had gotten him a place as a gardener at Twickenham; and that he had pleased the family to whom he was

recommended so much by his good behaviour, that, as they were leaving the house, and obliged to part with him, they had given him all the geraniums and balsams out of the green-house of which he had the care, and these he had been this day selling to the young ladies at Mrs Dumont's (Edgeworth, 1994: 290).

Helène aussitôt, qui ignorait la part que sa mère et la tante de Bélinde avaient dans l'histoire de cet homme, la raconta avec feu, disant qu'il avait été trompé et chassé par des belles dames; que lady Anne Percival, et sa tante Margareta étaient venues au secours de ce pauvre homme, et l'avaient placé jardinier à Twickenham; qu'il venait vendre des fleurs aux pensionnaires de mistriss Dumont, et qu'elle s'était chargée de le payer, lorsque l'arrivée de miss Portman l'en avait empêchée (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 74).

The Edgeworths' stance in the debate about the abolition of slavery is represented in *Belinda* through the black slave Juba, a relevant figure in our study for two reasons. First, following the contemporary fashion of naming both dogs and slaves for fallen kings (Perera, 1991: 24), Vincent's dog is called Juba in the source text while in French the dog is called Tomy (Edgeworth, 1994, III: 176) and is never equated with a man, so this dialogue is eliminated:

"But, really, Juba is the best creature in the world," repeated Mr. Vincent, with great eagerness. "Juba is, without exception, the best creature in the universe." "Juba, the dog, or Juba, the man?" said Belinda: "you know, they cannot be both the best creatures" "Well! Juba, the man, is the best man—and Juba, the dog, is the best dog, in the universe," said Mr. Vincent, laughing, with his usual candour, at his own foible, when it was pointed out to him (Edgeworth, 1994: 346).

Like women, black slaves were favourite objects of sympathy in British and French nineteenth-century fiction. "Grateful negroes", the title of one of Edgeworth's stories in *Popular Tales* (1804), populated sentimental and autobiographical narratives at the turn of the century vindicating the humanity of black people, also in France (Boulukos, 1999; Fernández Rodríguez, 2015). However, when we turn to this French translation, we see that Juba's sentimentalism at parting from Vincent disappears:

"I shall see you again, Juba, soon, at your cottage."

"But massa will not be there – massa is gone! When shall we see massa again? Never – never!"

He sobbed like an infant.

No torments, in the power of human cruelty to inflict, could, in all probability have extorted from this negro one of the tears, which affection wrung from him so plentifully (Edgeworth, 1994: 449).

Second, one of the most critical points suppressed in later editions was the story about Juba and Lucy's marriage. Edgeworth relied on Richard Lovell Edgeworth's advice:

In the second volume 'Jackson' is substituted for the husband of Lucy instead of 'Juba', many people having been scandalised at the idea of a black man marrying a white woman;

my father says that gentlemen have horrors upon this subject, and would draw conclusions very unfavourable to a female writer who appeared to recommend such unions; as I do not understand the subject, I trust to his better judgment and end — for Juba read Jackson (qtd. Perera, 1991: 16-7).

Kathryn Kirkpatrick points out that, with this subplot, Edgeworth questioned endogamy considered essential to the colonial control and “her challenge to the dominant cultural values also advocated women’s control of their bodies and destinies through the marriage choice” (1993: 343). In the French text, the story told by the old woman inhabiting the porter’s lodge built by the Percivals is considerably shorter than in English and evades the issue:

‘Oh, yes, my lady! We are not afraid of Juba’s now; we are grown very great friends. This pretty cane chair for my good man was his handiwork, and these baskets he made for me. Indeed, he’s a most industrious, ingenious, good-natured youth; and our Lucy takes no offence at his courting her now, my lady, I can assure you. That necklace, which is never off her neck now, he turned for her, my lady; it is a present of his. So I tell him he need not be discouraged, though so be she did not take to him at the first; for she’s a good girl, and a sensible girl — I say it, though she’s my own; and the eyes are used to a face after a time, and then it’s nothing. They say, fancy’s all in all in love: now in my judgment, fancy’s little or nothing with girls that have sense. But I beg pardon for prating at this rate, more especially when I am so old as to have forgot all the little I ever knew about such things.’

