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Race, Mimicry, Ambivalence, and Third Space in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* (1808)

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Résumé

Cette thèse étudie la race, le mimétisme, l'ambivalence et la théorie du tiers espace dans *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* (1808). J'ai examiné les représentations des femmes de couleur dans ce roman et j'ai soutenu que ces dernières vont au-delà des représentations conventionnelles restreintes des femmes de couleur dans la plupart des romans du XVIII^{e} siècle. L'auteure anonyme de *The Woman of Colour* capte la coexistence, au début du XIX^{e} siècle, de positions opposées envers les femmes de couleur des Antilles. De plus, j'ai examiné comment les femmes de couleur représentées dans ce roman peuvent créer une version d'un tiers-espace dans les interstices de cultures conflictuelles. Le tiers-espace est un concept que les critiques culturels et les théoriciens de la résistance utilisent pour définir une opposition aux forces dominantes par les personnes qui leur résistent. L'introduction fournit des discussions sur certains concepts de fond importants, notamment la race, le mimétisme, l'ambivalence et le tiers-espace. Le premier chapitre étudie les représentations des femmes de couleur dans le roman et le deuxième chapitre explore le tiers-escape qu'elles tentent de créer.

Mots-clés : XVIII^{e} siècle, La femme de couleur, roman, race, mimétisme, ambivalence, troisième espace

Abstract

This thesis studies race, mimicry, ambivalence, and third space in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* (1808). I have examined the representations of women of color in this novel and argued that these representations go beyond the restricted conventional depictions of women of color in most novels of the eighteenth century. The anonymous author of *The Woman of Colour* captures the coexistence, in the early nineteenth century, of opposing attitudes towards women of color from the West Indies. Furthermore, I have examined how the women of color represented in this novel could create a version of a third space in the interstices between conflicting cultures. The third space is a concept that cultural critics and resistance theorists use to define an opposition to dominating forces by the people withstanding them. The introduction provides discussions of some significant background concepts, notably race, mimicry, ambivalence, and third space. The first chapter studies to the representations of women of color in the novel and the second chapter explores third space they attempt to create.

Keywords: Eighteenth century, *The Woman of Colour*, novel, race, mimicry, ambivalence, third space

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To my family members

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Introduction

Background

The eighteenth century is the age in which the novel took shape as a form in Britain. English middle-class readers became fascinated with the middle-class characters and the lives of common people; they wanted to read about everyday events that influenced the characters' daily lives as opposed to those of cavaliers, kings, queens, or blue-blooded people common to the genre of the romance. Ian Watt argues that "The novel is the form of literature which most fully reflects this individualist and innovating reorientation" (13). It is, according to him, a complete and trustworthy depiction of human experiences, so under a responsibility "to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms" (Watt 32). The realism of the novel allowed 18th-century novelists to imitate individual experiences. Nancy K. Miller believes that "Unlike the archetypal nineteenth-century 'novel of destiny' whose hero-traditionally, an ambitious young man-journeys into a world of things and forces to be mastered, the eighteenth-century novel's hero is a heroine who stays home" (38). However, heroines in 18th – century novels by Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, Eliza Haywood, Penelope Aubin, and Mary Davys and others are usually white women. Black female characters generally play two different roles in novels written during this period. On most occasions, minor black female characters act with bravery to support white female characters, who occupy the role of protagonist in the plot or title of novel. On rare occasions, a black female character is portrayed in a novel as the main character that is accompanied by white females.

The Woman of Colour; A Tale (1808) depicts as its protagonist a woman of color, Olivia Fairfield, and provides an unusual example of a detailed representation of a marginalized black woman, a figure who, if she appears at all in the fiction of the long eighteenth century, tends to be simplistically portrayed. The anonymous author of *The Woman of Colour* captures the coexistence, in the early nineteenth century, of opposing attitudes towards women of color of the West Indies. Olivia, "the woman of color," is born to a white plantation owner, Mr. Fairfield, and his black slave mother, Marcia, in colonial Jamaica. Olivia experiences emotional and motivational ambivalence as she builds relationships with white women and white men in the land of the colonizer. Exploring *The Woman of Colour* in light of concepts of race, outlined by historians of the eighteenth-century such as Kim Hall, Imtiaz Habib, Jennifer Devere Brody, Roxann Wheeler, Susan Kingsley Kent, and Felicity Nussbaum, Kathleen Wilson, Henry Louis Gates, and, most importantly, Homi Bhabha (through his concepts of race, mimicry, ambivalence and third Space), I argue that Olivia's chosen movements, and eventual fate are transformative. I will examine how the anonymous author of *The Woman of Colour* employs some specific textual strategies to improve the inactive and enslaved condition of women of color in early nineteenth-century Britain. While there are only a few articles that examine *The Woman of Colour* in detail, the important studies listed above explore historical discourses and literary representations of race in the long eighteenth century and are therefore crucial to this study.

A. Race

Because this thesis explores the various representations of race in *The Woman of Colour*, it is important to first understand the historical roots of race and its constructions. Linguistically speaking, the term 'race' has a fairly recent, though not very detailed etymological history. "The Italian "razza," the Spanish "raza," the Portuguese "raça," and the French "race" were

documented rarely from the thirteenth century onwards, with more frequent occurrences beginning in the sixteenth century, when the term also appeared in English" (Wodak and Reisigl 373). Race, in its broadest sense, may "refer to a family, tribe, people or nation sharing a set of common interests, beliefs, habits or characteristics. There are two principal approaches to racial categorization: genealogical and biological" (Wolfreys 204). When we speak of white race or black race, writes Henry Louis Gates, we "speak in biological misnomers and, more generally, metaphors" (qtd. in Wolfreys 205). The notion of race, moreover, is highly contested. For example, Kwame Anthony Appiah interrogates the existence of 'biological' race:

> Talk of "race" is particularly distressing for those of us who take culture seriously. For, where race works – in places where "gross differences" of morphology are correlated with "subtle differences" of temperament, belief, and intention- it works as an attempt at metonym for culture, and it does so only at the price of biologizing what is culture, ideology. To call it "biological" is not to consign our concept of race to biology. (45)

Similar to Appiah, Benedict Anderson claims that racism actually has its origin in ideologies rather than in those of nations and it is "always associated with European domination, for two converging reasons. First and most important was the rise of official nationalism and colonial 'Russification'" (154). He contends that "colonial racism was a major element in that concept of 'Empire' which attempted to weld dynastic legitimacy and national community" (145). As Wodak and Reisigl maintain, "The starting point of a discourse analytical approach to the complex phenomenon of racism is to realize that racism, as both social practice and ideology, manifests itself discursively" (372).

In the third chapter of *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha states that the concept of race in "colonial discourse" is invented from a desire to fix the identity of the "other," and 'fixity', "as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition" (66). He claims that the stereotype is the major discursive strategy of colonialism, as a form of knowledge and identification that wavers between "what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" (66). Examining the process of ambivalence, Bhabha refers to racial stereotypes, because for him "racial stereotypes are essentially a reiteration of difference that operates on two perceivable planes: (a) as a discourse, and (b) as a (dis)identification process" (Macías 41).

The distinctions between nature and nurture or nature and culture emerge frequently in discussions about race. Tina Chanter states that the idea that race or gender is "socially constructed, culturally mediated, or historically constituted, has served to combat racist or sexist assumptions that traditionally have been used to constrain the behavior and potential of certain groups of individuals" (11). Race, as an ideological signifier, is often used as a means of cataloguing "based on binary oppositions between self and other, civilized and savage" (Wolfreys 208). Richard Dyer maintains that racial imagery has depended on the presupposition that "non-white people are 'raced', as he puts it, while white people supposedly are not, or do not see themselves in racial terms, unless believing themselves to be threatened by racial difference" (qtd. in Wolfreys 210). Dyer claims that the sense of whites as non-raced is obvious in the lack of reference to whiteness in the spoken and written communication of white people in Western countries.

Kim Hall suggests new links between race and gender in the Renaissance as she discusses the roles of men and women, and examines the effects of racial and cultural differences in the fictional depiction of blackness. To examine the roles of race and gender in the early modern conception of individual identity, she raises the question of "Who Is English?" (11). She examines travel narratives such as Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* and Leo Africanus's *History and Description of Africa*, as well as lyric poetry, and works of drama such as "the Poetics of Color" and "Dramas of Alliance." She claims that works such as *Midsummer Night's Dreams*

> rely on a display of women as audience and spectacle; more important, both offer a troping of blackness, a use of difference associated with Africa to express European luxury, wealth and beauty. The actual appropriation of the Moor's body in James's court resurfaces in the rhetorical evocation of Ethiopes and Tartars in Elizabeth's. (24)

Examining the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Hall shows how race and sexuality contributed to the construction of a new white and male oriented identity in English culture.

Hall argues, moreover, that black female characters have a definite literary impact even when they are textually absent. She urges early modernists to engage in the process of "reading what isn't there." Imtiaz Habib presents a theoretical framework for attending to this absence:

> [W]hat is therefore nonexistent, is also what is/should be unknown because it cannot be known. This in turn reinforces the conventional contemporary mistruth: there were no actual people of color in early modern England; references to them in popular media of the time are metaphoric; and the period is race-innocent. Thus, theory might seem to conspire with the natural fragmentariness and

> obscurity of the documentary life of the early modern English episteme to block the real of the racial in the corrective reconstruction of the age. (9)

Hall believes that if the invisibility of early modern English black people is also due to "the sedimented racial etymology of their naming (12), the visibility of this population has to avoid traditional study of the history and origin of proper names, especially personal names. Racial naming is not a neutral process that has the function of describing and identifying. Alden T. Vaughan, quoted in Imtiaz Habib's *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677*, states that "in each language the word for 'black' carried a host of disparaging connotations" (12).

