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Transatlantic Alternatives to Companionate Marriage

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remarkable for the way that it inverts the seduction plot's traditional sexual double standard, killing Belfield and giving Laura the typically male part of grieving, repentant survivor. Not only does Laura live, though, she learns; and her learning is not restricted to remorsefully reviewing her previous sexual misconduct. As the narrator observes, despite the "many vicissitudes that awaited her," "her beauty continued unimpaired; her mind acquired new brilliancy."[68] In those short lines, Sansay offers her most interesting commentary on the significance of the geographies of seduction. In Philadelphia, Sansay cannot eradicate the seduction plot; the story is too central to US conceptions of gender and sexuality. Yet, by reversing the terms of punishment, Sansay's novel questions the fairness of unequally punishing women for a sexual misstep that both partners make. Sansay's conclusion raises the question, *why* should Laura and others like her die? Although she does not provide her heroine with a happy ending, Sansay significantly revises the terms of the seduction plot in the United States by allowing Laura to survive.

Comparing geographically specific discourses of seduction in two novels by Leonora Sansay demonstrates how the logic and narrative demands of seduction differ across two unique settings in a single author's fiction. In *Secret History,* Sansay rejects the morality of the seduction plot, transforming readers' expectations for the typical coquette and fallen woman stories by providing alternative Caribbean domesticities as counterpoints to familiar US figures. Although Sansay does not jettison the seduction plot in her Philadelphia story, she radically revises the dominant and conventional conclusion, the death of the fallen woman. By killing Belfield, Sansay places the guilt of premarital sex on the male partner, reversing the sexual double standard that demands women pay the price for nonmarital sexual activity. Although Sansay's Philadelphia-based seduction story is more circumspect in its challenges to the narrative conventions of sex and gender, like *Secret History* it, too, envisions female-centered community as a necessary support structure for women betrayed by the romantic scripts they are taught to inhabit. Sansay's comparative Caribbean novel launches the critique of seduction she continues, if more moderately, in the City of Brotherly Love.

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A POSTCOLONIAL HEROINE "WRITES BACK"

WRITTEN FROM THE POINT of view of an upper-class Jamaican mulatto woman, the anonymously published *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* (1808) begins in Jamaica when Olivia Fairfield, the daughter of a black slave and an English master, discovers that she must travel to England and marry her unknown white cousin, Augustus Merton, in order to retain her father's fortune. For the sensitive and sprightly Olivia, marriage to an unknown man who may be repulsed by her biracial heritage is a cruel legacy from a beloved father. Although the stipulation in Mr. Fairfield's will is meant to protect his daughter from the racial and sexual oppression that most black and biracial Caribbean women experienced, by linking Olivia's inheritance to her sexual relationship with a white man, Mr. Fairfield forcefully reiterates the very racial and sexual oppression he seeks to prevent. As an epistolary novel, the narrative is relayed through Olivia's first-person letters to her white governess, Mrs. Milbanke, in Jamaica. From Olivia's biracial and colonial point of view, what might be a typical English courtship plot becomes instantly comparative. For in the relative privacy of her letters, Olivia reveals how she patiently suffers insensitive British racism, discovers a deep love for Augustus, and realizes he returns her affections.

Unlike the heroines of Jane Austen whose stories inevitably end with marriage, this is not the conclusion to Olivia's story. Olivia suffers a surprising and deep loss after Augustus's first wife reappears and, with no malicious intention, renders Olivia's seemingly perfect marriage null. If readers are initially led to believe that the worthy Olivia achieves her ideal, attains the status of successful domestic heroine, and triumphs over racism through her happy marriage, they are forced to question the value of the marriage plot when Olivia's happy ending is torn from her. In

her correspondence with Mrs. Milbanke after Augustus's first wife returns, Olivia expresses her determination to live a single life and, in doing so, rejects the two powerful narrative conclusions available for fictional women: marriage or death. By the novel's end, Olivia's rejection of both the marriage and seduction plots becomes a critical commentary on the significance of race and colonial oppression in metropolitan social reproduction. Continuing to insist on her respectability and domesticity despite the loss of her marriage and the shocking reality that she has been made to reenact her slave mother's past concubinage, Olivia simultaneously claims and alters the typical role of the domestic heroine, making it less exclusively metropolitan and more racially diverse. In effect, Olivia's pathbreaking conclusion creates a new pattern of domesticity accessible to Caribbean tropicopolitans, Srinivas Aravamudan's term for colonized persons subjected to colonial discourse. She makes a place for herself and for the Caribbean within the dominant ideology of domesticity.