‘But you have the best right in the world to speak about such things, and your granddaughter has the best reason in the world to listen to you,’ said Lady Anne, ‘because, in spite of all the crosses of fortune, you have been an excellent and happy wife, at least ever since I can remember.’

‘And ever since I can remember, that’s more; no offence to your ladyship,’ said the old man, striking his crutch against the ground. ‘Ever since I can remember, she has made me the happiest man in the whole world, in the whole parish, as every body knows, and I best of all!’ cried he, with a degree of enthusiasm that lighted up his aged countenance, and animated his feeble voice. (Edgeworth, 1994: 244, my italics)

Oh! Madame, dit la vieille femme, elle commence à s’y accoutumer; et d’ailleurs Juba est si aimable pour elle et pour nous; c’est lui qui a fait tous les petits meubles que vous voyez ici. Le collier de bois d’ébène qui est au cou de Lucie, c’est encore son ouvrage, et un présent de lui. Dans le premier moment, Lucie pensait que jamais elle ne pourrit le regarder sans frayeur, mais c’est une idée, et je ne désespère pas de les voir s’aimer beaucoup. C’est si fou de ne pas croire qu’avec de la raison et de la patience on vienne à bout de vaincre l’indifférence! On m’a souvent dit cela dans ma jeunesse; ma je suis si vieille, qu’à peine je puis me ressouvenir de ce que je pensais dans ce temps-la. Madame, pardonnez-moi si je vous importune, quand croyez-vous que Juba reviendra? (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 209- 10)

Taboo topics, like travestism and adultery, do not appear in French in consonance with moral essayists. Feminist scholar Mary Poovey explains that certain activities like coquetting, dressing provocatively, gambling or reading novels were considered “unnatural” because they might jeopardize conjugal fidelity (1984: 19). The episode of Clarence dressed up as a Countess of Pomenars is deleted in French and also an allusion

to it (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 7). In the source text Clarence confesses to the Doctor that he has a mistress (Edgeworth, 1994: 135) while in French he simply says “j’ai des autres raisons pour de ne point écrire à Bélinda” (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 221). Unfeminine behaviour is condemned, and Lord Delacour’s speech about witty women is compressed:

‘A woman may have too much wit —now too much is as bad as too little, and in a woman, worse ; and when two people come to quarrel, then wit on either side, but more especially on the wife’s, you know is very provoking— ’tis like concealed weapons, which are wisely forbidden by law. If a person kill another in a fray, with a concealed weapon, ma’am, by a sword in a cane, for instance, ’tis murder by the law. Now even if it were not contrary to law, I would never have such a thing in my cane to carry about with me; for when a man’s in a passion he forgets every thing, and would as soon lay about him with a sword as with a cane: so it is better such a thing should not be in his power. And it is the same with wit, which would be safest and best out of the power of some people’ (Edgeworth, 1994: 155).

C’est une nouvelle preuve de votre esprit et de votre bonté; je voudrais que mylady fût de votre gout: je reconnais son mérite; mais, soit dit entre nous, je lui voudrais plus de raison; il est aussi malheureux, pour une femme, d’avoir trop d’esprit que d’en manqué. Rien n’est plus dangereux que d’avoir les moyens de soutenir une mauvaise cause (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 30).