Similarly, Lynda Boose labels women of color in early English modern texts as "unrepresentable" because the British male-dominated British literary canon was afraid of a black woman:

> While such anathema would eventually apply to everyone thus stigmatized, the locus of the transfer would be not the black male but the black female, whose signifying capacity as a mother threatens nothing less than the wholesale negation of white patriarchal authority. Within the symbolic order of the system, it is precisely that capacity makes her unpresentable. (46)

Felicity Nussbaum argues that black women in the eighteenth century are not so much "absent as they are a spectral presence. It matters immeasurably, I think, that though the first object that Burke's newly sighted boy sees in black [1], what he perceives is specifically a Negro woman, who in being both dark and female, embodies the most horrific combination that he can imagine" (188). Nussbaum's *Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race and Gender in the*

[1] See Edmund Burke's A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful. J. Dodsley, 1767, Digitized, Jul 31, 2007- page 276

Long Eighteenth Century (2003) explores literary and cultural exemplifications of human difference in the British Empire during the eighteenth century. Focusing on women s writing, Nussbaum analyzes known and lesser-known novels and plays from the Restoration to abolition. She explores various abnormalities such as weakness, illness, and ill health as they combine with concepts of femininity, masculinity, and race to define normality as it relates to national identity. Including works by Aphra Behn (1640 – 1689), one of the most prominent and first professional woman writer, and Frances Burney (1752 – 1840), and educated, intellectual woman of the period and a member Bluestockings Society, as well as Thomas Southerne (1660 –1746), Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), Laurence Sterne (1713 – 1768), and Olaudah Equiano (c.1745 – 1797), Nussbaum treats a range of incapacities such as being mute, visually impaired, or lame , and considers physical peculiarities such as eunuchism and giantism as they are inflected by arising thoughts of a racial femininity and masculinity. According to Nussbaum, for the eighteenth-century audience, *Othello* embodied the racialized horror that could have destabilizinheag effects:

> For the eighteenth-century audience, it seems that Othello embodies the racialized monstrousness that undermines the nation. Believing that Shakespeare especially catered to readers' passionate desire for fantastic tales, Shaftesbury tells his readers that Othello is just a tale weaver, a 'Moorish hero, full-fraught with prodigy, a wondrous story-teller!' who seduced 'his fair lady' Desdemona with his invented histories. Superstitious, passionate, and above all womanish, all eighteenth-century readers of wondrous stories resemble Desdemona's succumbing to Othello's 'round unvarnish'd tale,' later echoed by travel writers including Mungo Park. (4)

In short, Nussbaum shows how bodily features, such as facial features, observed as abnormal and strange, combine in the general imagination to reveal a presentation of differences that were present between the extremes of superb and unpleasant originality.

Jennifer Devere Brody looks at "constructions of Englishness" (5) as white, masculine, and pure and "Americanness" (11) as black, feminine, and impure in the light of black feminist theory and African American studies to read nineteenth-century culture (9). Brody's study of Victorian literature and paintings reveals that purity is impossible. She states that "Paradoxically, purity has its roots in hybridity" (67), and therefore, that hybridity in depictions of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity is unavoidable. She examines a large amount of evidence to demonstrate that early Victorian culture is connected to different forms of blackness. Brody opens her book with a study of Daniel Defoe's "A True-Born Englishman" (1701), a satirical poem defending the then King of England William, who was Dutch-born, against chauvinistic attacks by his political opponents, and making fun of the concept of English racial purity, pointing to the mixed origins of English identity.

Exploring *The Woman of Colour*, Brody states that this novel "stands as a record of the historical 'interracial' relations and cultural commerce connected with colonial enterprise" (15). She argues that the first letter from Olivia to her nursemaid, Mrs. Milbanke, imitates her journey from green plantation in Jamaica to mundane England. Moreover, she states that Olivia's journey repeats the exchange of material goods during the three-sided trade in which raw agricultural products and slaves were cultivated "and then, in industrialized England, refined into white sugar, shirts, and women of color. A direct product of overseas venture-capital expeditions, which formed the basis of imperialism, the text of *The Woman of Colour* serves as a material reminder (and remainder) of such circum-Atlantic encounters" (15). She examines the hybrid

character of *The Woman of Colour* whose "identity is positioned between the primary narrative of her father and that of her mother, which in the order of the text, is secondary. As the illegitimate daughter of a white English plantation owner and his African slave, Olivia is here "caught between the two: unwilling to deny her mother and yet willing to follow her father's order" (19). Moreover, according to Julie Murray George Boulukos, who has examined the "grateful slave" and the emergence of race in eighteenth-century British and American culture, contends that the image of the grateful slave "depends for its success on two key assumptions: first, that plantation slavery will continue in a brutal form that makes the humane reformers' efforts remarkable, and second, that Africans can be induced not just to accept slavery, but to embrace it, to be overwhelmed by ecstatic gratitude toward someone who continues to claimmastery over them" (93).

Roxann Wheeler examines the advent of skin color as a major signifier of identity in British thought. She compares and contrasts the Enlightenment's belief on the biology of race with fictional records. She recognizes a traumatic problem in history: in what way, at what time, and for what cause, reason, or purpose did black and white became decisive signifiers of collective identity? She states that "As the epigraphs indicate, skin color and race as we know them today have not always been powerful tools to convey difference. At various times in European history, they have fostered meanings incongruent with the current ubiquitous conviction about their significance to identity" (2). Wheeler examines the intertwined hierarchies structuring racial ideology, and colonial subjugation during the eighteenth century, claiming that "[a] similar failure to account for historical variation arises when racial ideology in Britain is erroneously conflated with contemporary American or West Indian notions of race during the eighteenth century" (9). Exploring the cultural policies for differentiating groups of people,

Wheeler concludes that as a result of a flourishing colonizer empire in the eighteenth century, English authors dealt with distinguishing the British from colonized people by designating qualities that made a distinction between the colonizers and the colonized:

> English writers' concern about their countrymen in early modern Ireland was more about their remaining civilized than about civilizing the Irish. This same frame of reference, with some adaptations, informed many early English practices and perceptions of Native Americans, Australian Aborigines, and West Africans until the nineteenth century. (299)

Wheeler investigates the growth of British racial suppositions and the commencement of skin color as a signifier of that process. Her goal is a new literary historical clarification which portrays Britons' thinking on race as a binary of white as opposed to black over the British colonial history "which combined moral and aesthetic meanings, primarily in the binary pair pure white and sinful black" (2). Wheeler aims to change our notion of race away from notions of genetic and biological racism toward cultural racism. This approach shows a significant break with literary history's binary account of eighteenth-century British racial thought.

In addition to Felicity Nussbaum, who studies the presence of black women in the eighteenth century, Susan Kingsley Kent looks specifically at notions of race as they connect to gender. Focusing on the relations between gender and power in cultural, political, social, and economic life, she examines the history of Britain from the seventeenth century to the present time in four parts. She studies how power relations were established within different gender and race classifications, and explores "how women and men reacted to the institutions, laws, customs, beliefs and practices that constituted their various worlds, class, racial and ethnic

considerations…" (i). Kent examines the transformation of political power in British society over a wide span of time in relation to social divisions of class, race, religion, region, and gender:

> Although new ideas about the family and about gender thrown up by struggles for power in the political, religious, economic, or social realm rarely had any immediate effect on the ways in which families, and men and women, went about their business on a day-to-day basis, they did operate to both open up and close down possibilities for individuals to rethink their place in the familial, political, and social order, which could produce longer-term changes in that order. By articulating the crises of authority of the seventeenth century in gendered and sexualized language, contemporary men and women also created crises of gender that would themselves have to be addressed as those of more conventional authority were resolved. (4)

Susan Kingsley Kent's exploration of power relationships within different gender classifications and how people reacted to social considerations such as race, class, and ethnicity help researchers reconceptualize the gender organization of the time.

In addition to Nussbaum and Kent, Kathleen Wilson studies the issues of nation, gender and identity in the eighteenth-century British world. As she explains, in England perceptions of origin and heritage were changed and the question of national identity was a particularly troubled and ambiguous issue. Wilson bases her analysis on a wide range of case studies drawn both from Britain and across the Atlantic and Pacific worlds. Creating a colorful and original colonial landscape, she considers topics such as "the centrality of theater in English culture" (3), masculinity, the symbolism of Britannia and the role of women in war. In both, "rationale and

performance," she writes "theater frequently drew upon and exaggerated the masculinist cultural identities circulating elsewhere in the public sphere in a self-conscious effort to socialize audiences into the mores of gender and national differentiation" (37). Wilson shows the sweeping consequences that colonial power and expansion had upon the English people's sense of self; nonetheless, "identity was in fact a concept used in scientific and philosophical discussion in the eighteenth century to describe the presumed fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else" (2). She argues that the praised distinctiveness of English culture was in fact created by the bodies, practices and exchanges of peoples across the world.

Having provided this overview of understanding and critical approaches to race in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the next part of this introduction will explore the relationships between race, mimicry, ambivalence, and the third space in the context of this era

The discourse of race that Bhabha is "trying to develop displays the problem of the ambivalent temporality of modernity that is often overlooked in the more 'spatial' traditions of some aspects of postmodern theory" (Bhabha, "'Race', Time and the Revision of Modernity" 196). Terms such as ambivalence, hybridity, and third space popularized by Homi Bhabha's theory of colonial states have associated the study of national and colonial contexts "because those terms imply that there are no pure terms of authority, identity, or culture for either colonizers or the colonized" (Wheeler 41). In another word, purity is a big sentimental lie.

Toni Morrison's *Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, is an edited collection of eighteen essays by a number of writers on the subject of the testimony of Anita Hill at the Senate confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas for the U.S. Supreme Court. In her introduction to these essays, Morrison reminds, or informs, the reader of the great debate that swirled around the nomination

of Clarence Thomas. Morrison shares some of her ideas on the construction of race for an "official story" (x) in the hearings. She illustrates how the language, used to describe the black nominee, was motivated by racist pigeonholes, reducing him to his laughter, his body, and his sexuality:

> For example, the nominee chosen, the president said, without regard to race was introduced by his sponsor with a reference to the nominee's laugh. It was, said Senator Danforth, second in his list of "the most fundamental points" about Clarence Thomas. "He is his own person. That is my first point. Second, he laughs. [Laughter] To some, this may seem a trivial matter. To me, it's important because laughter is the antidote to that dread disease, federalitis. (xii)

She argues that the discussion about Thomas's confirmation contains images of black people dealing with issues such as sex and personality. Morrison perceives in the Thomas hearings cultural echoes of race that date back centuries ago and that can be perceived in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, "where Friday's servile and uncivilized character presents an image of what whites expect from blacks" (Gillespie 239). Daniel Defoe's novel creates a colonial racial attitude that supports the claim of civilizing the uncivilized Friday.

