

Carmen Borbély

“Whence, Then, Is This Change of Sentiment?”: Homesteading and Restorative Nostalgia in *The Woman of Colour*

Abstract: Following the lead of recent inquiries into *The Woman of Colour* (1808) as a sensibility narrative that fleshed out the unfinished project of abolitionism at around the time when the slave trade was being outlawed in England (1807), this study explores the intermingling between what Svetlana Boym has identified as two distinctly oriented strands of nostalgia, reflective v. restorative, that innervate the title character’s sensibility of (dis)enchantment with her homesteading voyage, as she is transported from her native island into another – partly ancestral yet also foreign and emetic – insular space, from which she eventually tries to expunge herself into a yet-to-be-undertaken voyage of return.

Keywords: *The Woman of Colour*; Homesteading; Restorative/ Reflective Nostalgia; Diasporic Intimacy; Circumatlantic Diaspora.

CARMEN BORBÉLY

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
carmen.borbely@ubbcluj.ro

DOI: 10.24193/cechinox.2023.45.01

In a transactional scene that reverses the dynamic of colonial exchanges in the anonymously¹ penned novel *The Woman of Colour* (1808), newlywed Olivia Fairfield is a Jamaican settler’s Creole daughter whose storm-ridden transoceanic journey appears to have reached a homey matrimonial end (“my halcyon felicity”)² on a picturesque Devonshire estate. Here she accepts a “confidential intercourse” about the boons and banes of the diasporic experience with a seemingly similarly dislocated character, the self-styled “East Indian” Lady Ingot.³ To the latter – the wife of the “eastern nabob” Sir Marmaduke, who assumes that his massive wealth accrued in Bengal entitles him to push a bill through Parliament to build his Pagoda in a restructured public landscape – homecoming is equivalent to mounting a spectacle of opulent exoticism and dissembled alienation. As the lady explains, using the theatrics of exacerbated sentimental rhetoric, “—Alas! I have wofully felt myself thrown out of my level in this *abstracted* country.”⁴ To Olivia,

whom Lady Ingot scathingly dubs “my dear exotic,”⁵ homegoing to a country that is also an “abstraction” – but in the sense of a warily anticipated, rather than jadedly dis-remembered, destination – is impressed with the inconsolable memory of “leaving the scenes of [her] infancy”⁶ and of her recently concluded perilous voyage. What is more, with each of the stations she advances through, Olivia’s stay in England is by degrees enlivened by a resolve to least interfere with, and to care for, her new place of dwelling. Here, as she muses at a later moment, “I would not willingly lop a branch, or disturb a rook’s nest.”⁷

The political arcs of their voyages home are also at odds. Olivia’s circular crossing of the Black Atlantic may be seen to reiterate, with a difference, the colonial history of transoceanic conquests and migrations. It indicates how the present continues to be, in Elizabeth DeLoughrey’s terms, “metonymically haunted by the violence of the middle passage.”⁸ Lady Ingot, on the other hand, makes her return from her imperial expedition to India conditional on parading the material stamps of difference accumulated in the colonies: the exotic foods, “the turtle, and the curries” that she serves at the extravagant dinners she throws in the Pagoda, or the outlandish attire that she voluptuously flaunts against “degenerate imitators of that luxurious ease” of “us *East Indians*.”⁹ Yet if Lady Ingot claims to feel threatened by the English ladies’ perceived mimicry of her Circassian languid poses, and recoils at their “distorted barbarism of the likeness,”¹⁰ the real threats facing Olivia in a country where her complexion is a visual index of her outsider position impel her to disguise, and not to boastfully strut, her vulnerability. In

her case, dissemblance¹¹ – understood in terms of restraint of impassioned outrage, rather than histrionic inflation of emotion – works as a mode of both withstanding disparagement in an (un)homely society and conveying to her peers lessons in sympathy.¹² She unfailingly illustrates, in her interactions with her English relatives and acquaintances, the desirable virtue of self-effacement and benevolent regard for class- and race-disadvantaged others.