A Tropicopolitan Heroine

It must have been difficult for many nineteenth-century British readers to contemplate a virtuous mixed-race woman as the primary heroine of a domestic novel. Two of the three extant reviews of the novel cannot resist a bit of cutting commentary on the protagonist's race. For instance, the reviewer for the *British Critic* notes that "this Woman of Colour is by no means illiterate or without ingenuity of contrivance," as he or she presumably expects. Although the reviewer for the *Critical Review* notes that Olivia "displays much good sense and feeling," the review also notes that "the character of her black servant Dido, is the most natural of any."[1] Such commentary suggests that reviewers read with racist expectations and are most gratified when those expectations are met (as in the more stereotyped depictions of the less educated Dido). In contrast to popular stereotypes of lascivious mixed-race Caribbean women, Olivia is an altogether successful nineteenth-century domestic woman.[2] She shares several features—such as her virtue, independent spirit, and confidence—in common with other heroines of British Romantic fiction. She is clearly a domestic woman in Nancy Armstrong's terms; she has learned to "turn behavior into psychological events" and, in the act of claiming her superior moral value, she regulates her own desire.[3] In the past thirty years, literary scholars such as Nancy Armstrong, Joseph Allen Boone, Christopher Flint, and others have demonstrated how the British domestic novel naturalized a changing set of historically specific family relations and

gender roles; namely, companionate marriage and the rise of the domestic woman.[4] While historians are now revising previous notions about the pervasiveness of companionate marriage in actual historic couples' lives and literary critics are rethinking the function of the domestic woman in fiction, the companionate-marriage *ideal* certainly structured the plots of many nineteenth-century domestic novels.

Revising Nancy Armstrong's classic account of the domestic novel as an ideological tool for shaping bourgeois women's gender roles, Eve Tavor Bannet argues that eighteenth-century British women novelists played an active role in creating the domestic woman ideal and in claiming the domestic sphere for feminist purposes.[5] Eighteenth-century feminist fiction writers, Bannet observes, politicized the domestic realm by making it a space where women could critique unjust practices and even claim power for themselves. For instance, in response to the 1753 Marriage Act, British women novelists as diverse as Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Hannah More, and Jane West made marriage, sexuality, and the legality of those relationships central to the fiction of the period. Many women recognized that the law, which claimed to reform marriage and protect family relations, needlessly complicated common-law marriages as well as local customs and practices. In restructuring the rules and procedures required to marry, eighteenth-century British law actually voided many marriages and rendered some children illegitimate. In Bannet's account, women novelists recognized such injustices and vigorously portrayed the ill effects on women and families in their own fictional representations of domestic life.

If Bannet notes the ways that eighteenth-century women both participated in the construction of domesticity and questioned its results, Helen Thompson argues that feminist theorizations of agency have limited our ability to see representations of women's compliance to patriarchal power in eighteenth-century domestic novels as a form of political agency.[6] To comply, in Thompson's reading, is a conscious act of will that points out, rather than supports, the Lockean fantasy of a "universal" (male) individual imbued with natural rights. The domestic heroine's compliance shows that gender hierarchies are not natural or inherent in the body. Thompson's theory of compliance is particularly useful for thinking about the ways that Olivia Fairfield participates in a problematic liberal, bourgeois domestic ideology. For Olivia's compliance to the dictates of domestic fiction radically ensures that she is recognized as a domestic heroine, a role she would not ordinarily be eligible to fill as a biracial Caribbean woman.

A valuable instance of Olivia's qualification for domestic heroine status, her capacity to "turn behavior into psychological event" (and thereby

regulate her desire) can be seen in a conversation in which Olivia begs Augustus to clarify his feelings for her.[7] Exceeding the "limits usually prescribed to my sex," Olivia requests a private conversation with her cousin. However, this breach of conduct is easily forgiven when Olivia explains that, although she is already engaged, she fears he intends to marry her for her fortune. In "a beseeching attitude," Olivia begs her fiancé to reconsider the engagement "if it is to unite you to an object, for whom you feel no regard." Olivia's actions reveal an uncommon depth and sensitivity. She cannot be satisfied with an ordinary marriage; her love must be returned before she can be happy. This plea, couched in the language and demeanor of a "trembling abashed woman," finally forces Augustus to confess "that I am warmly, sincerely interested for your happiness!"[8]

In a final clarification of feelings, Olivia inadvertently reveals the depth of her love for Augustus, but not before regulating that desire with a modest concealment: "'I resolve to *refuse* your hand?' cried [Olivia], scarcely knowing what I said, 'Oh, Mr. Merton how can you—If, indeed'—Alas! I found out that I was betraying myself, by the eager gaze of Augustus."[9] In a quick turn, Olivia modulates her behavior in order to regulate her desire. She worries, in recalling these events, that she has "been too forward," but the reader is satisfied that her motivation—a desire for mutual respect and true affection—proves Olivia's worth and Augustus's satisfactory appreciation of her.