Seemingly, a world free of racial hierarchy is an imagined utopian world for Morrison, who has "never lived, nor has any of us, in a world in which race did not matter. Such a world, one free of racial hierarchy, is usually imagined or described as dreamscape-Edenesque, Utopian, so remote are the possibilities of its achievement". However, "as an already-and always-raced writer," she never reproduces "the master's voice and its assumptions of the all-knowing law of

the white father" (Morrison, "Home" 3). Nor would she replace his voice with that of his flattering mistress.

Sara Salih in *Representing Mixed Race in Jamaica and England from the Abolition Era to the Present* (2010) explores the cultural depictions of mixed-race people in Jamaica and England from the Abolition era onwards. Through close readings of novels such as *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, Marly and Dinah Craik's *Olive* as well as "histories," and Richard Hill's *Lights and Shadows of Jamaica History: Being Three Lectures, Delivered in Aid of the Mission Schools of the Colony Book*, Salih explores the extent to which colonial ideologies may have been reinforced by what might be called "subject-constituting statutes" (4), at the same time as the potential for violence which supported the law. She "also consider [s] the role legal and nonlegal discourse may have played in disciplining the brown body in pre-and-post-Abolition colonial contexts" (4).

As suggested by thinkers mentioned in this part, race is socially constructed, and historically constituted. Racist traditions have always been used to constrain the behavior and potential of some groups of people in specific environments.

B. Mimicry, Ambivalence, and Third Space

Olivia's mimicry and the maintenance of gender inequality in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* (1808) is incompatible with her disagreements with racial pigeonholes in white-male dominated England. "Mimicry" is used in postcolonial studies "to make sense of those instances where the colonized Other mimics elements of dominant, colonial identity" (Felluga179). According to Homi Bhabha, such mimicry at once reflects features of colonial authority and threatens that authority because it is always adopted with a difference. Bhabha's notion of mimicry has its

origins in the work of Jacques Lacan and Frantz Fanon. In the epigraph to Chapter four of *The Location of Culture*, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," he quotes Lacan, who sees mimicry as being analogous to camouflage as "practised in human warfare" (121). Camouflage is the hiding of personnel or equipment from an enemy by making them appear to be part of the natural surroundings. It is in this way that the notion of menace and mimicry live together, where the "menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority and it is a double vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial object" (126). According Homi Bhabha, mimicry is:

> the sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers." (122-123).

Therefore, the use of mimicry makes it possible for a writer to question a colonial subject's authority over a black or mixed-race character. For the purposes of this chapter, I consider its potential to criticize and interrogate stereotypical assumptions by distorting the boundaries between colonial women of color and the white colonial society within narrative. "The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse," writes Bhabha, "is profound and disturbing" (123). Bhabha explains that, because "in normalizing the colonial state or subject, the dream of post Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms" (123).

Bhabha argues that "the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference… Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (122). After Olivia's marriage, she considers herself as "half an English woman and, it has always been [her] ardent wish to prove [her] worthy of the title!" (*The Woman of Colour* 111). Ambivalence is a state of having concurrent mixed and contradictory feelings, reactions, or beliefs towards somebody or something. It is the experience of having an attitude towards someone or something that contains both positive and negative features. According to Bhabha, the notion of ambivalence sees culture as having opposing opinions and scopes. This ambivalence presents a split in the identity of the colonized and allows them to be the hybrid of their own cultural identity and the colonizer's cultural identity. Ambivalence contributes to the reason why colonial power is characterized by its belatedness. The colonial signifiers of authority only "acquires its meaning after the traumatic scenario of colonial difference, cultural or racial, returns the eye of power to some prior, archaic image or identity. Paradoxically, however, such an image can neither be 'original' – by virtue of the act of repetition that constructs it – nor 'identical' – by virtue of the difference that defines it" (153). Moreover, Melissa Adams-Campbell states that "*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" (105)

In Chapter Two I will examine in greater detail how a version of Homi Bhabha's Third Space, "the interstices between colliding cultures" (Brosch 148), is produced in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*. The third space is a concept that cultural critics and resistance theorists use to define a resistance to dominating forces by the dominated people:

> The Third Space acts as an ambiguous zone that develops when two cultures interact. It: challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. In other words, the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the narrative of the Western nation which Benedict Anderson so perceptively describes as being written in homogeneous, serial time. (Bhabha 54)

It does so through the "disruptive temporality of enunciation" (Bhabha 54). Bhabha states that

> It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity. (54-55)

C. Review of Criticism and Contribution to the Field

While not much has been written on *The Woman of Colour*, and no scholar has tackled it through the lens of Homi Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and the third space, this thesis draws on the existing scholarship that considers the representation of race in this novel.

Jennifer DeVere Brody, in *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* (1998), employs black feminist theory and African American Studies to explore Victorian cultural issues such as the construction of "Englishness" as "white,", "masculine," and "pure" (7), and "Americanness" (11) as black, feminine, and impure. Brody's exploration of Victorian novels, plays, paintings, and science fiction exposes the impossibility of purity and the

unavoidability of hybridity in representations of ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and race. Opening with a reading of "A True-Born Englishman," Brody analyze mulattas typified by Rhoda Swartz in William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and Olivia Fairfield in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*. Studying nineteenth-century theatrical productions, she elucidates how such stage productions depended on feminized, "black" characters to reconstruct Englishmen as male white subjects.

Melissa Adams-Campbell in *New World Courtships: Transatlantic Alternatives to Companionate Marriage* (2015) explores a collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels such as *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* to compare institution of marriage from the Atlantic world - Atlantic World history refers to relationships between the societies of the Americas, Africa and Europe, from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. It explains the significance of cultural differences in marriage in the Atlantic world. Adams-Campbell states that "*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" (101). She argues that this novel achieves more than a detailed explanation of the problems 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" (101).

Mary McAleer Balkun, and Susan C. Imbarrato are co-editors of *Women's Narratives of the Early Americas and the Formation of Empire*. The essays explore "the myriad connections between women's experiences and the forces of empire to show how women's assertions and protests contributed to the development of the Americas" (ix). Moreover, these articles "also share a specific focus: the impact of empire building on the female body" and portray a "variety

of genres, including the saga, letter, diary, captivity narrative, travel narrative, sentimental novel, autobiography, and poem" (ix). In her study of *The Woman of Colour* in this book, Brigitte Fielder concludes that "Olivia ultimately returns to a black Atlantic community, intending to take up the work of racial uplift. In this move, Olivia resembles the mixed-race characters of late nineteenth-century antipassing fiction by African American writers" (103). In sum, these critiques have disrupted what is to elucidate how race has been produced and continue to operate.

Among the few works that look in detail *The Woman of Colour* is Julie Murray's "The Country and the City and the Colony in *The Woman of Colour*" (2014) which concentrates on the main character's disillusionment in Britain. She claims that "Olivia's disappointment with city life in particular has her hoping that Augustus will similarly 'prefer [her] plan of a country life and retirement'" (88). Murray explains that when Olivia arrives in England and imagines of a new life with Augustus, she desires "to set up home in the country, especially to get away from London and the fashionable and fickle world it represents" (90). Generally speaking, she claims that Olivia's country view fits for the most part "with the conservative paternalism of the trope of the 'grateful slave'" (93). The fantasy of the grateful slave would become one of the powerful tropes of proslavery systems.

Lyndon J. Dominique, in "Spectral and Literal Black Heroines in Eighteenth Century British Literature" (2019), claims that "the roles that black heroines play" in the eighteenth-century fiction and "the influence they collectively wield" (11), have not been properly investigated. Dominique claims that *The Woman of Colour* consciously twists its depiction of a woman of color trapped within "binaries because it is interested more in promoting Olivia as a woman enslaved and oppressed by white men rather than their equal as suppressors of freedom and oppressors of Negro slaves" (27). This claim of course recalls Homi Bhabha's notion of

hybridity as “a difference ‘within’, a subject that inhabits the rim of an ‘in-between’ reality” (Bhabha 19). In accordance with Bhabha’s ‘in-between’ reality, Jennifer De Vere Brody states that Olivia's “‘identity’ is positioned between the primary narrative of her father and that of her mother, which in the order of the text, is secondary. She is here ‘caught’ between the two: unwilling to deny her mother and yet willing to follow her father's orders” (19). In my thesis I will expand this view that Olivia represents that type of resistance on which creates the physical and discursive context of third space that produces developing cultural hybrid identities.

The present study gains significance as it sheds light on Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial concepts of “Mimicry,” “Ambivalence,” and “The Third Space” on the one hand, and *The Woman of Colour; A Tale*, on the other, as it engages with and expands upon concepts of race outlined by the above historians. I examine the representation of Olivia as a woman of colour, and the extent to which her character re-writes and transforms traditional portrayals of a subjugated woman of colour in ways that coincide with Homi Bhabha’s concept of the “Third Space”. “Having successfully challenged prejudice in England,” writes Dominique, “Olivia has the potential to become an independent advocate for societal reform, equity, and emancipation in Jamaica” (37). Olivia changes over the course of the novel. The novel’s conclusion is significant in this respect, for Olivia’s final decision to return to Jamaica is based in a desire to improve the circumstances of helpless blacks, and to advocate for the freedom of people of color.

This study looks at *The Woman of Colour* through Homi Bhabha’s concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and third Space as well as through notions of race outlined by historians of eighteenth-century race such as Roxann Wheeler, Susan Kingsley Kent, and Felicity Nussbaum. “The Third Space” refers to the spaces between opposing cultures, a liminal space. Homi Bhabha compares “The Third Space” with the stairwell as a liminal space, “in-between the designations of

identity, [it] becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white" (Bhabha 5). The anonymous author of *The Woman of Colour* creates a Bhabhaian stairwell of the liminal in-between third space to give a chance for the creation and designation of new identities through representative interactions between upper and lower classes, as well as black and white.

In this introduction, I have provided an overview of definitions of "race", "racism," "mimicry", "ambivalence", and "Third Space" as well as a summary of some books which have explored these and other related issues. These scholars of these works reveal that race and racism are complex and theoretically multifaceted issues. They explore the meaning of "race", "racist" and "racism" in the eighteenth century, looking at forms of "genetic," "culturalist," and "institutional racism". Some of these scholars ask how do these different forms of racism manifest themselves in literature in general and in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* in particular. The following will examine how *The Woman of Colour* depicts a woman of color, Olivia, who exceeds the limited often stereotypical portrayals of women of color depicted in many novels of the long eighteenth century. It will consider how the notion of mimicry helps to illuminate the inherent ambivalence of Olivia and other women of color in the novel by exploring their ambivalent responses to white women and men. Chapter Two will study how a version of Homi Bhabha's Third Space, the interstices between colliding cultures, is produced in *The Woman of Colour.* Despite the fact that Olivia follows the male-centric impediments forced on her by her father's will, she connects herself with individuals who favor the abolition of slavery. Olivia is finally presented as a potential ally for social change; and freedom in Jamaica since she has challenged prejudice in England.