Didacticism in *Bélinda* takes the form of moralistic running commentary of the third person omniscient narrator, which in French is more marked than in the original. Sometimes comments of the narrator are amplified and charged with moral reflections, for instance, when Belinda’s awakening is reported in the source text: “Belinda saw things in a new light; and for the first time in her life she reasoned for herself upon what she saw and felt. It is sometimes safer for young people to see than to hear of certain characters” (Edgeworth, 1994: 69). In the target text, Edgeworth’s natural prose is abruptly interrupted:

Auprès de mylady? — Bélinda se forma des idées, des jugements à elle pour la première fois de sa vie. — On fait un bien bon cours de morale, lorsqu’on a toujours devant ses yeux une victime de l’immoralité, de l’inconséquence et de la folie du monde. Les exemples des malheurs, ou le vice extrême, sont aussi puissans [sic] pour donner horreur du vice, que les exemples du vice triomphant, heureux et tranquille, sont pernicieux. — Bélinda sut profiter de ces grandes leçons (Edgeworth, 1802: 116)

The opposite procedure is also adopted, so the long narrative about Champfort’s sad end comprising two long paragraphs at the beginning of chapter twenty-five (Edgeworth, 1994: 342-3) is summed up in one with an appeal to the reader:

Nos lecteurs seront charmés d’apprendre que lord Delacour trouva les moyens de prouver que la lettre anonyme avait été envoyée par Champfort; la justice s’empara de cet infâme calomniateur. Pendant ce temps, mistriss Freke payait par d’horribles souffrances le prix de

son acharnement à vouloir nuire à lady Delacour. Mais laissons ce deux personnages; leur sort est digne d'eux (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 170).

Moral comments added in French are related to characters representing rationality and the voice of patriarchy in the story. In the French text Dr. X— says something that does not appear in English: “Arrêtez. Lui dit le docteur X, modérez vos transports, l'intérêt de mylady exige qu'on lui évite toute espèce d'émotion; je prononce à regret cet arrêt; vous serez quinze jours sans la voir” (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 111), and the same happens after Lady Delacour's operation:de

Le chirurgien était parti aussitôt après l'opération: il était essential, pour garder le secret de mylady, qu'il ne prolongeât point son séjour chez elle. Le docteur X. la soigna avec un zèle que chaque jour semblait couronner de succès.

Cet homme, estimable autant qu'habile, ne se contentait pas de lui prodiguer les secours de son art: remontant aux causes morales, il cherchait à rendre lady Delacour à elle-même, en même temps qu'à la santé.

Il lui prescrivit un régime sévère, lui défendit absolument l'opium. Son séjour à la champagne lui permettait un genre de vie aussi réglé que sain; elle n'avait plus d'inquiétude sur sa santé, plus de tourmens [sic] à cacher (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 113).

3.2. Feminity in *Bélinde*

At the beginning of *Belinda*, and shortly after a brief presentation of the protagonist, the reader finds Aunt Stanhope's letter to her niece. This lady's speech is characterized by a certain amount of economic vocabulary which is missing in French:

[...] nothing to my mind can be more miserable than the situation of a poor girl, who, *after spending not only the interest, but the solid capital of her small fortune in dress, and frivolous extravagance, fails in her matrimonial expectations (as many do merely from not beginning to speculate in time)*. She finds herself at five or six-and-thirty a burden to her friends, destitute of the means of rendering herself independent (for the girls I speak of never think of learning to play cards), de trop in society, yet obliged to hang upon all her acquaintance, who wish her in heaven, because she is unqualified to make the expected return for civilities, having no home, I mean no establishment, no house, &c. fit for the reception of company of a certain rank (Edgeworth, 1994: 8, my italics).

Mais concevez-vous une position plus affreuse que celle d'une jeune mademoiselle pauvre, quand elle a dépensé en pompons et en rubans l'intérêt et le capital de sa modique fortune? Elle pense alors au mariage: un engagement convenable, une heureuse union, fuient devant elle avec le Bonheur et le repos, et pourquoi? parce qu'elle n'a pas trace le plan de sa vie de manière qu'un établissement solide et convenable en soit toujours le but. Elle se trouve, à trente-cinq ou trente-six ans, à charge à ses connaissances, à charge à toute la société, où l'instinct de l'habitude la pousse (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 6-7).