Even in this encounter, though, Olivia's status as woman of color means that she must not only comply with the standards of domesticity, but she must constantly prove that a biracial woman can be a domestic woman as well. Olivia's complexion renders her body, rather than her virtue, the primary object of interest among her English acquaintances. In Armstrong's account, the new morally superior female subject must shed the aristocratic display of the body in favor of her psychological depth. But Olivia must constantly remind others—even Augustus—that "the good qualities, which I may possess, are not to be discerned in my countenance."[10] She is more than her "olive" outside. These reminders seek not just to redress Augustus's potential racism, but also lingering doubts held by nineteenth-century British readers. As gently as Olivia reproves her family's racism, the novel, too, expands its readers' sympathies through an imagined intimacy with a thoroughly respectable colonized domestic woman.

In the familiar conventions of the domestic novel, Olivia's reward for complying with the standards of domesticity should be a happy marriage to a loving husband. Indeed, contemporary reviews of the novel expressed their disappointment with the story's surprise bigamy in no uncertain terms.

A writer for the *British Critic* [March 1810] succinctly notes: "It is very hard after all, that the poor heroine does not get a husband, for she is made very much to deserve one." Another reviewer observes, "We do not see what good is to accrue from reading a story, in which an amiable female is despoiled of her name and station in society . . . and three worthy characters [Augustus, Olivia, and the first wife] made wretched for no reason in the world."[11] What is the reader to learn from Olivia's experiences, this critic demands. To what purpose is such a story written? Our heroine's decision to describe herself a "widow" may be the first clue to understanding "what good is to accrue" from this novel. In Rachel Blau DuPlessis's terms, Olivia writes "beyond" the narrative demands of marriage or death in the usual heroine's ending: "Writing beyond the ending means the transgressive invention of narrative strategies, strategies that express critical dissent from the dominant narrative." Indeed, it "produces a narrative that denies or reconstructs seductive patterns of feeling that are culturally mandated, internally policed, hegemonically poised."[12] If, then, Olivia amply qualifies for the role of domestic heroine, she rejects this role (and its reverse, the fallen woman) for a new life story and a new pattern of domesticity.

A Brave New Domestic World

The Woman of Colour clearly shares many of the features Bannet outlines for eighteenth-century British feminist fiction's critique of the institution of marriage. Augustus Merton's secret first marriage is duly punished. His clandestine arrangements produce misery when he and his first wife are separated by the evil machinations of a jealous lover who incorrectly leads him to believe the first wife has died, and, again, when his happiness with Olivia is overturned by the untimely reappearance of his first wife. Still, *The Woman of Color* achieves more than a critique of clandestine marriage or even the unjust influences of greedy and/or overprotective parents. With her mixed-race Caribbean heritage and respectable femininity, Olivia challenges nineteenth-century British claims that the mother country is the sacrosanct domestic space, while the colonies are degenerate corruptions. Although some readers might question whether Olivia's narrative with its story of a good marriage lost simply reinforces the companionate-marriage ideal, as I note in more detail later, Olivia's outsider position enables her to constantly compare and critique the supposedly more civilized British marriage system with the social norms of Jamaica. Though set primarily in England, *The Woman of Colour* nonetheless offers a strong comparative-marriage plot.

Olivia calmly claims her right to the title of domestic woman with each instance of racism she patiently endures and corrects. However, her biracial heritage complicates her antiracist position. She is neither black nor white, neither English nor Afro-Caribbean; we might call her *Creole* —that hybrid blend of racial and cultural inheritances that comprises the legacy of colonial domination in the Caribbean—but in 1808 that term was used to define *white* West Indians.[13] Explaining her biracial social status to her racist white relations, Olivia makes a distinction between her own position and that of the slave populations in Jamaica. At the same time, she surprises readers by claiming her affiliation with her African heritage. In response to her hostile, racist cousin Mrs. Merton's claim that "I thought that Miss Fairfield—I understood that people of your—I thought that you almost *lived* on rice . . . and so I ordered some to be got." Olivia notes, "This was evidently meant to mortify your Olivia; it was blending *her* with the poor negro slaves of the West Indies! It was meant to show her, that, in Mrs. Merton's idea, there was no distinction between us—you will believe that I *could not* be wounded at being classified with my brethren!"[14] The dizzying use of exclamation points and the constant reference to "our poor slaves" belies Olivia's claim to remain unwounded by the comparison. Yet this educated and immensely respectable heiress does not flatly reject her slave heritage; rather, this "not them, but of them" logic forcefully highlights her "mixed" position.