Chapter One: Exceeding the Limited and Stereotypical Portrayals of Women of Color

> "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" (*The Woman of Colour* 88).

This chapter will examine the depictions of women of color in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*. These depictions, I argue, exceed the limited stereotypical portrayals of women of color in many novels of the eighteenth century. Lyndon J. Dominique contends that women of color were present in eighteenth-century British literature, in texts where their racial characteristics had been indicated but never developed with the constant power that readers can find in this novel. "This rare black woman's narrative deserves to be seen," he argues, "not only because it is the first long prose fiction in British literature to prominently feature a racially-conscious mulatto heroine, but also because, conceivably, a woman of color could have written it" (18). *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* is an example of the developing depictions of women of color, notably Olivia and her Black servant, Dido. Now, it is regarded as a significant document in the history of British slavery and race, due to its very early depiction of a woman of color.

Examining the works of twentieth-century scientists unveils how biological disciplines constructed and promoted the ideas of race and racism. Black, Parry, and Kingsbury published *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, as a significant work in the history of race in London in 1808 (Murray 87). Set in the early 1800s in Britain and Jamaica, the novel primarily comprises letters Olivia writes to Mrs. Milbanke, who is in Jamaica, where Olivia yearns to be. The novel highlights the effect of an unfamiliar and inhospitable society, which still has racist stereotypes.

The concept of race was espoused in the big busy cities "as a way of legitimating the discrimination and persecution of non-Christian communities. At a later date, it also came to be used to discriminate against the descendants of non-Christians, who had by then been converted to Christianity. In other words, faith came to be seen as something inherited" (Stolcke 11). As a matter of fact, the social construction of race served the expansionist interests of the Christian church but it is not fair to say that this was the only way that the concept of race operated in society. In short, it was not just about religion. Further, Christianity was not only for white people. Nowadays it is "an undeniable fact for geneticists and biologists that the concept of 'race,' in reference to human beings, has nothing to do with biological reality" (Wodak and Reisigl 373). Therefore, race is a social construct, not a biological characteristic. Racism proposes not only incentives but also the means by which to downgrade some groups in society.

Depicting Olivia Fairfield, the daughter of an enslaved Black woman and her white master, the anonymous novelist takes the reader from Jamaica to England. When the novel opens, Olivia Fairfield, the so-called "illegitimate" daughter of Mr. Fairfield, a white English plantation owner, and Marcia, an African person he is enslaving, is on the way from Jamaica to England. Olivia, accompanied by her Black servant, Dido, launches "on a new world … in obedience to the commands of [her] departed father" (*The Woman of Colour* 53). The novel is set after 1807, the year the slave trade was abolished in Britain. Olivia's mother, Marcia, was an enslaved person who had been coerced by her "owner" to have sex with him. She converts to Christianity and understands that her seducer has acted completely against the commands of his religion. When Mr. Fairfield "poured into her attentive and docile ear, those truths for which the soul of Marcia panted, he made her start with horror at the crime of which she had been innocently guilty" (*The Woman of Colour* 54). Marcia, the new Christian, reproaches him, the

old Christian, who lives in direct opposition to the laws of the Gospel. According to Olivia, her father "dared not combat a resolution which appeared to him to be almost a command of Heaven. [Olivia's father] loved Marcia with fervour; but the pride of the man, the quick feeling of the European, the prejudices which he had imbibed in common with his countrymen, forbade his making this affectionate and heroic girl his wife" (*The Woman of Colour* 55). Olivia believes that her mother, Marcia, had a strong soul, but she also believes that it dwelled in a weak body, so in giving birth to Olivia, Marcia died and was buried in the ground, where she was free (*The Woman of Colour* 55).

The Woman of Colour: A Tale criticizes the arranged marriage and reveals the inexcusable effects of this tradition on women; Olivia becomes the victim of patriarchal societal forces of when the requirements of her white father's will forces her into marriage. Her marriage finally fails. Mr. Fairfield wills Olivia a legacy with the condition that she must marry her cousin, Augustus Merton. West Indian planters, such as Mr. Fairfield, "their families, and their descendants were regarded as conspicuously rich by anyone's standards in early modern Britain" (Ryden 19). If Augustus rejects marriage, the money will be paid to his older brother, George, and Olivia will remain dependent on him. She is reluctant about her journey and anxious about her future. She states that "Every day, as it takes me farther from Jamaica, as it brings me nearer to England, heightens my fears of the future, and makes my presaging heart sink within itself!" (*The Woman of Colour* 53). Moreover, brooding on her future, she writes in a letter: "Ah, my dearest friend! shall I ever more enjoy that placid happiness, that calm tranquility, which surrounded me at the Fairfield plantation?" (*The Woman of Colour* 88). To William Safran, a scholar who has contributed considerably to subjects such as immigration, diaspora, and national identity, Olivia is a diasporic figure who:

> retain[s] a collective memory, vision, or myth about [her] original homeland [and believes that she will not be] fully accepted by [her] host society and therefore feel[s] partly alienated and insulated from it. [She regards her] homeland as [her] true, ideal home and as the place to which [she] would (or should) eventually return'. [Moreover, she believes that she is] committed to the maintenance or restoration of [her] … homeland and to its safety and prosperity. (Safran, qtd. in Mishra 16-17)

Applying the modern concepts of diaspora criticism to an early-nineteenth-century character, Olivia is Black diasporic character who is away from her homeland but has a collective memory of her homeland; she cannot integrate in the host country, and she contemplates returning to her homeland.

Olivia learns that there is a great deal of racial bias against her in England, and some people (such as Mrs. Merton) are racist. Nevertheless, Olivia marries Augustus Merton and they find joy for a short time and inherit his family fortune. Then, one day, Olivia discovers that Augustus is already married and has been using her to live a luxurious life. He had lied to her, saying his wife had died, but she is alive, so their marriage is illegal. Finally, Olivia decides to escape her home, as well as the persecution and ill-treatment she has endured in England. She thinks about her good lost days of a rustic life style, observing that "to form a truly unvitiated and primeval neighbourhood of undisturbed truth, simplicity and innocence, we must revert to the golden age, and to the rapt reveries of enthusiastic poets" (*The Woman of Colour* 125). Referring to the English Romantic poets who believe that nature is a source of revelation, she reveals her hybrid identity. Dido, her maid, helps her and takes her to the border of Wales. She returns to Jamaica with Dido to make a new life there. In Jamaica, Olivia meets some Black

people who live there and spend their time on the healing of their minds from experiences of racism.

Although Olivia Fairfield is depicted as a marginalized woman of color in a white society, the presence of such Black characters, as protagonists, is rare in British literature at that time. Note that "'Black presence' means characters in the novels who are either Africans or African descent, or men of color like Caribs of Cariban tribe in South America and the Caribbean" (Hayden 400). The novel provides some understanding about the race and gender politics of the early nineteenth century as Black women coming from backgrounds similar to Olivia Fairfield's and Dido's might have experienced them.

Olivia is the narrative voice in the letters which creates the story. As the narrator, she describes how the white characters in the novel came to understand that she and Dido are not as different from them as they had expected. The anonymous author of the novel has chosen the narrative voice wisely, as it has a vital effect on the story and the reader's response. As Fang Tang argues women of color "can break silences and reconstruct history, using the power of narrative to bring them from the margin to the center" (165). The whole story depends on the narrative voice of the novel. Narrative voice is an indispensable component in story, as it regulates the character with whom readers may identify.

The Woman of Colour: A Tale edifies, illuminates and admires the Black characters' presence in British literature. It was printed for the booksellers to the East India Company in 1808, and it "stands as a record of historic 'interracial' relations and cultural commerce connected with colonial enterprise" (Brody 15). Dominique claims that the novel "provides a missing link in the narrative history of black heroines …; it allows us to gain some insight into

the race and gender politics of the time as black women might have experienced them" (18). However, the author of the novel does not describe Olivia as a far-fetched "heroine." It is a work of realistic fiction.

Realistic fiction is a genre involving events that can really happen to people; we could plausibly be in the characters' situations. The chain of events in a realistic novel bears a resemblance to real life, and imaginary characters in the novel react in a comparable way to real people. Olivia is a real and multifaceted character; as Brody argues "Olivia Fairfield, the woman of color, both conceals and reveals conflicting ideas of difference" (16). On the one hand, Olivia is depicted as a "poor girl" who "is every minute wishing for friendly guidance" and "maternal counsel" (*The Woman of Colour* 53); she expresses her understanding, pleasure, pain, or the fact that she is not a heroine. On the other hand, Olivia is depicted as a woman of color who both tries to produce a proper relationship or orientation with the white society in the novel (she marries her white English cousin) and tries to subvert the social humiliations and attitudes of inferiority leveled at people of color.

Olivia, as a woman of color, stands for "African-British" subjectivity and has her own sensible experiences, viewpoints, feelings, opinions, and wishes. It is obvious that "in Black-British writing generally, Africa in many ways functions as the unconscious that shapes Black-British identity" (Msiska 175). In England, Olivia subverts the social humiliations and relegation directed at her due to her African physical appearance by her "half an English" (*The Woman of Colour* 111) femaleness. She, as a free Black colonial subject, claims the civil rights of citizenship regularly given to whites in the recently established Great Britain. There is a very important conflict here. Even though Jamaican people of color made claims of whiteness, they were deprived of legitimate rights to use the important privileges enjoined by colonial whites. In

other words, the law supported divisions among Jamaican people. As Wilson explains, Jamaican law "created a bifurcated system that divided the numerous castes into four classes: whites, who alone had access to English common law and its most sacred plank, trial by jury; free people of color having special privileges granted by private acts; free people of color not possessing such privileges; and slaves" (148). Therefore, English men held primary power in Jamaica.