Teresa Michals considers Aunt Stanhope a speculator in domesticity since, for her, the family neither preserves a paternalist hierarchy nor is a private alternative to the

unstable marketplace (1994:14). Edgeworth purposefully opens her narrative presenting Aunt Stanhope's particular view of femininity, but, for the French audience, she remains an unmarked character. She explains that "I have covered my old carpet with a handsome green baize, and every stranger who comes to see me, I observe, takes it for granted that I have a rich carpet under it" (Edgeworth, 1994: 9), which is eliminated in French —also the label that the narrator applies to her "match-making" (Edgeworth, 1994: 9)—, and her advice about separated wives "as long as the lady continued under the protection of her husband, the world might whisper, but would not speak out" (Edgeworth 1994: 16). Stanhope is called "Cette femme adroite" (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 151) instead of "manoeuvring lady" (Edgeworth, 1994: 212), and the narrator's ironic comment "In the whole extent of Mrs. Stanhope's politic imagination (Edgeworth, 1994: 212) is rendered as "Dans toute l'étendue de sa politique" (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 151).

Belinda is definitely the most insipid character in Edgeworth's canon since she makes no mistakes and, most of the times, she looks rational. Though Edgeworth devoted time and effort to its composition, she was not very happy with the protagonist, as she revealed in a letter to Sophy Ruxton: "[...] I really was so provoked with the cold tameness of that stick or stone Belinda, that I could have torn the pages to pieces: and really, I have not the heart or the patience to *correct* her. As the hackney coachman said, 'Mend *you!* better make a new one.'" (qtd. Hare, 1894, I: 169; December 1809). The terms in which Belinda is introduced are either transformed or erased in French, so the heroine is advertised as "Packwood's razor strops" (Edgeworth, 1994: 25) —which in French becomes "comme l'on annonce de jolies mousselines" (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 41; 122) —, and men's quips are omitted:

'Mrs. Stanhope overdid the business, I think,' resumed the gentleman who began the conversation: 'girls brought to the hammer this way don't go off well. It's true; Christie himself is no match for dame Stanhope. Many of my acquaintance were tempted to go and look at the premises, but not one, you may be sure, had a thought of becoming a tenant for life' (Edgeworth, 1994: 25).

Edgeworth wanted to show the character's introspection in the novel and used focalization to show Belinda's thoughts to the reader. Nevertheless, in French, the way the narrator presents Belinda is significantly compressed:

The result of Belinda's reflections upon Lady Delacour's history was a resolution to benefit by her had example; but this resolution it was more easy [sic] to form than to keep... Her ladyship, where she wished to please or to govern, had fascinating manners, and could alternately use the sarcastic powers of wit, and the fond tone of persuasion, to accomplish her purposes. It was Belinda's intention, in pursuance of her new plans of life, to spend, whilst she remained in London, as little money as possible upon superfluities and dress (Edgeworth, 1994: 70).

Elle résolut d'imiter lady Delacour dans ses bons momens [sic], et de suivre un autre plan de vie en général. Elle ne voulut dépenser que très-peu de chose pour sa toilette (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 117).

In the translation, Belinda is less hesitating than in English due to some changes, and her virtues pass unnoticed to the French readers. In the French text chapter twenty-five is abruptly reduced, so the conversation between Lady Delacour and Belinda on whether she loves Vincent or Clarence (Edgeworth, 1994: 356-61) appears in the first chapter of volume four (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 1). The beginning of chapter thirty about Lady Delacour's impression of Vincent and Belinda's civil courage (Edgeworth, 1994: 452) is summarized in two paragraphs in French (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 162).