Olivia continually rises above such race-baiting, turning the sting of racism into learning opportunities for her family (and, no doubt, for some readers). Just after the rice incident mentioned previously, Olivia teaches a young relative that her black maid's skin is not dirty and will not rub off. Quite patiently she explains, "The same God that made *you* made me . . . the poor black woman—the whole world—and every creature in it! A great part of this world is peopled by creatures with skins as black as Dido's, and as yellow as mine. God chose it should be so, and we cannot make our skins white, any more than you can make yours black."[15] And in reply to her young cousin's question about whether the color would rub off, Olivia gives the child her handkerchief to try it on her own skin. Successfully winning over little George, Olivia patiently battles the prejudices of others. In the process, she successfully defines her virtue and worth as a long-suffering domestic woman in the face of—perhaps even because of—her family's obvious racism. Olivia's outsider perspective challenges the supposed superiority of Britons and British culture with her frequent and uniquely positioned cultural comparisons.

Yet even as Olivia proves her domestic virtue in the face of British racism,

she radically questions some British women's claims to the same status. For instance, Olivia compares the fashionable Mrs. Merton, her would-be sister-in-law, to a "languid" West Indian woman; indeed, Mrs. Merton beats any of the "supine" West Indians she has observed in Jamaica: "Nothing more frequently excited my surprise, and I may add, disgust, than the languid affectation and supine manners of some of our West Indians; but I never saw any one of them who could in the least compare with Mrs. Merton, who seems to have attained the very height of inaction." Describing her relation as "pretty by anyone who looks for feature only," Olivia characterizes Mrs. Merton as an unpleasant combination of self-importance, spleen, and racial prejudice. More telling, though, is the way Olivia connects her unpleasant personality to her mimicry of fashionable colonial mannerisms. For instance, Mrs. Merton speaks with "the languid drawl of a fine lady" and "preceded us down the stairs with a languid careless step, which could not have been exceeded by the most die-away lady in the whole island of Jamaica."[16] While Mrs. Merton dislikes Olivia and works to embarrass her at every turn, she performs what is, to Olivia, clearly a familiar (and disgusting) form of Caribbean sensuality—a sensuality that Olivia understands as connected via white Creoles back to fashionable women of color. Olivia confirms her understanding that Mrs. Merton's fashionable sensuality originates in the Caribbean through her careful distribution of the word *languid* over the course of several pages as she first describes her cousin's wife. Mrs. Merton's manners are certainly consciously performed; the question is whether and how she understands them to be colonial imports, directly mimicked from the Caribbean women of color she is so intent to belittle.[17]

Sharon Harrow has argued that in eighteenth-century British literature, colonial otherness is "a force that would underwrite financial stability [even] as it undermined social hierarchy and infected or adulterated a feminized English virtue."[18] Olivia's relationship to Mrs. Merton (and others whom she finds contaminated by colonial customs) is a fascinating instance of such an infected feminine virtue, for Olivia is a colonized other commenting on the transmission of "languid" Jamaican manners into English society. While Olivia's disdain for Mrs. Merton's "die-away" inactivity seems to fit Harrow's description, Olivia's position as colonized woman of color changes the dynamics of her commentary. Olivia's performance of domesticity and her critique of Mrs. Merton's lack of domesticity fit within Homi Bhabha's theory of colonial "mimicry": a mode of behavior inculcated by British colonizers that aims to produce colonized subjects who are "almost . . . but not quite" British.[19] Bhabha notes the

ways that this "not quite" status affords colonized peoples the space in which to creatively adapt to colonization. Olivia's mimicry of, or her "compliance" to, British domesticity oddly opens the way for Olivia to inhabit an alternative domestic scene, a Caribbean domesticity.

If Olivia's mimicry confirms Harrow's claim that "bourgeois domesticity [was seen] as the means by which England should dispossess itself of the vices of empire," she also highlights that domesticity is not a "native" English attribute. Olivia avers that domesticity—as an ideological set of values—is not moored to particular environments such as the "pure" English countryside, or to particular (white) bodies. She performs her domesticity as well as—indeed, better than—Mrs. Merton. And if Mrs. Merton continually insists on Olivia's difference, her inability to ever truly be English (or white), Olivia counters Mrs. Merton by confirming their difference. She turns the tables by being more English than the English. Unlike the languid Mrs. Merton, Olivia is active in both body and mind; she frequently walks for exercise and performs mental gymnastics around her dull-witted acquaintances.[20] In an exemplary sardonic quip, Olivia observes that Mrs. Merton "considers me as but one remove from the brute creation," but "I seem hardly to consider her as a rational being," "so here, perhaps, we meet on equal terms." Similarly, Olivia reverses the colonizing gaze when she bluntly assesses her colonizers: "I am disappointed in England: I expected to meet with sensible, liberal, well informed and rational people, and I have not found them; I see a compound of folly and dissimulation."[21] Olivia's canny reversals do not simply satirize British foibles as do previous "exotic" narrators such as Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*; in her letters to Mrs. Milbanke, Olivia authors herself as a full-fledged domestic heroine, a role she intently revises by insisting on her own place within it.[22]