The Woman of Colour: A Tale depicts an intercontinental arranged marriage, arranged by the will of the father, an apparently kind white governing father who deprives his daughter, the dark-skinned colonial woman, of power and authority, and subjugates her to a life of permanent white male authority in Britain. Therefore, she should have been ready for a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, from America to England. Olivia is "rather surprised at this information, as [her father] had never before intimated his intention: I did not, however, oppose his design; but instantly made preparations for our voyage" (*The Woman of Colour* 195). Marriages arranged by close relatives were normal throughout the world until the eighteenth century. Arranged marriage might be defined "as a marital union in which intended spouses are selected by parents or respected elders of bride and groom…. Arranged and forced marriages are closely linked. … women and men are frequently coerced to marry according to their families' decisions" (Dasgupta 40 -42). Olivia is coerced to marry, according to her father's decisions, a man chosen by her father's agreement

Olivia has to marry a man who is perceived as the "image" of her father. Her father's benevolence turns out to be doubtful. Olivia subtly but openly criticizes the scope of her father's benevolence. He "contented himself, therefore, with seeing that slaves on his estate were well kept and fed, and treated with humanity, — but their minds were suffered to remain in the dormant state in which he found them!" (*The Woman of Colour* 55). Commenting on this episode

in this novel, Dominique explains that Olivia's observation is "Another ideological stab at the policy of benevolent paternalism famously espoused in Edgeworth's *The Grateful Negro*. Neither Mr. Edwards nor Mr. Fairfield tries to improve their slaves intellectually. By pointing this out, Olivia is directly critiquing the extent of her father's benevolence" (*The Woman of Colour* 55). White slaveholders, including her own father, try to hold enslaved people's minds in a hibernated and inactive state.

At the outset of the narrative, Olivia is depicted as a weak character subject to the will of white men who make decisions about her life; however, she changes and finds empowering ways to respond to the structural violence. According to Jennifer DeVere Brody, England never had laws prohibiting mixed-race marriage, so the marriage between Olivia and her cousin, Augustus Merton, "was not impossible, although it was viewed as both impolite and impolitic…the subplot of the play *The Woman of Colour, or Slavery in Freedom* (which opened in London on October 22, 1853, at the Surrey Theatre) makes this point dramatically" (18). On the other hand, Olivia writes to Mrs. Honeywood about her own state of apprehension, uncertainty, and fear. She believes that her father's motives and intentions were positive even if he sometimes made a mistake. Her father's soul "recoiled at the idea of leaving me in Jamaica, or of uniting me to any of the planters there: for to them he knew that his money would be the only bait. In England, in his native country, he deemed, that a more liberal, a more distinguishing spirit had gone abroad" (*The Woman of Colour* 58). As a hybrid, mixed-race-woman, she is subjugated and overwhelmed by white men. The title of the novel, *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, places an emphasis on Olivia's mixed-race identity, femaleness, and the outcomes of her enslavement by her father's will. Some events of the novel highlight the colonial condition Olivia deals with as well as her powerlessness and liability as a young woman of color in a white Eurocentric civilization, which

focuses on European culture to the exclusion of a broader view of the world and implicitly regards European culture as distinguished. In the beginning of the novel, Olivia is manipulated and made vulnerable by the will of white men; she is not aware that she can show resistance and dismantle her vulnerability, yet she learns how to resist and improve her position.

In a letter to Mrs. Milbanke, Olivia shows that she is changing through learning; Olivia describes her first breakfast with the Mertons. She calls the enslaved people of the West Indies "my brothers and sisters" (*The Woman of Colour* 77) and associates her desire for fair behavior as an oppressed woman in England with theirs. Olivia thanks Mrs. Merton for studying her palate and says, "I assure you there is no occasion; I eat just as you do, I believe: and though in Jamaica, our poor slaves (*my brothers and sisters*, smiling) are kept upon rice as their chief food, yet they would be glad to exchange it for a little of your nice wheaten bread here" (77-78). Her reaction challenges Mrs. Merton's inhospitality, problematizes the aggressive actions by which her white father had run his agricultural estate, and exemplifies how the novel raises awareness of the space of home. The Mertons are the first of several characters who stand for the insincere presentation associated with stylish life among the British white subjects in London. Olivia is "fatigued by the formal stiffness of Mr. Merton" (98) and is sick of Mrs. Merton's "affectation and vanity, and disgusted at her selfish and mercenary husband" (98). Therefore, she wants to be free from the dishonesty, "which the common rules of good breeding impose in [her] behaviour towards them" (98). Olivia strongly believes that she will be free in the woods or forests of the country far from "the hypocrisies of cities" (230)

The anonymous novelist uses some tools to make Olivia more pleasing and less intimidating to the white Eurocentric reader. Her name is Olivia and her skin is olive-toned. The name Olivia is Biblical and symbolic. In the Bible, "the name Olivia means peace of the olive

tree" (Meaning of "Olivia"). It is said that "Sex and religion provided the tools to modify race, muting white power through contact with black bodies" (Poley 27). Interestingly, "olive-skinned Olivia omits any overt reference to her father's 'physical' whiteness" (Brody 23). Writing a letter to Mrs. Milbanke, Olivia discusses her complexion: "We are considered, my dear Mrs. Milbanke, as an inferior race, but little removed from the brutes, because the Almighty Maker of all created beings has tinged our skins with jet instead of ivory! —I say our, for though the jet has been faded to the olive in my own complexion" (53). An olive complexion is typical of people from many countries such as Greece, or Italy, and the author tries to diminish the degradations about her Blackness by using a Biblical name for the main character which stands for peace. Her skin is as "olive" (53) as her name suggests, which serves as an obvious "attempt to mute the stigmas surrounding her blackness by equating her color with Mediterranean whites in the same way that Patrick Healy, the first black president of Georgetown University, was informally known as 'the Spaniard' when he walked those venerable halls" (Dominique 30).

Being the embodiment of peace and understanding, Olivia teaches Letitia's son, George, "through contact with black bodies" (Poley 27), to reconsider the bias he articulates about Dido, Olivia's Black maid. Little George runs to his mother and complains about Dido, calling her "nasty black woman," and saying that she has been kissing him, and "dirtying [his] face all over!" (78-79). Mrs. Merton pretends to silence him. Olivia tells him that her body is quite as clean as his own, and that, Dido, too, is as clean as her or him. When Olivia arrives in England, her body's racial signs become the focal point for the attention of the white British citizens, who characterize her within their colonialist definitions, which connect her with the position of enslaved Black people. The anonymous author of the novel intentionally uses a technique of racial muting to make Olivia more pleasing and less menacing to white Brits. For example, when

Olivia meets Augustus and his family for the first time, Mrs. Merton shows some racial attitudes that white people have against all Black colonial people. However, Olivia responds to Mrs. Merton's racially slanted speech and expresses her craving for "proper" behavior from white people. Dominique believes that Olivia's response challenges "not merely Mrs. Merton's prejudiced inhospitality but also questions the inhospitable practices by which her slave-holding father managed his plantations" (29). Olivia's responses link her craving for unprejudiced treatment as a victimized woman in England with that of enslaved people in the colonies.

In this society, children learn to group people by racial characteristics and express racial stereotypes. Little George comes running into the room, runs to his mother, and says, "Oh. Mamma! mamma! Look at poor George's face—that nasty black woman has been kissing me, and dirtying my face all over!" (*The Woman of Colour* 78). Mrs. Merton pretends to silence George on Olivia's account, but the pleased expression of her face cannot be misunderstood. George associates dirtiness with Dido's Black skin color, and his racial prejudices are aligned with those held by many of the white colonialist characters. Olivia uses her own body as a tool to teach George to reconsider the bias he expresses towards Dido by allowing the child to try to rub off the Blackness of her skin. At this point Olivia "is clearly championing racial equality for all people of African descent, not just the appealing light-skinned ones" (Dominique 31), and, in doing so, she challenges the prejudices of the white colonial subjects.

Augustus is another British white subject who expresses racial stereotypes. He is going to be Olivia's husband because it is the only way he can get the large inheritance left to him in his uncle's will. He confesses in a letter to Lionel Monkland that at a particular point in time when his eyes were first cast on Olivia, he "started back with a momentary feeling nearly allied to disgust; for I beheld a skin approaching to the hue of a negro's, in the woman whom my father

introduced to me as my intended wife!" (*The Woman of Colour* 102). However, he, is the first person whose racist mindset Olivia manages to change.

The Woman of Colour steadily criticizes colonial commerce, especially the system of slavery. It does so, in part, through the main character, who has an anti-slavery disposition. Olivia depicts how within two miles of them, situated on a fine area of high ground, stands the Pagoda, Sir Marmaduke Ingot's large new building, "the temple of *folly*! The eastern nabob seemed to have harnessed his fleetest Arabian coursers to his chariot, when he came to pay his compliments to us" (*The Woman of Colour* 108). Personified by the array of "nabobs" and other "fashionable," "new-moneyed" characters lately "returned from the 'East,' commerce is itself understood in the novel, Julie Murray, argues, as a form of slavery, and its adherents are the languishing, sensual, thoroughly Orientalized figures so familiar from texts in this period" (Murray 94). Furthermore, Olivia is disillusioned in England and her "disappointment with city life in particular has her hoping that Augustus will similarly 'prefer [her] plan of a country life and retirement'" (Murray 88). Murray contends that when Olivia arrives in England and imagines a new life with Augustus, she desires "to set up home in the country, especially to get away from London and the fashionable and fickle world it represents" (90). Generally speaking, she claims that Olivia's country view fits most of the time "with the conservative paternalism of the trope of the 'grateful slave'" (93) who prefers to serve their decent master until their death.

Many approaches from diverse disciplines "reflect on the material, economical, social, political, social psychological, cognitive, and other causes and motives for racism" (Wodak and Reisigl 373). Roxann Wheeler sees the greater fluidity of racial identity in the eighteenth century in contrast to the biological racism of the nineteenth century. She quotes Jean Baptiste du Tertre's 1667 observation, which "provides a typical example of perceiving essential kinship

between Indians and Europeans: 'Only skin color distinguishes them from us, for they have bronzed skin, the colour of olives'" (69). Wheeler emphasizes the changeableness, uncertainty, discrepancy, and flexibility of eighteenth-century categories of difference. Wheeler finds a great deal of "slippage" in eighteenth-century categorizations of difference. Dark skin "and cross-dressing signify social and economic conflict and literally mark change at the level of the body; they are multiply resonant of displacements, slippages, and substitutions of gender, race, station, and religion" (163). Juxtaposing Olivia and Dido, the novel tries to challenge racial assumptions, revealing significant social differences between these characters. Olivia and Dido are powerful women of color, although there are crucial social differences between having dark and light skin, free and unfree, in this context. In spite of everything, Dido is "presumably a slave in Jamaica, whereas Olivia is a wealthy lightskinned heiress living off the proceeds of her father's slave plantation" (Salih). Dido agrees to be Olivia's servant and is tied to her by their history on Olivia's father's plantation. However, Dido interrogates slavery, as well as its racial assumptions and stereotypes. She thinks that her loyalty to Olivia and her compulsory enslavement at the hands of white colonial women are two completely different issues. She emphasizes that "Dido was never slave but to her dear own Missee, and she was proud of that" (*The Woman of Colour* 100). Dido criticizes the treatments of Black colonial subjects and enslaved people and advocates for a change in these inhuman treatments. Dido explains that white colonial subjects in English call her "'blacky,' 'wowsky,' 'squabby,' 'guashy', and all because she has a skin not quite so white" (*The Woman of Colour* 100).