Belinda contains Edgeworth's most powerful female character which is mainly portrayed directly through her discourse. The femininity represented by Lady Delacour does not correspond with the model promoted by conduct books either in England or France, as Poovey points out:

Femininity branded as "monstrous" any unconventional attempt to explore, develop, or express the female self, and, while it granted women considerable influence in society, this image effectively inhibited many women's ability to understand, much less to satisfy, their own desires or needs [...] What autonomy a woman earned was often purchased at the cost of either social ostracism or personal denial of inadmissible aspects of herself (1984: 35).

A complex character, Lady Delacour meant a creative challenge for Edgeworth, who wanted to literally kill her in her drafts, as Kirkpatrick explains in an appendix to her edition (Edgeworth, 1994: 479-483). Lady Delacour is excessive, she lacks rationality: "Lady Delacour was governed by pride, by sentiment, by whim, by enthusiasm, by passion — by anything but reason" (Butler, 1975: 142), and Butler even compares her with Henry James's women since she is "meretricious and superb" (1996: 92).

As a *bel esprit* and a woman of fashion, Lady Delacour is all the time using lines of different sources, ranging from well-known poets to popular rhymes contributing to the polyphony of the text. A good deal of this material is pruned in French:

'If you have made any appointment for the rest of the evening in Berkley-square, I'll set you down, certainly, if you insist upon it, my dear — for punctuality is a virtue; but prudence is a virtue too, in a young lady ; who, as your aunt Stanhope would say, has to establish herself in the world. Why these tears, Belinda? — or are they tears? for by the light of the lamps I can scarcely tell; though I'll swear I saw the handkerchief at the eyes. What is the meaning of all this? You'd best trust me — for I know as much of men and manners as your aunt Stanhope at least; and in one word, you have nothing to fear from me, and every thing to hope from yourself, if you will only dry up your tears, keep on your mash, and take my advice; you'll find it as good as your aunt Stanhope's' (Edgeworth 1994: 28).

Si vous avez quelque engagement pour Berkeley-Square, je vous y descendrai, certainement, ma chère; mais pourquoi rentrer? Ayez confiance en moi, Bélinda; je connais aussi bien le monde que mistriss Stanhope, je vous promets que vous pouvez tout espérer de vous, et que vous devez ne rien craindre de moi. Croyez-moi, essayez ces pleurs que je crois voir couler, et remettez votre masque (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 47).

Lady Delacour is constantly displaying her assertive self. She dares to trespass certain limits and even claims to have used Colonel Lawless to make his husband jealous, a detail which is skipped in French:

I should not have suffered half as much as I did if he had been a man of a stronger understanding; but he was a poor, vain, weak creature, that I actually drew on and duped with my own coquetry, whilst all the time I was endeavouring only to plague Lord Delacour. I was punished enough by the airs his lordship doubly gave himself, upon the strength of his valour and his judgment—they roused me completely; and I blamed him with all my might, and got an enormous party of my friends, I mean my acquaintance, to run him down full cry, for having fought for me. It was absurd—it was rash—it was want of proper confidence in his wife; thus we said. Lord Delacour had his partisans, it is true; amongst whom the loudest was odious Mrs. Luttridge (Edgeworth, 1994: 52-3).

J'en détestait plus lord Delacour, don't l'orgueil était enflé para le succès de ses armes (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 96)

Information relative to her duel is considerably reduced (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 99) and also her cynical attitude about the artificiality and uselessness of the World she belongs to. One of Lady Delacour's comments is paramount to understand her, but it is not rendered into French: "'How stupid it is,' said Lady Delacour to Belinda, 'to hear congratulatory speeches from people, who would not care if I were in the black hole at Calcutta this minute; but we must take the world as it goes — dirt and precious stones mixed together'" (Edgeworth, 1994: 142).