In a dialogue that deserves lingering on because it tensely replays and reverses Orientalist polarities, with one colonial entertaining fantasies of native sensuality and the other aspiring to be released from phantasmal dis-identification with Englishness, dissimulation is pivoted against sincerity and conformity against singularity. Whether feigning or concealing fragility, both women epitomise distinctly gendered counterparts to the glamorised Romantic male figure of the “suffering traveller,” whose voyaging discomforts, mishaps, dangers and ordeals, Carl Thompson states, were distilled into an aura of “authority and authenticity.”¹³ In the view of Lady Ingot, the insatiable traveller, they are both way-faring women of privilege. Having lived in England’s colonies in the Western and, respectively, Eastern hemispheres presumedly elevates them above all other “narrow minded, prejudiced” women who have never set “foot out of England,” women who are, as she says, prone to slavishly adhere to ideas “planted in them at their births” and “handed down by mothers and grandmothers, and great-grandmothers, through countless generations.”¹⁴ By contrast, as she hints at her mother’s and her own painful separation from their birthplaces, Olivia, the abstemious voyager, de-idealises travel

as a superior, elite prerogative. She also later pronounces herself specifically against the “folly, ostentation, and self-conceit, as the Ingots had displayed.”¹⁵ She stakes a maternal claim to the safety of territorial stillness, in direct opposition with the enchanting picture of itinerant adventure painted by Lady Ingot. Her reply therefore is that “I think our mothers and grandmothers were sensible beings. I rather lean towards old customs, and old notions.”¹⁶

As the transoceanic travellers’ differently conceived notions of old and new are pitted against each other, so are their spatial conceptions of home. One of the significant themes brought into focus by the conversation between the two women, whose lives are punctuated by intervals of expatriation, is the possibility to (re)build affective relays with the metropolitan, rather than peripheral, country that serves as their contact zone: those “social spaces where,” in Mary Louise Pratt’s definition, “disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.”¹⁷ Indeed, Olivia is both observed and observer in this and other cross-colonial encounters. In her “dynamics of creole self-fashioning”¹⁸ at the heart of empire, she is quick to note that Lady Ingot’s deceptively egalitarian discourse is intended to reinforce the legitimacy of colonial practices roughly around the time when the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1807) is adopted, bringing Britain’s transatlantic human traffic to an official end.¹⁹ The discomfiting alloy of hostility and hospitality faced by Olivia as a “stranger in a strange country”²⁰ complicates her efforts to imaginatively frame this land as her home-country.

This aspect has not passed unnoticed in criticism. Following Lyndon J. Dominique’s publication of the bicentennial modern critical edition of *The Woman of Colour* in 2008, the novel’s largely unprecedented²¹ focalisation on the discordant commitments to homeland and hostland of the “racially-conscious mulatto heroine”²² has been zestfully investigated in scholarship.²³ The overlapping familial, political and cultural significance of Olivia’s quest for home has been addressed from different angles, teasing out the contradictions inherent in what Jennifer De Vere Brody’s 1998 seminal study discusses as the *mulattaroon’s* double-edged drive towards complicity with, and resistance to, colonial ideology.²⁴ Marking two decades and a half of undiminished academic interest in a novel that was out of print for two centuries, the January 2023 issue of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* proposes “New Essays on *The Woman of Colour* (1808),” which shed more light on the open-ended implications of Olivia’s voyage of return to her Jamaican home in a text that is of genuine value for “archival and African Diasporic methodologies,” as editors Nicole N. Aljoe, Kerry Sinanan, and Mariam Wassif point out in their introduction to the volume.²⁵

Capitalising upon these readings of the Creole traveller’s homebound trajectories, I aim to expand the discussion around the novel’s oblique reminder of the Black diaspora²⁶ by filtering Olivia’s transatlantic relocations through the bifocal lens of what philosopher Edward S. Casey has defined as *homesteading* and *homecoming*.²⁷ Taking into account the idea that the thrust of the diasporic experience lies in the drive to build “homes away from home,”²⁸ as in James Clifford’s key explanation, I am

interested in tracing how Olivia's migrant narrative and the proclivity for nostalgia she exhibits on her way towards her English new home shifts into a diasporic sentimental narrative about the need to "maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere."²⁹ Whereas Dido is the only other Caribbean featured alongside Olivia in England, it would also be possible to see, as Aljoe, Sinanan, and Wasif say in their telling survey of the eighteenth-century colonial cultural imaginary, that a Black diasporic presence had been consistently accumulating in England by the turn of the nineteenth century.³⁰ Because of that, *The Woman of Colour* indeed perturbs the "rhetorics of silence and absence" on this historical reality by alluding to the difficulties of getting set into place for the members of these spectral communities in the making.³¹ The text's depiction of transcultural (dis)enchantment, which is a direct result of the protagonist's multiple attachments to England, Jamaica, and the space in-between, can be read in light of cultural theorist Svetlana Boym's thoughts on two disparate mechanisms of nostalgia.³² In Boym's view, "reflective nostalgia thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming," while "restorative nostalgia stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home."³³ This two-pronged model can shed light on the way in which Olivia's diasporic affect rattles the metropolitan society's orchestration of the double-coded score of marital and colonial submissiveness.³⁴