In Olivia's next encounter with Britons who have been tainted by colonial experiences, Olivia's moral character is confirmed through comparisons with the outlandish behavior of three English "nabobs," a married couple and their son who have just returned from India. The encounter shows that it is not the geography, climate, or extent of one's experience in the colonies that corrupt "native" English morals, but rather the conscious adherence to domestic values, especially the appropriate performance of gender that ensures one's continued moral integrity. Lady Ingot, "a masculine woman; very hard-favoured, and of a forbidding countenance," hopes Olivia, another immigrant from the empire, will prove an ally against the "narrow minded, prejudiced beings" who have never "set a foot out of England."[23] While Lady Ingot is willing to overlook racial difference in the hopes of finding cosmopolitan similarities with her potential new friend, Olivia will have none of it. She counters the admittedly ridiculous Lady Ingot with a most peculiar set of claims:

> "I rather lean towards old customs, and old notions, and can trace one of *my ideas* as far back as the *Old* Testament, where a lady of some note, being asked, whether she would be spoken of to the king or the captain of the boat, answered, with true feminine modesty—'I dwell amongst my own people!' It has always struck me as a most beautiful reply. Retirement seems the peculiar and appropriate station of our sex; and, the enlargement of the mind, and the conquest of prejudice, is not always achieved, perhaps, by visiting foreign climes!"
>
> "You speak like a *perfect* English woman," said Lady Ingot; "I see you have already imbibed our air."
>
> "I thank your ladyship for the compliment," said I: "I do consider myself as more than *half* an English woman, and, it has always been my ardent wish to prove myself worthy of the *title*!"[24]

This passage leaves one with an abundance of questions: How can the dislocated Olivia ever "dwell amongst my own people"? Who are her people, exactly? Furthermore, how is Olivia "*more* than half" English? Olivia's efforts to prove herself worthy of the title of domestic woman serve only to reinforce her outsider position. She will, of course, never be more than half-English even if she perfects the sensible, liberal persona she expects to have met in England. In her conservative defense of "old customs, and old notions," Olivia attempts to prove that learned behaviors, one's manners and moral integrity, can outweigh race and/or colonial geography (that is, that a mulatto West Indian woman could be a legitimate domestic woman). By complying with the hegemonic expectations of domesticity, including performing an appropriately demure femininity, Olivia actually does prove that domesticity is not the result of "imbib[ing] the air," but learned and vigilantly performed behavior.

More pointedly, Olivia understands her performance of retiring feminine modesty to trump Lady Ingot's performance of masculine/racist assertiveness. Indeed, in Olivia's view, Lady Ingot belittles others and assumes an unjustified, pompous authority because she is used to seeing herself as better than the indigenous Indian populations whom she has always dominated. If Lady Ingot believes her travels have made her more open-minded, Olivia critiques this understanding with her retort that "the enlargement of the mind, and the conquest of prejudice, is not always achieved, perhaps, by visiting foreign climes!"[25] Of course, from

Olivia's colonized perspective, Britons' travels to "foreign climes" in the service of the empire could hardly be said to enlarge the mind or alleviate prejudice. More narrowly, one concludes that Lady Ingot's regular exertion of her authority renders her masculine, the ultimate colonial degeneracy. Although Lady Ingot might naturally seek an ally in a colonial heiress, Olivia puts pressure on the assumption that they share an equivalent position. Olivia is the daughter of a plantation owner; she is even served by a black maid. But she does not preside over others as does Lady Ingot. If her current performance of British domesticity makes her *more* than half-English, Olivia still claims her slave mother and that history of oppression.

How should we account for Olivia's comparative critiques of Britons' "reverse" mimicry? Prior to the strictly essentialist, biological understanding of inherent racial characteristics that develops in the late nineteenth century, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the "taint" of the colonies is described as a disease contracted through exposure to unhealthy or foreign contaminants. We can see this in reverse in Lady Ingot's statement that Olivia has "imbibed our air." Examples from literature include *The Secret Garden* in which the sickly orphan Mary returns to England after her family dies in India and subsequently recovers by gardening in the rural English countryside. This colonial taint is usually "cured," as in Mary's case, with a restorative connection to a more congenial British climate and simplistic, ruddy nature. A more serious form of colonial contamination is "going native"—which frequently carries the suggestion of trading in one's culture for another. Going native implies a radical reprioritizing of assumptions, beliefs, values, and practices. It is not a hybrid blending of identities, but a wholesale exchange of one set of values for another. The danger of colonial travel is that one might "pick up" colonial habits or modes of being against one's will. Neither of these contamination models adequately accounts for the transformation of British manners Olivia notes in the cases of Mrs. Merton and Lady Ingot.