In the French version we simply find: "Elle aimait le monde, et cependant elle le connaissait" (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 11), but in English Lady Delacour lectures Belinda about men and the girl's marriageability:

'Oh, as a common acquaintance, no doubt—but we'll pass over all those pretty speeches: I was going to say that this 'mistress in the wood' can be of no consequence to your happiness, because, whatever that fool Sir Philip may think, Clarence Hervey is not a man to go and marry a girl who has been his mistress for half a dozen of years—do not look so shocked, my dear, I really cannot help laughing—I congratulate you, however, that the thing is no worse—when a man marries, he sets up new equipages, and casts off old mistresses; or if you like to see the thing as a woman of sentiment rather than as a woman of the world, here is the prettiest opportunity for your lover's making a sacrifice' (Edgeworth, 1994: 149).

This is totally skipped, and also Lady Delacour's self-perception applying male terms "You see I am absolutely a reformed *rake*" (Edgeworth, 1994: 176, my italics). She later thinks she has not totally changed, which does not appear in French:

'Observe, my lord,' continued she, smiling, '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.' 'How so?—How so, my dear?' said Lord Delacour and Belinda almost in the same breath. 'How so?—Why, if Lady Delacour were

to wash off her rouge, and lay aside her air, and be as gentle, good, and kind as Belinda Portman, for instance, her lord would certainly say to her,' So alter'd are your face and mind, 'Twere perjury to love you now'" (Edgeworth, 1994: 314).

The author depicts female physical pain in *Belinda* in an almost naturalistic way, but, in the target text, there is a tendency to avoid descriptive detail and scenes about physical violence or fits of illness. For instance, Marriot's account of Lady Delacour's fever is importantly reduced:

'The house was quite in a state of distraction for some days. I never would sit down to the same table, ma'am, with Mr. Champfort, nor speak to him, nor look at him, and parties ran high above and below stairs. And at last my lady, who had been getting better, took to her bed again with a nervous fever, which brought her almost to death's door; she having been so much weakened before by the quack medicines and convulsions, and all her sufferings in secret. She would not see my lord on no account, and Champfort persuaded him her illness was pretence, to bring him to her purpose; which was the more readily believed, because nobody was ever let into my lady's bedchamber but myself' (Edgeworth, 1994: 261).

'Ma maîtresse fut irritée de ce refus. Sa fièvre redoubla, et la mit dans le plus grand danger: elle refusa de voir milord, à qui Champfort persuadait que cette maladie était feinte. C'était assez vraisemblable, puisque personne que moi n'entraît dans la chambre de my lady' (Edgeworth, 1801, III: 20).

Lady Delacour has the richest range of registers in the novel. Few readers could remain unaffected when Lady Delacour tells her life to Belinda, or when she reveals her anxiety before the operation. She also contemplates her life nostalgically as a rotten tree, which in French inexplicably changes into a clock:

'Ah, my dear!' said Lady Delacour, 'you forget, and so do I at times, what I have to go through. It is in vain to talk, to think of making home, or any place, or any thing, or any person, agreeable to me now. What am I? The outside rind is left—the sap is gone. The tree lasts from day to day by miracle – it cannot last long. You would not wonder to hear me talk in this way, if you knew the terrible time I had last night after we parted. But I have these nights constantly now. Let us talk of something else. What have you there—a manuscript?' (Edgeworth, 1994: 286)

O ma chère! S'écria lady Delacour, vous oubliez ma position: qui peut encore m'être agréable? La cloche fatale a sonné pour moi, ma tomber est entr'ouverte; chaque jour ma vie est un miracle qui ne peut se prolonger. Si vous saviez combien mes nuits sont cruelles! Mais laissons ce triste sujet de conversation. Quel est ce manuscrit ? (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 66-7)

Changes affecting the characterization of women are not restricted to Lady Delacour. The conversation between Mr Percival and Harriet Freke about female prudence and public opinion (Edgeworth, 1994: 229-30) is eliminated, and Mr. Percival's opinion about the heroine of romance (Edgeworth, 1994: 251) and female delicacy (Edgeworth, 1994: 255) is also suppressed. The same happens with two

anecdotes about Freke (Edgeworth, 1994: 252), and Miss Moreton's elopement with Freke is much more detailed in English (Edgeworth, 1994: 252-3)