With its scenes of beleaguered virtue and speech staccatos mirroring the heroine's intensity of feeling, the novel has been seen as a "complex laboratory of sensibility

in action."³⁵ Several studies have already noted how the novel deploys the rhetorical arsenal of moral sentimentalism to stage, in Markman Ellis's terms, a "tropological movement between the figure of slavery and the bonds of marriage,"³⁶ demonstrating the ineffectuality of the romance of domesticity within a broader ideological context that problematises the humanitarian scaffold of the "sentimental body politic."³⁷ A resurgent epistolary text³⁸ that reworks the premises of slave and captivity narratives,³⁹ *The Woman of Colour* has rekindled discussions on key aspects of novelistic form in the long eighteenth century, prompting fresh reflections on the ways in which unpacking the archive of transatlantic narratives could shed light on how patterns of sentimental writing were adapted or altered to instrument a "pragmatics of affect"⁴⁰ designed to cultivate more humane responses to the suffering of diasporic subjects and to imagine, in Lynn Festa's words, "the broader category of humanity" by "extending affective, if not political *being* to others."⁴¹ I want to develop the idea that whilst the text is an anarchetypal⁴² sounding board that echoes different generic offshoots of the long eighteenth-century novel, *The Woman of Colour* is, at its core, a narrative of diasporic affect, rooted in what Stephen Ahern identifies as the historically comingled forms of amatory, sentimental and sensational-Gothic fiction.⁴³ I am, however, less interested in exploring Olivia's shared "literary genealogy with other [scribbling] virtuous white women such as Pamela, Clarissa and Evelina."⁴⁴ Instead, I wish to find why Olivia's intensified emotive responsiveness to nature during her English "captivity" exudes a Romantic mode of heightened sensibility that

counterbalances the ethics of restrained emotion she adheres to in managing her cross-colonial⁴⁵ interactions and, eventually, engineering her escape.

The novel welds into nervous juxtaposition the dissonant “structures of feeling”⁴⁶ that frame Olivia’s place affect on her two-way voyage. “From the moment when I set my foot on *your land* of liberty,” she confesses *en passage*, “I yield up my independence.”⁴⁷ This is how, in the novel’s opening section, the mixed-race heroine discloses her predicament to Charles Honeywood – her fellow voyager and, partly like her, the offspring of English enterprisers in Jamaica. Her realisation of coerced transportation into a country that – soon after landing in the slave-trading port of Bristol and setting house with her English cousins and uncle in Clifton – she distinctly perceives as “*your own*”⁴⁸ is reiterated in a letter sent to Mrs. Milbanke, her West Indies-based English correspondent. Orphaned of both parents, Olivia struggles to become emotionally fastened to an overseas territory to which she feels she does not automatically belong exclusively by virtue of her paternal blood. Yet while she is repeatedly reminded in her social transactions that she is a foreigner in England, whether tolerated, admired or disdained, she also strives to imbibe her fatherland’s “emotional placescapes,”⁴⁹ not least by honing, as I argue below, a Romantic receptivity to nature. This she develops in step with her homesteading project, leading her to identify herself at one point as “more than half an English woman”⁵⁰ but also in the end to say farewell to “England, favoured Isle.”⁵¹

To clarify the difference between two terms I have been using in relation to Olivia’s transatlantic destinations, I will resort

to Edward S. Casey’s perspective on homesteading and homecoming: both are types of travel that target re-emplacement but their spatiotemporal alignments and the modes of dwelling in place they precipitate are somewhat distinct. As Casey puts it, a homesteading journey steers one towards an unknown, “new place that will become [one’s] future home-place,” an elsewhere it becomes the traveller’s task to render habitable and adapt for long-time occupancy.⁵² Homecoming, on the other hand, is not so much future-, as past-(re)oriented. It is prompted by one’s temporary or permanent self-given mandate to retrieve or resume the deep alliances that used to hold one in a familiar place. “In homesteading,” Casey says, “one seeks to attain an ongoing co-habitancy with one’s new home-place and its denizens” but in homecoming, “the co-habiting is not now with a new place and an open future – both of which demand prolonged effort.”⁵³