Colonialism from the Inside: Critiquing Cultural Tourism by "Writing Back"

The Woman of Colour posits British mimicry of colonial otherness as a form of consumerism. Otherness becomes a commodity available for use by white Britons, with or without actual colonial contact. In *Black Looks,* bell hooks calls this complex phenomenon the "commodification of otherness"—whereby mainstream consumers try on otherness without "relinquish[ing] forever one's mainstream positionality."[26] This "cultural tourism" is a temporary fad, much like this year's excitement over stripes will quickly be superseded by some new fashion trend. "Currently," hooks argues, "the commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, via exchange, by a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other's history through a process of decontextualization."[27] In her concern about the displacement of the other and the decontextualization of the other's history, hooks names the problem I outlined earlier about whether and how Mrs. Merton understood that her "languid drawl" and mannerisms were inherited from Caribbean "women of colour." For Mrs. Merton, this mode of sensuality is most likely generically exotic, though Olivia is careful to connect it to Jamaica. It is Olivia's role as "recontextualizer"—the way that she insists we see Mrs. Merton as enacting a form of "die-away" Jamaican femininity or the way that she subtly corrects Lady Ingot's assertion that travel enlarges the mind—that I find not just satiric, but potentially postcolonial.

Although we do not know who wrote *The Woman of Colour,* I suggest viewing the anonymous author as, at the very least, sympathetic to a tropicopolitan position.[28] The question becomes, how does a tropicopolitan like Olivia understand cultural tourism? What do we gain from her colonized perspective that we do not find in more mainstream notions of colonial contact as contamination documented by Sharon Harrow? Tropicopolitan narrators such as Olivia demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the choices that colonized and colonizing subjects make in fashioning identities. British cultural tourism, as Olivia observes it, is dangerous because this mode of commodifying otherness eradicates difference and homogenizes culture, thereby removing the threat implicit in Bhabha's theory. There is no danger or potential loss in this mode of mimicry—rather, it is a lifestyle choice, easily exchanged for the next exotic fashion. Still, Olivia's account of British mimicry makes whiteness recognizable as a set of discrete cultural practices subject to change, rather than a biologically inherent set of traits. In its temporary "trying on" of otherness, cultural tourism allows the British mimic to use "the backdrop of otherness" to connote the mimic's own status as sensual, worldly, or cool by association, if you will. Scholars have more work ahead to differentiate between the cultural tourism that Olivia witnesses in nineteenth-century Britain and the twentieth-century cultural tourism

that hooks and others observe in postmodern late capitalist America. Of value here is how *The Woman of Colour* insists that we recognize the commodification of otherness as a reciprocal form of mimesis intimately linked to colonial power structures.

As a colonial mimic herself, Olivia is in a unique position to comment on the mimicry of others. Olivia obviously patterns herself after a domestic woman, but her performance is more than mimetic; I argue it is also an early instance of a colonized character "writing back to the center."[29] In making such a claim, I proceed with caution. Olivia does not express a postcolonial identity—there is no "post" to her colonial experiences; no Jamaican nation yet exists. Neither does she identify with or champion the black Jamaican population. As a tropicopolitan, Olivia both participates in and resists colonizing discourses; however, even as she asserts British domestic values, Olivia occupies a position of difference from the colonizing culture. She begins the process of "writing back to the center" by imagining a place for herself within British domesticity; by the novel's conclusion she will go even further, writing, in Rachel Blau DuPlessis's terms, "beyond" Britain and British narrative conventions for women's stories, as she imagines a new mode of domesticity and a new ending for herself in the Caribbean.

Just as events seem poised to ensure Olivia's future happiness, Augustus's first wife returns; Olivia and Augustus discover that they are accidental bigamists. One way to understand this sudden turn toward bigamy is, like Bannet, to place *The Woman of Colour* in the context of other women writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays who actively critiqued British marriage laws and the sexual restrictions placed on women. Olivia has every right to complain; by the sexual standards of the time, she has just been reduced to a concubine. Her relationship with Augustus has at once been rendered outside the law and outside the bounds of morality. Recognizing the impossibility of continuing their marriage, Olivia relinquishes Augustus to his first wife. In doing so, she gives up on marriage completely: "I scruple not to own to you, that, as my husband, I loved you with the warmest affection; that tie no longer exists, it is now become my duty to force you from my heart,—painful, difficult I acknowledge this to be, for your virtues had enthroned you there! But this world is not our abiding place. I look forward with faith and hope to that eternally happy state where there is neither 'marrying nor giving in marriage,' where there shall be no more sorrow, and where 'all tears shall be wiped away from all eyes!'"[30] Seeking a future state where there is "neither marrying nor giving in marriage," Olivia hopes

to find peace; significantly, it is the state of marriage, not just Augustus's earlier and secret marriage, that seems to be the problem. When a Mr. Honeycomb later proposes to Olivia, she makes the most direct refusal possible: "I *now,* and to the *last* moment of my existence, *shall* consider myself the widowed wife of Augustus Merton."[31] As a "widow," Olivia assumes authority over the devastating situation by controlling the terms of her unbelievable status reversal from legal wife to fallen woman; with this new label, she rejects the seduction plot entirely. Like Lydia Maria Child's Hobomok, a character addressed in this book's introduction, Olivia is a victim of circumstance when a previous claimant to her husband's heart returns. But unlike Hobomok, whose romantic sacrifice also becomes emblematic of a tidy resolution to the United States' so-called Indian problem, Olivia refuses to "forever pass away,"[32] to vanish out of existence for the convenience of white folks. In fact, she symbolically kills her beloved as she obstinately authorizes the terms of her experience.[33]