Dido's parents were enslaved in Olivia's father's estate when she was born, so she objects to forcing Black people into slavery. Dominique argues that Dido is "active in questioning the terms of freedom in England for people of African descent, albeit without the

syntactical refinement that comes naturally to the educated Olivia" (35). As the central narrative voice, Olivia facilitates an understanding of Dido's revulsion in the face of the behavior she receives in England. When Augustus's first wife, Angelina, appears, Dido's critical voice is amplified. As soon as Caroline says that Angelina has returned, Dido screams in pain and anger: "Oh accursed, accursed wretches! … they that contrived so black a plot! —Oh, my dear Missee, we will go back to our own good country! —we will pray to a good God Almighty, to teach you and me to forget that we was ever set foot on English land! My poor Missee was happy in our own dear Jamaica" (*The Woman of Colour* 141). Dido maintains that she "has no master" with "her lip quivering, and turning pale from passionate emotion" (*The Woman of Colour* 141).

As opposed to Olivia, characters associated with wealth, such as Sir Marmaduke Ingot's family who have "acquired a very considerable fortune at Bengal" (*The Woman of Colour* 108), are controlled or strongly influenced by fashion. "The whole thoughts of Marmaduke were turned towards the East, exerted all his interest (which was, at that period, very great, as his mercantile connexions were very extensive), and fitted out his nephew for Bengal" (*The Woman of Colour* 183- 184). Olivia portrays them as belonging to a new species of animal. She says, "I DO not know why I have dwelt on the Ingots, except that, as they are to me a new species of animal, I feel my own curiosity, as well as pity, excited in analyzing them, and imagine that you will feel similar emotions" (*The Woman of Colour* 122). It is after her meeting with this "species of animal" that Olivia writes to her friend that she is "disappointed in England": "I expected to meet with sensible, liberal, well informed and rational people," she writes, continuing, "I have not found them; I see a compound of folly and dissimulation" (*The Woman of Colour* 88). In the opening letter of the novel, Olivia writes that people of color are considered "as an inferior race, but little removed from the brutes, because the Almighty Maker of all-created beings has tinged

our skins with jet instead of ivory!" (*The Woman of Colour* 53). However, the novel shows that the inferiority described by "inferior race" (*The Woman of Colour* 53) is manifested by bondage to colonial commerce and fashion, not by the color of one's skin. Olivia's anti-slavery tendencies aim at an extermination of colonial commerce or "disgraceful traffic" (*The Woman of Colour* 81) in any form. She hopes to "be immediately understood; the feelings of humanity, the principles of [her] religion, would lead [her], as a Christian, [she] trust[s], to pray for the extermination of … disgraceful traffic, while kindred claims … would likewise impel [her] to be anxious for the emancipation of [her] more immediate brethren!" (*The Woman of Colour* 81). However, as Christopher Leslie Brown properly observes, "Antislavery thought in the eighteenth century did not build cumulatively, block by block, to a higher stage of moral consciousness" (40), but rather, antislavery sensibility "lay dormant, inert, and ineffective" (40) in Anglo- American societies.

In conclusion, the novelist brings the narrative to its end with a conversation between the editor of the manuscript and a friend, who criticizes the editor severely:

> *Friend*. —What do you propose from the publication of the foregoing tale? If your *Woman of Colour* be an imaginary character, I do not see the drift of your labours, as undoubtedly there is no moral to the work!
>
> *Editor*. —How so?
>
> *Friend*. —You have not rewarded Olivia even with the usual meed of virtue—*a husband*! (*The Woman of Colour* 189)

The fictional editor maintains that "[v]irtue, like Olivia Fairfield's, may truly be said to be its *own reward*... there is no situation in which the mind … may not resist itself against misfortune, and become resigned to its fate" (*The Woman of Colour* 189). He claims that the novel should

"teach *one child of calamity* to seek *Him* in the hour of distress who is always to be found, if they teach one *skeptical European* to look with a compassionate eye towards the *despised native of Africa*— then, whether Olivia Fairfield's be a *real* or an *imaginary* character, I shall not regret that I have edited the Letters of a *Woman of Colour*!" (*The Woman of Colour* 189). The editor implies that the novel criticizes and rejects colonial commerce slavery- as it underscores its dehumanizing and displacing tendencies.

The Woman of Colour: A Tale is a novel that denounces British biases by, in Viktor Shklovsky's words, foregrounding what Olivia and Dido do and speak. They avoid surrendering to these distressing social prejudices. In her letter to Mrs. Milbank, written after Augustus's wife returns, Olivia expresses her purpose to live a single life, and in doing so, she "rejects the two powerful narrative conclusions available for fictional women: marriage or death. By the novel's end, Olivia's rejection of both, read alongside the dismissal of the conventional seduction plot serves as a critical commentary on the significance of race and colonial oppression in metropolitan social reproduction" (Adams-Campbell 98). Olivia proclaims herself a 'widow' who returns to Jamaica with Dido to "again zealously engage [her]self in ameliorating the situation, in instructing the minds—in mending the morals of our poor blacks," (*The Woman of Colour* 188). Insisting on her decency and married life despite the loss of her marriage, Olivia claims and changes "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 tropicopolitans, Srinivas Aravamudan's term for colonized persons subjected to colonial discourse" (Adams-Campbell 98). Readers in early nineteenth-century Britain may not have expected a woman of color as the protagonist of a novel. Olivia

Fairfield surpasses the partial and often orthodox portrayals of women of color depicted in novels of the eighteenth century.

Chapter Two: The Woman of Colour: A Tale: The Interstices between Colliding Cultures

This chapter examines how women of color in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* create a version of a third space in "the interstices between colliding cultures" (Brosch 148). The third space is a concept that cultural critics and resistance theorists use to define an opposition to dominating forces by the people withstanding them. Space plays a vital role for transcultural processes in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* and affects different aspects of characters' identities and cultural backgrounds. As Carmen Fernandez argues, "narratives of place recognize the way space and locations are important in the processes of identity formation" (7), and, as Balkun and Imbarrato contend, "from its beginning, *The Woman of Colour* is a tale about movement in transatlantic spaces and through possibilities of racial identification" (Balkun and Imbarrato). One aspect of Olivia's hybrid identity is depicted when she remarks: "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!" (*The Woman of Colour* 111). Hybrid identity is formed in the intercultural space, a space of in-betweenness, or what Bhabha calls the "Third Space of enunciation" (54). The other part of Olivia's hybrid identity is depicted through her African physical appearance. Social constructivists "see language, religion and / or physical characteristics as creating the set of identities from which one can choose, but as inadequate explanations for ethnic identity or national affiliation" (Joireman 54). Ethnic identity is related to the sense of belonging to a specific ethnic group. Olivia states that she is ethnically a "mulatto West Indian" (*The Woman of Colour* 92) who can mix her female cultural and racial legacies in a way that creates her hybrid identity. To trace practices of direct and indirect oppositional resistance, I will discuss the concepts of "third space" and explore how it is produced in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*.

Illuminating "the long-neglected involvement of black slaves and their descendants in the radical history of [England]" (12), Paul Gilroy discusses a culture that is not specifically African, British, American, or Caribbean, but nevertheless all of these; he describes a Black Atlantic culture whose perceptions exceed any one ethnic community to construct something novel. Gilroy writes that the history of the Black Atlantic was constantly "crisscrossed by the movements of black people -- not only as commodities but engaged in various struggles towards emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship" (16). He provides a means to reexamine the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory. It seems that Paul Gilroy's "Black Atlantic" as a space of movement is similar to Homi Bhabha's "The Third Space" (Bhabha 54). Bhabha's Third Space is "the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference. … as accompanying the 'assimilation of contraries' and creating that occult instability which presages powerful cultural changes" (Bhabha 56). In this way, as Fielder argues, we can consider "Olivia's movement within the frames of identification that position her relative racial privilege somewhere between white English/ creole Mrs. Milbanke and black Dido" (173). She is a member of the Black Atlantic diaspora, the community to which she and Dido physically return at the end of the novel. According to Huq, the Black Atlantic "is a site of complex diasporic movements which reflect African cultural flows across America, Europe and the Caribbean" (37-38). Olivia is a manifestation of this cultural flow.

The third space can be transformative and, as Kalua contends, "Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundary" (30). Moreover, Dai argues, "The 'third space' is a space of ambiguity and ambivalence, but it is also a space of reconfiguration and creation" (96). I am going to suggest that, in the words of Ripmeester and Butz, through "anonymous, disguised, opportunistic,

cautious, compromised, and largely unorganized, oppositional micro-practices" (18), the women of color in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* represent a type of resistance that creates the physical and discursive context of a third space. According to Amoamo, "Bhabha's insights stress the discontinuous nature of the location of emergent cultures/ethnicities or, 'third space cultures', where new identities and affinities are restlessly forming" (1255). "Third spaces'' produce developing culturally hybrid identities. Homi Bhabha argues that "[t]he intervention of the Third Space of enunciation … destroys … [the] mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code… [and] challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as … homogenizing, [and] unifying" (54). Therefore, the third space is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive space that engenders new possibility. It is an enunciative, "interruptive," and "interrogative" (Bhabha 341) space of new forms of cultural meaning and production that undermines the strength, morale, or resistance of the limitations of existing boundaries and questions conventional categories of culture and identity.