In Poovey's terms, Lady Delacour is a desiring subject, a blankness that comes into view only when it interferes with the ideal woman who cannot be seen at all (1984: 22) and is embodied by Lady Anne Percival in *Belinda*. When the latter is described, there is a footnote about English ladies which aims to approximate the French reader to a familiar French author: "On croirait que l'auteur anglais a voulu peindre ici la vertueuse femme du célèbre Lavoisier" (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 160). Dr. X— reshapes the feminine ideal, and, the first time Lady Percival is alluded to, there is a reference to Griselda, a well-known literary figure for any English reader:

'Now,' said Dr. X—, looking at his watch, 'it will be eight o'clock by the time we get to upper Grosvenor street, and lady Anne will probably have waited dinner for us about two hours, which I apprehend is sufficient to try the patience of any woman but Griselda. Do not,' continued he, turning to Clarence Hervey, 'expect to see an old-fashioned, spiritless, patient Griselda, in lady Anne Percival — I can assure you that she is — but I will neither tell you what she is, nor what she is not. Every man who has any abilities likes to have the pleasure and honour of finding out a character by his own penetration, instead of having it forced upon him at full length in capital letters of gold, finely emblazoned and illuminated by the hand of some injudicious friend: every child thinks the violet of his own finding the sweetest. I spare you any farther allusions and illustrations,' concluded Dr. X—, 'for here we are, thank God, in upper Grosvenor street' (Edgeworth, 1994: 97).

A present, allons retrouver lady Anne; dit le docteur X. C'est une femme dont l'amabilité... — Mais je ne veux point vous dire ce qu'elle est, ou ce qu'elle n'est pas; tout home d'esprit aime à juger par lui-même: nous serons bientôt arrivés; partons (Edgeworth, I, 1802: 157).

Information related to the ideal English family personified by the Percivals is altered. Three conversations with the Percival children about the fishes are missing (Edgeworth, 1994: 98-100; 235; 248-9), and the story Lady Anne tells them about the old gardener and the aloe tree is summed up (Edgeworth, 1994: 106-7). When Mrs. Delacour accuses her daughter-in-law of having "cambrick-handkerchief sensibility", as well as neglecting her second child and being an unfeeling mother, Lady Anne supports Lady Delacour, and this part is reduced:

'And mine, so much,' said Lady Anne, 'that I cannot believe such a being to exist in the world—notwithstanding all the descriptions I have heard of it: as you say, my dear Mrs. Delacour, it passes my powers of imagination. Let us leave it in Mr. Hervey's apocryphal chapter of animals, and he will excuse us if I never admit it into true history, at least without some better evidence than I have yet heard.' (Edgeworth, 1994: 103)

'Et les miennes aussi, dit lady Anne; et tellement même, que je ne puis concevoir qu'un être pareil existe. —Malgré tout ce que j'en ai entendu dire, ma chère mistress Delacour, je répéterai avec vous que je ne puis le comprendre' (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 165).

Edgeworth is not particularly keen on metaphorical language in her *oeuvre*, but *Belinda* exhibits this feature which is registered when Lady Anne gives her opinion

about children's feelings. The subtle quality of her discourse does not match the French translation:

'If we tear the rosebud open we spoil the flower.' Belinda smiled at this parable of the rosebud, which, she said, might be applied to men and women, as well as to children. 'And yet, upon reflection,' said Lady Anne, 'the heart has nothing in common with a rosebud. Nonsensical allusions pass off very prettily in conversation I mean, when we converse with partial friends: but we should reason ill, and conduct our selves worse, if we were to trust implicitly to poetical analogies. Our affections,' continued Lady Anne, 'arise from circumstances totally independent of our will.'

'That is the very thing I meant to say,' interrupted Belinda eagerly.