By declaring herself a "widow," Olivia frees herself from the position of mistress, but she also frees herself from the unequal partnership of marriage and the dictates of the marriage plot. Olivia elaborates on her situation later when she explains that there is no room in her heart for another "lord:" "I feel consolation—a romantic satisfaction, in imagining myself as the widow of my love! Had death taken from me the object of my affections, *this bosom never could have known another lord.* Think then . . . how much more acute was my misfortune, when, by a single stroke, an instance almost unparalleled—duty—religion—even honour, bade me instantly to resign my living husband."[34] The term *lord* is pointed. It is, of course, a formal phrase for a husband, but this usage is old-fashioned by the early nineteenth century—replaced, in the companionate-marriage tradition, with the husband's first name.[35] That Olivia uses the word *lord* to describe her husband suggests to the reader something important about the depth of her love. Augustus was her superior, more than a friend or companion. She describes him as "a model of manly beauty and grace" and "a singularly prepossessing young man."[36] When they are married, she notes: "I am thankful to Heaven, for my happy, thrice happy lot; and humbly pray, that my Augustus's happiness may be as perfect as my own." Noting his occasional sadness, but unable to find any reason for it, Olivia adds, "I will not quarrel with my husband, because *his* cup of felicity does not overflow."[37] When his source of sadness is finally revealed, Olivia turns to religion and the Lord God to find peace.

In turning to religion, Olivia expresses a fairly typical response to her

extraordinary circumstances. However, unlike other heroines who retreat or die in shame and frustration, Olivia understands that her experience is not an individual or isolated event. Instead, she turns to her Afro-Caribbean heritage to make sense of her loss. Connecting her own situation with the experiences of her slave mother, Olivia observes to her pastor: "My mother, though an *African slave,* when once she had felt the power of that holy religion which *you* preach, from *that* hour she relinquished him, who had been dearer to her than existence! And shall I then shrink from a conflict she sustained?"[38] Although Olivia's mother freed herself from what she felt was a sinful sexual relationship with her literal master, Olivia must learn to free herself from the "lord" of her heart. The invisible hand of fate—or, in our terms, systematic racial and sexual oppression—dooms the daughter to repeat her mother's renunciation of a white man to whom she has no legal tie. In the context of the novel, this repetition does *not* reflect on Olivia and her mother, but rather on the failings of men who abuse their partners' trust and on the failings of the supposedly superior British marriage system that ultimately fails to protect women. Mr. Fairfield wouldn't consider marrying his slave, but he did dictate his daughter's marital choice and subject her to white male control. By hiding his first marriage, Augustus risks Olivia's happiness and fails to be a true partner. Both men act wrongly, but it is the virtuous black/biracial women who are made to suffer.

In the terms of this novel, Olivia's choice to pronounce herself a widow is equivalent to declaring her independence; her failed marriage teaches her that no human should be lord over another. As Jane West said, the liberty that women sought was "not the power of doing what you please, for that is licentiousness, but the security that others shall not do what they please to you."[39] This critique is especially poignant for the daughter of a black slave. Olivia, a cultural and racial hybrid afloat in an Atlantic world, can and must set the terms for her own value. Though the ending is not happy in the traditional sense of a happily-ever-after marriage—the usual reward for a proper domestic woman—Olivia has created a new kind of happy ending, one in which she determines her own future. In this sense, *The Woman of Colour* enables Olivia to move "beyond" the confines of the traditional conclusions of a woman's story, marriage or death. In her new life as a "widow," Olivia will make her own decisions without the permission of her white relations. She will not return to Jamaica to become a white man's mistress; her father's inheritance, which she eventually regains, makes her financially as well as physically and mentally independent. Instead, she plans to rejoin her governess and devote herself

to charitable racial-uplift projects. Olivia proves through her sacrificing love that she deserves the title of domestic woman, but she does not die from the loss of traditional respectability that her bigamy might entail. Rather, she returns to Jamaica ready to share her unique brand of domesticity in her modestly feminine capacity. She remakes Jamaica into a domestic retreat from the psychic damage of the metropole—a move that expressly reverses the typical domestic fiction plot in which virtuous British women return to rural England to restore health and morality after exposure to the vices of the West Indies. In contrast, Olivia's Jamaica is not a seat of libertinage, nor is it a hermitage where she will isolate herself to mourn Augustus. Rather, Olivia makes herself a bountiful patroness for those most in need. While we might question her class privilege and the relation she assumes to other enslaved and colonized persons, she is, remarkably, a self-determined woman.