The spatial metaphor of "the third space" provides a useful tool through which to understand *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*. According to Homi Bhabha, third space is a "contingent 'in-between'" (10), hybrid cultural (11) space which provides "the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood– singular or communal –that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (2). He claims that it is the space of otherness or "the adversarial" (156), a cultural space "where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences" (312). In this novel, the women of color try to create and live in "the third space," thus participating in the type of resistance that this space offers. In a metaphorical and literal sense, this third space is created in white male-dominated England. England is the place of

difference, situating the cultural, racial, and sexual differences between white English men and women of color. However, this third space does not contain preconstructed identities, but rather, identities which are endlessly negotiated through this space of difference. The concept of negotiation may be illustrated through Bhabha's notions of hybridity and identification. For Bhabha, the significance of hybridity is not based on the ability to detect two initial points from which the third develops. More accurately, as he explains, hybridity "is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" ("The Third Space" 211). Likewise, for Olivia, the significance of her hybridity is not based on her ability to detect two initial points from which she grows. Rather, her hybridity is the third space which allows other situations to occur.

Homi Bhabha tries to elucidate hybridity "through a psychoanalytic analogy, so that identification is a process of identifying with and through another object, an object of otherness" ("The Third Space" 211). *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* serves as an illustration for a hybrid form considering its title and main character, as well as the complex question of authorship. Olivia Fairfield, a young woman of color, travels from Jamaica to England, alongside her Black servant, Dido, and encounters the white British white subjects in London. It is through these crossings of power and difference that Olivia and Dido form their resisting or opposing identities. The social meeting is a "particular kind of meeting from which a wide range of different responses may emerge (e.g., confusion, misunderstandings, tension, trauma, and possibly social change)" (Fahlander 15). It is not only a place limited to conflicts between different people, but it is also a place in which we find encounters between people and materialities, where "materialities refers to a wider range of 'natural' and 'cultural' material

substances" (Fahlander 15). Both Olivia and the white British subjects are aware of the moralizing discourses of race, yet their constructions of race draw from different cultural, historical, and gendered positions. While the British white subjects are motivated to construct the issue around the perspectives of the white Eurocentric civilization, thereby attempting to subordinate people of color, Olivia and Dido are motivated to stabilize their position in white Eurocentric London through their counter-discursive strategies.

On the grounds that binary oppositions, such as man/ woman, and white/non-white, always privilege one term over the other, it can be said that the anonymous author of *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* creates a space to question these basic binary oppositions which usually work to reinforce the existing social structure, monitor cultural identities, and guarantee the naturalization of domination and subordination. Any fruitful understanding of resistance requires attention to the spatiality of social life. Bhabha's notion of "Third Space" provides an appropriate spatial metaphor to explore the spatiality of power and resistance. According to Soja, Bhabha "explores the nature of cultural difference of what he tellingly calls the location of culture" (57). Moreover, in a debate about the uncertainty of socio-cultural procedures, Bhabha states that "It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (55).

The third space, as an "ambiguous area of engagement that provides, in a perverse way, a common battleground" (Bhabha 292), might enable the creation of discursive spaces– a process we can identify in *The Woman of Colour*. Accordingly, Olivia's efforts to create a third spaces represent a strategy available to alter her condition; it "is a strategy particularly amenable to the

circumstances of the radically disempowered [people such as Olivia] -- those condemned by their location in a field of power to struggle, not to win, but merely to fight another day" (Ripmeester and Butz 11). If we follow Bhabha's claims about third spaces, spaces which are, to some extent, beyond binary opposition, then we can claim that the space created by Olivia is a third space - a "productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness" (Ripmeester, and Butz 57). Olivia tries to utilize her created third space to challenge the fixed, naturalized, and dualistic identities of people in white-subjects-oriented London.

Although *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* is limited to a representation of Olivia's experiences in England, it "suggests larger considerations for racial relationships within slaveholding empires and the black diaspora" (Fielder 173). Olivia's third space may be located somewhere between poles of "opposing racialization and the complexity of people of color's experience of and resistance to empire and enslavement" (Fielder 173). Examining Olivia's relationship with white and Black people, we discover the novel's vital clarification of mixed-race women's orientation with enslaved people, without overlooking the improved position in which Olivia, the woman of color, is placed.

Olivia's identity fluctuates between an identification with her white father and her Black mother. Individuals "with mixed emotions are torn between two or three different, conflicting, actions" (Carlson and Hatfield 158). Even though, in general, Jennifer DeVere Brody considers Olivia's movement as a path of transformations, she sometimes regards her as alternating between positions of relative power and privilege, too. Olivia is here trapped between the two, "unwilling to deny her mother and yet willing to follow her father's orders. A product of the middle passage, she is posited as a figure poised on the edge of New World territories. This is

another example of how such narratives privilege the white father" (Brody 19). The narratives of *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* both depict and deconstruct essentialist notions of race. Olivia's embodiment exposes race's fluidity against the falsehoods of fixedness prevalent in white English society. The novel recounts the development of race through Olivia's transatlantic travel from Jamaica to England through the passage of her letters to Mrs. Milbanke, (her protector and friend, a white English/creole woman in Jamaica) which "provide the framing … for her narrative and also posit its audience" (Fielder 174). Mrs. Milbanke's perspective never enters the plot, and we never read any letter from her to Olivia.

Though Olivia calls Mrs. Milbanke her "earliest and best friend; my governess, my instructress!" (*The Woman of Colour* 53), she identifies with Black people and recalls the transatlantic movement of Black people in the salve trade. Olivia knows that she and other people of color are regarded as a subordinate race, just because their skin has been shaded with black "instead of ivory!" (*The Woman of Colour* 53). In the novel, the woman of color's body– Olivia's in particular- is a record of transatlantic movement. Olivia "is but one example of such women of color who traveled across the Atlantic, from America to England, in an order to be connected to their proper-tied patria" (Brody 15). By identifying herself with her Black people, Olivia remembers her ancestral relationships, claims her segregation from the white Eurocentric community in London, and return to her homeland.

Living in a third space, Olivia moves between white and Black communities and in the end decides to join to a community of people of African descent. People of color sometimes attempted to create a transitional in-between situation in order to keep the unwanted situation away. People of color were "agitated politically for full rights of equality with whites. But … they often ignored or trampled on the rights of Negro slaves. Thus, caught between the racial

categories black and white, people of color also teetered between the categories enslaved yet free, oppressors yet oppressed" (Dominique 27). Olivia is less free than white men and women, but she is freer than enslaved men and women. Brigitte Fielder claims that *The Woman of Colour* "illustrates the woman of color's continual shifting within the racial and political landscape of empire. Olivia's shifting positions of relative power reveal both her privilege and her oppression relative to the novel's other characters" (175). However, Dominique states that the anonymous author of the novel intentionally skews the depiction of a woman of color caught within binaries because the novel "is interested more in promoting Olivia as a woman enslaved and oppressed by white men rather than their equal as suppressors of freedom and oppressors of Negro slaves" (27). The novel depicts Black Atlantic movements through the relationships between mixed-race Olivia and both her white former governess in Jamaica and her Black maid. Olivia has a very exceptional relationship with both of them based on affection, love and caring.

In the opening passage of the novel, Olivia Fairfield, is "at sea" (*The Woman of Colour* 53), which, in addition to the primary meaning, can connote not knowing what to do, or being bewildered, and confused. In the first letter to her nursemaid, Mrs. Milbanke, she writes, "LAUNCHED on a new world, what can have power to console me for leaving the scenes of my infancy, and the friend of my youth?" (*The Woman of Colour* 53). She sails toward a new space, England, and an unclear future determined in some ways by her past in a Jamaican space. The novel is a reminder of encounters in the transnational history of the Atlantic world. In general, when the enslaved people and the master encounter each other, "At first the slave is dominated by fear and by the desire for self-preservation. Insofar as he assimilates the master's definition of his slavishness, he has denied his capacity for autonomous consciousness. His life becomes immersed in nature and in his work" (Davis 562). Olivia does not want to deny her mother and

yet is eager to follow her father's commands. She shares some qualities with her African mother and English father. Her journey to England on the one hand imitates her mother's journey under different conditions from their native land. On the other hand, she imitates her father's journey from England to Jamaica.

Figures such as Olivia are disregarded in literature of the age "in part because her own overtly hybrid roots recall the miscegenated borders of the culture itself. Her appearance comments on the 'illegitimate' sources of English wealth and the unseemly origins of English imperial power" (Brody 18). The struggle to outline appropriate boundaries of gender, race, and sexual propriety comes together in Olivia. She dismantles the mechanical boundaries of race; she is pulled forward to the homeland of her white father, and backward "into the dark and circling waters of her black mother's womb" (Brody 18). As Olivia says of her mother, she "was a strong soul, but it inhabited a weak tenement of clay. In giving birth to me she paid the debt of nature and went down to that grave, where the captive is made free!" (*The Woman of Colour* 55). The connotations of whiteness and blackness are at work in all narratives of slavery. Slave narratives which were written in the face of immense opposition were astounding works of literature that "testified to the horrors of the institution of slavery, to the unsupportability of the ideology of white supremacy, and the enormous strength of formerly enslaved Africans. And yet, these narratives were unacceptable without the imprimatur of a white person" (Desai, Hamlin, and Mattson 152).

Olivia's movement within the frames of identification situates "her relative racial privilege somewhere between white English/ creole Mrs. Milbanke and black Dido" (Fielder 173), or, in Bhabha's word, a third space, on the borders of different homelands. For Bhabha, borders are significant entrances, full of paradox and uncertainty. The borders both separate and

join different places and "are intermediate locations where one contemplates moving beyond a barrier…. [T]he 'beyond' is an in- between site of transition: 'the "beyond" is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past" (McLeod 147). McLeod argues that people find themselves "in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (147). Olivia moves within the borders of white, creole, and Black people, or, following Bhabha's conception, a third space that constructs complex identities. In fact, an eighteenth-century "woman's residence in this area—on the fringes of two national borders but securely anchored to neither— seems to be a fitting location for emphasizing the liminality that both of these women embody in their respective texts" (Dominique 147). Olivia's hybrid identity is constructed by the instability of race. By representing mixed-race Olivia's experiences in England and Jamaica, the anonymous author of the novel suggests concerns for racial contacts within slaveholding European kingdoms and the Black diaspora.