'They are excited by the agreeable or useful qualities that we discover in things or in persons.'

'Undoubtedly,' said Belinda.

'Or by those which our fancies discover,' said lady Anne (Edgeworth, 1994: 239).

La douleur qui lui cause le départ de son ami M. Vincent ne l'empêche pas de penser à ses fleurs, dit lady Percival: ceux qui s'attendent à trouver un sentiment profond dans un enfant de six ans se trompent bien. S'ils veulent le faire paraître. Ils ne produisent que de l'affectation. Il faut laisser leur âme s'ouvrir. Le cœur des enfants est un bouton de rose; si on veut l'épanouir trop tôt, la fleur est perdue.

Bélinde sourit à cette comparaison, qui pouvait, disait elle, s'appliquer aux hommes et aux femmes comme aux enfants: elle pensait que les sentimens [sic] se développaient spontanément (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 197).

The scene in which Belinda is pulling a carnation into pieces while Lady Delacour is asking her if Clarence has declared himself (Edgeworth, 1994: 194) and the comparison between Lady Delacour and Lady Anne are more elaborated in English, though not necessarily longer:

Mrs. Freke's wit, thought she, is like a noisy squib, the momentary terror of passengers; Lady Delacour's like an elegant firework, which we crowd to see, and cannot forbear to applaud; but Lady Anne Percival's wit is like the refulgent moon, we 'Love the mild rays, and bless the useful light' (Edgeworth, 1994: 232).

Aidée par ses aimables hôtes, Bélinde fit d'utiles réflexions sur la conversation de mistriss Freke; elle apprit à distinguer l'esprit juste de celui qui n'est que brillant, et à préférer toujours la raison à l'esprit. Elle compara celui de mistriss Freke au ver luisant qui fait courir les enfants; celui de lady Delacour, au brillant feu d'artifice qui attire l'admiration du moment; et enfin, celui de lady Anne Percival, à la douce lueur de la lune qui éclaire sans éblouir (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 185).

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the translation of this feminocentric work delves into the analysis which gender studies have already carried out on Edgeworth as a feminist writer. We have

seen that, due to its complexity and ambitious thematic scope, *Belinda* sets Edgeworth apart from the mainstream of women novelist in nineteenth-century Britain. Edgeworth adopted the canonic form of the tale and related her work to prestigious authors, which drew Ségur's attention quickly and his translation certainly enticed French readers. However, *Bélinde* as presented to the French audience is not on a par with Edgeworth's text.

At microstructural level, Ségur turns *Belinda* into a moralistic narrative adapted to French consumers. French poetics determined pruning narrative passages and those parts which would shock French readers. Scenes are heightened with hackneyed sentimental language and secondary characters are not as prominent as in English. Edgeworth's story is censored in the sense that it does away with free indirect discourse and with the irony in some character's discourse, which is not rendered as in *Belinda*. The moral aim of the text is deeply felt in the form of declarative statements by the omniscient narrator at the cost of sacrificing both focalization from characters and narratorial irony. Also, there is a tendency towards the amplification of moral speeches and explication.

Edgeworth had many reasons to object to Ségur's translation of her memorable feminocentric work. Ségur's version proves to be a watered-down version of Edgeworth's powerful critique because it is less ambiguous and more politically correct while she was consciously tackling with many hot issues: the treatment of the black people, the rights of woman and their role in courtship, marriage and as mothers. All of them place Edgeworth in an outstanding position as a novelist highly aware of the role of literature as a vehicle to denounce social problems from a woman's point of view.

The translator's adaptation of Edgeworth's *Belinda* has important consequences in the transmission of Edgeworth's works and ideas on the Continent. Edgeworth slipped into other literatures after the publication of her *oeuvre* in France, which had an enormous cultural influence at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the image French readers obtained of *Bélinde* and of her author diverges from the one Edgeworth had in Britain and places her as a writer of complacent domestic stories for women.

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