Like most British heroines, Olivia Fairfield longs for a companionate marriage, but when that life is made impossible by circumstances out of her control, Olivia has a unique perspective on being single. She returns to the Caribbean, where she must have seen many examples of successful unmarried women of color living life on their own terms. I do not want to suggest that black or mixed-race women in the Caribbean did not face their own intense battles with race, gender, and class oppression or, on the opposite spectrum, that they served as early feminist icons. More modestly, I claim that as a Caribbean woman of color, Olivia has many models of successful single black and mixed-race women surviving and thriving.

Recent historical work demonstrates that late eighteenth-century free women of color played significant social and economic roles in the Caribbean: they traded and sold commercial goods and produce, owned shops, bought and sold real estate, rented property, lent money, and profited in the slave trade.[40] Affluent women of color sent their children to be educated in Europe. In Barbados, women of color owned inns; in Jamaica, free women of color organized their own social clubs, put on dances, and maintained prominent positions in society. Although it is unclear how much of the capital traded in these transactions was the result of sex work, inheritance from white slave-owning fathers, and so on, women of color were successful, even shrewd, financial managers.

Inserting the newly "widowed" Olivia Fairfield into this picture, one sees her as a potentially powerful social leader in the free colored community; she also has the necessary wealth to shape opinions and generate substantive changes in the lives of others. As Susan Socolow observes,

"The majority of free women of color certainly led precarious economic lives, but [public records] suggest that many played important roles in the local economy, acting independently, unlike white women, who were rarely visible acting on their own."[41] In this context it is possible that Olivia, an independently wealthy woman of color, could be freer than many of her white counterparts in England or Jamaica. Olivia makes Jamaica her home and, in doing so, she challenges stereotyped representations of Caribbean sensuality and significantly "writes back" and "beyond" the restrictions of the domestic novel and its marriage plot. However, it is important to qualify this moment by noting that the price Olivia pays for this oppositional stance is to accept and to mimic, even in a now-altered form, the ideology of domesticity with fairly standard definitions of femininity.

Olivia Fairfield is certainly an unusual Atlantic world heroine. As a domestic woman she shares many values and assumptions about gender, marriage, and the family with other heroines of British domestic fiction. However, Olivia's biracial tropicopolitan position sets her apart in ways that challenge her to define her worth in nonracist, postcolonial terms. Much like the gesture of Haitian mulatto women wrapping their heads in madras cloth in "obedience" to sumptuary laws, Olivia's narrative embraces the values of the domestic novel, even as it defiantly relocates the domestic and its cultural and moral authority to the Caribbean. Written in the same year as Sansay's *Secret History, The Woman of Colour* powerfully reclaims the Caribbean as a domestic space, a genuine home; as scholars continue to uncover more information about free women of color in the Caribbean, readers may more readily imagine Olivia returning to Jamaica finally able to "dwell among her people."

[5]

BUNGLING BUNDLING

IN "THE AMERICAN ORIGINS of 'Yankee Doodle,'" J. A. Leo Le
locates a surprising instance of bundling in a lesser-known version
"Yankee Doodle." The lines read: "Two and two may go to bed / T
and two together / And if there is not room enough / Lie one atop
other."[1] Alongside the song's cheeky refrain to "keep it up" and "with
girls be handy," these lines reveal that colonial Americans were none
shy about the outright sexual nature of courtship. Bundling was an e
American courtship practice popular in seventeenth- and eighteen
century New England and mid-Atlantic colonies that presented a yo
unmarried couple with the opportunity to spend the night together in
female partner's family home for the purposes of getting to know
another. Although couples were customarily expected to retain at l
some undergarments and had nominal parental supervision during
process, demographic studies show that, in this period, as many as
percent of all first births were conceived prior to marriage. The histo
Richard Godbeer has argued that bundling was a pragmatic solutio
colonial couples' demands for independence and privacy, as parents
knowledge of their daughter's sexual partners could intervene to for
marriage if necessary.[2]

Lemay's identification of bundling in "Yankee Doodle" is significant
cause he dates the song to the 1740s, much earlier than previous cri
demonstrating how the song was an early site of colonial identity o
Lemay argues, "American self-characterization." Until Lemay's pathbre
ing article, most scholars believed that "Yankee Doodle" was a satiric
ish production created to mock colonials, especially New Englanders,
their provincialism. However, Lemay claims that the song was actu
a colonial production ridiculing British snobbery. Posing as backw