Olivia, a person of mixed white and Black ancestry describes herself as follows: she has "the common failings of [her] sex, but [she is] fully acquainted with the numerous disadvantages under which, as a stranger, and a mulatto West Indian," she experiences (*The Woman of Colour* 92). Her emphasis on her racial identity, as well as her hybridity, signifies more than the consequence of an affair between a white slave holder and a Black woman he is enslaving. According to Brody, "The mulattaroon has been marginalized in Victorian discourse, past and present, in part because her own overtly hybrid roots recall the miscegenated borders of the culture itself" (17 -18). Olivia tries to create and live in a hybrid space or third space supports racial equality for all people of African descent and calls for the ending of racial segregation

whereby persons categorized into different categories are kept apart and forced to live and work separately from each other.

Moreover, Olivia can be called a "tropicopolitan" (Poley 27). "Tropicopolitan" is a name for the colonized people who exist both as a fictitious construct of colonial figurative interpretation and as real inhabitants of tropical space. Therefore, as Adams states, as a tropical figure, "the colonial becomes a certain kind of complex subject-object in transatlantic space… a figure whose journey through literary discourse reveals both the 'hybridization of metaphor' that Anzaldua saw in her story of the mestiza, and the limits of that very construction of the colonial body" (206). Olivia is a moderate "tropicopolitan" who tries to challenge the dominant system of racial discrimination in Britain "through contact with black bodies" (Poley 27) in order to destabilize it by enlightening of the white Eurocentric British people. As a biblical emblem of peace, she aims to bring peace between white people and people of color in her third space. Tropicopolitan storytellers such as Olivia "[demonstrate] a nuanced understanding of the choices that colonized and colonizing subjects make in fashioning identities … Olivia's account of British mimicry makes whiteness recognizable as a set of discrete cultural practices subject to change, rather than a biological inherent set of traits" (Adams-Campbell 107). It seems that the anonymous author of the novel hopes that the readers will recognize the institutionalization of otherness as an identical method of the imitation, the representation of the real world in literature, associated with colonialism. Olivia Fairfield is an uncommon Atlantic-world female main character. She is deemed different by the racist status quo in England. Her mixed-race tropicopolitan position makes her different in ways that challenge her to express her worth in unprejudiced and nonracist terms. *The Woman of Colour* "reclaims the Caribbean as a domestic space, a genuine home" (Adams-Campbell 112) to live, and Olivia confirms this claim by

returning to Jamaica.

To create a third space, Olivia tries to show that race and gender are not essential but are socially constructed discourses. She is a woman of color with a different mindset; all she needs to be satisfied in her life are "the conversation of [her] husband, a contemplation of the beauties of nature, and the society of rational and well-informed friends; books, music, drawing; the power of being useful to [her] fellow creatures" (*The Woman of Colour* 99). Women of color are significant characters in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*. Olivia is "olive" (*The Woman of Colour* 53); Dido is "black" (*The Woman of Colour* 79). Miss Singleton's "natural complexion" (*The Woman of Colour* 87) is similar to Olivia's; and Letitia Merton is "alabaster" (*The Woman of Colour* 73). This focus on women of color attempts to dismantle the binary opposition of white and Black women. It disengages two social prejudices, based on this binary opposition in England: one that idolizes all white women and another that degrades all Black women. Olivia tries to live in a third space, the in-between space, through her "in-between" appearance, since Olivia's skin tone is described as "jet [that] has been faded to olive" (*The Woman of Colour* 53), although she is not ashamed to confess her sympathy with the dark-skinned Black people who were brought from Guinea's sea-shore.

After marriage, moving away from challenging racial pigeonholes, she tries to bring her identity into line with the citizens in England. Under the power of the patriarchal, colonialist will which has been left by her father, Olivia starts a new life and dwells among colonial English citizens. Social identity theory "places the concept of social identity in the center of its social psychological theory of intergroup relations" (Wodak and Reisigl 374). It explains a person's sense of belonging to a group and her/his encouraging or harmful feelings connected with that belonging. Olivia tries to mimic and to identify with white women. This is the colonial mimicry

that Homi Bhabha elucidates when he writes that "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (122). Even though marrying white colonial Augustus Merton makes Olivia mimic the white colonial women's position, she manages to create her own third space, a space between the white colonial women and the dark-skinned Black people.

Dido's activities after Olivia's failed marriage demonstrate that she is determined to continue Olivia's effort to create a space of racial reception for Black and mixed-race women in white- and male- dominated London. For many, "whiteness and blackness continue to represent extremes on a spectrum of racial and multiracial possibilities" (Goodman, Moses, and Jones 73). Dido does her best for racial justice and equality and resists traditional subjugated stereotypes. As a woman of color, she fights for racial justice, racial equality and the racial tolerance without mimicking the white colonial women. Although Dido is not the main female protagonist of the novel, she has a great influence on Olivia and her effort to create a space of racial reception in London is significant. Dido remains consistent in her anti-slavery stance throughout the novel.

Dominique states that *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* was a rare event at the time of its publication. It occupies this statues because it demonstrates that "a black woman [can be] explicitly acknowledged in a novel's title or plot as the major character supported by a white female cast," and because it shows that "a [Black woman] can have a major influence even when she is not a titular character or even the main protagonist, similar to the minor or secondary role that Dido occupies in *The Woman of Colour*" (11). The characters of Olivia and Dido undergo a change from obedient characters to confident and powerful ones, who defy and defeat

the deep-rooted racial stereotypes of white racists. (Olivia's concentration on her duty as Augustus's wife outshines her goal of supporting racial equality and neutralizes the anti-slavery tendency that was noticeable in the first half of the novel. Dido persisted with her anti-slavery attitude and questions slavery throughout the novel.) Likewise, *The Woman of Colour* outstandingly resists the traditional marriage plot of sentimental novels of the eighteenth century; Olivia declares herself a 'widow' who returns to Jamaica with Dido to "again zealously engage [her]self in ameliorating the situation, in instructing the minds—in mending the morals of our poor blacks" (*The Woman of Colour* 188).

Conclusion

Thinkers of resistance have focused on two distinct types of oppositional discourses: revolutionary social action, and those often anonymous, veiled, thoughtful, bargained, messy, and oppositional small practices defined as day-to-day resistance. Closely scrutinizing day-to-day resistance marginalized people exhibit, is a more complex task than scrutinizing revolutionary resistance. Marginalized people do not have a separate physical or even discursive space outside the domain of power from which to commence an overt resistance against the power that has subjugated them. Instead, the physical and discursive space of marginalized people can be labelled as the "Third Space". The Third Space is a concept that cultural critics and resistance theorists use to define an opposition to dominating forces by those who withstand them. Being always in flux, the Third Space is a site of toil where representation is concerned. Marginalized people, such as women of color, try to foster the Third Space features of their environment in order to create conditions in which the dominating power can be safely disconcerted. Focusing on Third Spaces is necessary if we want to comprehend a variety of different things marginalized people do to endure their conditions. The spatial metaphor of the Third Space provides a useful tool by which to understand *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*. In this novel, the women of color try to live in a Third Space, and thus participate in the type of resistance that this space offers. To trace the practices of direct and indirect oppositional resistance of subcultures of women of color to create a space for their own, this thesis has examined Third Space in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*.

The Woman of Colour: A Tale was written by an anonymous writer two centuries ago, yet remains relevant today. Even now, so many men treat women like assets and so many women experience sexual coercion, a type of physical and psychological violence that occurs all over the

world. So many Black people, poor people, diasporas, and homelands are treated as commodities. These people are customarily treated as tradable and disposable goods existing for the advantage of individual satisfaction rather than as indispensable individuals in society.

In countries that allow misogyny and racism, women such as Olivia are troubled, because there is no one for them to turn to. Olivia finds out that she is not an honored part of Britain, so she chooses to leave and return to Jamaica because in Jamaica women are in community. In Eurocentric and white-oriented England, citizens base their perceptions on white, middle- class ethical and ideological values. However, Black people who were considered second-class in white-oriented England lived together peacefully in Jamaica without the worry of racism.

The portrayal of women of color in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* implicitly challenges the inadequate stereotypical representations of women of color in numerous novels of the long eighteenth century. The novel highlights the effect of an inhospitable society, which still has a racist attitude. In this society children learn to group people by racial characteristics and express racial stereotypes. Olivia stands for African-British subjectivity and has her own sensible experiences such as viewpoints, feelings, opinions, and wishes. Her antislavery tendencies aim to exterminate commerce or dishonorable buying and selling in any form.

When the novel opens, Olivia Fairfield -the daughter of Mr. Fairfield, a white English plantation owner, and Marcia, an African person he is enslaving- is on her way from Jamaica to England. She is accompanied by her Black servant, Dido, and is ordered by her father to marry her cousin, Augustus Merton. She later finds out that there is a great deal of racial bias against her in England. Olivia attempts to create a transitional in-between situation to keep the unwanted situation away. Living in a Third Space, Olivia moves between white and Black communities and ultimately decides to join a community of those who are of African descent. She escapes the

persecution and ill-treatment she endures in England and returns to Jamaica with Dido to forge a new life.

Throughout the novel, Olivia advocates for the ending of racial segregation and racial equality for all people of African descent. She can be considered a tropicopolitan who tries to challenge the dominant system of racial discrimination in Britain via her contact with Black people. She attempts to destabilize systematic racism by enlightening the white Eurocentric British and, as a Biblical emblem of peace, bring peace to all races in a Third Space.

To create a Third Space, Olivia tries to show that race and gender are not essential but, rather, socially constructed. She is a member of the Black Atlantic community, the one to which she and Dido return to by the end of the novel. Olivia is a woman of color who can be seen as a symbol of the Black Atlantic because of her consistent voyaging across the Atlantic Ocean, from Jamaica to England and from England to Jamaica. The Black Atlantic is a site of diasporic movements mirroring African cultural movements across America, the Caribbean, and Europe.

Although Dido is not the major female protagonist, she is a significant character in the novel. She has great influence on Olivia and her effort to create a space of racial reception in London. She contends that racism is something that people will need to heal from. Dido is also a character who helps Olivia from her breakdown and bring her to a new home, a new identity, and a new life. Dido does her best to champion racial justice and equality and resists traditional subjugated stereotypes. Even though *The Woman of Colour: A Tale* only represents Olivia's and Dido's experiences in England, it reveals broader concerns pertaining to racial relationships within empires and the Black diaspora.

In conclusion, *The Woman of Colour* depicts a Black woman's life in the British Empire during a period where such female characters were largely absent from British novels. The novel makes it possible for us to obtain some useful insights into the race, class, and gender politics of the time that shaped women of color's experiences.

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