It might be tempting to see Olivia’s homesteading and homecoming voyages as mapped out on separate and opposed routeways toward a “settled coexistence”⁵⁴ with others in antipodal varieties of the home-world. However, the fact that she is a child of the middle passage, with dual loyalties to the imperial centre and the colonial periphery, leads to a conflation of these referential contexts. Thus, each of her voyages contains within itself the figural potentialities of its reverse. Sailing eastward to a “world of strangers,”⁵⁵ she musters the inflated rhetoric of Gothic melodrama to stress her susceptibility to emotional anguish: “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!"⁵⁶ The impassioned discourse of high-strung emotion, which finds a more conventional hyperbolic use in the foiled courtship and thwarted romance sections, irrupts in the opening scene of heartache. It is clear that Olivia's sensibility pedigree – "her rebellious and repining heart"⁵⁷ – is inherited from both parents.⁵⁸ More than that, her own homesteading encases her father's non-materialised return to England, but her projected homecoming to Jamaica is redolent of Marcia, her mother's "traumatic transoceanic migration."⁵⁹

In a cruising scene that recalls the archetypal Gothic heroines' shattered logic of emotional and physical distress,⁶⁰ Olivia's easily impressionable mind predicts falling into gruesome English captivity in a space that is the very opposite of Arcadian Jamaica:

I fancied that I was hastening to England, to be immolated at the shrine of avarice; all the bright prospects of my youth seemed blighted; I was friendless – fatherless – forlorn – journeying towards a land of strangers, who would despise and insult me. Bitter tears coursed each other down my cheeks; I wrung my hands in agony together—my heart sank within me – I had no resolution – no confidence left – I believed myself the most forlorn of human creatures, and I thought that a cessation of being, would be a cessation of misery.⁶¹

Because the memory of her matrilineal descent echoes the violence of the slave trade, Olivia is consumed by the idea that she is setting off to a land where she is fated to reiterate her mother's state of

bondage. She therefore fantasises that she is headed for a site of confinement that, in her mind, is wrapped up in futural anxiety. However, as several episodes in which she "exercises" her feelings will prove,⁶² she can upturn the scenario of native savagery alleviated by European intervention.⁶³ In aligning her own fate to Marcia's capture and enslavement, Olivia overturns the logic of captivity narratives, a cross-Atlantic genre that, as Joe Snader states, "imagined encounters between British characters and various dangerous, exotic, and putatively inferior peoples."⁶⁴ Recapping Marcia's noble deportment,⁶⁵ Olivia slides into the position of a cultural anthropologist who observes the English in their native environment. She also exudes a sense that her moral sensibility is at an elevated remove from the aggressive philistinism and merciless predations of the Ingots, the Singletons, or the Mertons.

For the child of an English planter and an African slave, the difficulty of (re)-entry into affective affinity with the land of her father is compounded by her mediated, rather than direct memory of it. It is also contingent on her adjustment of distance and closeness to her native isle, or to the equally diffracted memory of her mother. Jennifer De Vere Brody has shown that Olivia's "journey 'forward' is also a journey 'back,' since she moves from a familiar *new* world to an unfamiliar *old* one."⁶⁶ Yet it is easy to see, from the outset, that her loyalties as a woman of "olive [...] complexion"⁶⁷ driven into exile and contracted into marital thralldom lie with a circumatlantic⁶⁸ community of vaster age and proportions than either the immediate family she has lost, or the extended one she is about to join. "I am not ashamed," she

says, in an elated interlude from foreseen suffering, “to acknowledge my affinity with the swarthiest negro that was ever brought from Guinea’s coast!”⁶⁹ The terms in which the topos of nostalgia is referenced at the start and end of her English tour are nearly identical: a wistful compulsion to seek shelter in “some tranquil nook of my native island” v. a resolution to regain access to “my youthful tranquillity.”⁷⁰ This indicates that for Olivia, the voyage back is always already etched in the forward trajectory of her departure. Amid multilayered melancholy sites, her loss of ground is literalised in the impermanent map of her transatlantic passage and is intensely interiorised in the remedial impulse of restorative nostalgia.

The idea of home is sublimated into a characteristically Romantic “noetic place.”⁷¹ It is a mental trope that memorialises her emotional connection to the primeval topography of collective pain⁷² that overlaps “the scenes of my infantine happiness.”⁷³ What is significant is the fact that she fails to generate poignant memories of her life in Jamaica. There is one significant exception that arouses the reader’s curiosity: on board the ship, with Dido mixing the colours and watching “the progress of my pencil,”⁷⁴ Olivia tries to complete a “little sketch” of the Fairfield Plantation that she began to draw just before leaving. Pictured from direct observation, the watercolour painting remains, however, an occluded, “abstracted” image of the homescape. The visual field of attention is soon taken over by a distracting tactile scene, with Dido caressing Olivia’s hair.⁷⁵ This double portrait is reconfigured by Mrs. Honeywood onto the virtual canvas of a chivalrous romance, depicting “some great princess going over

to her betrothed lord,” and by Dido into a subversive vignette of decolonial sentiment: “my Misse be de queen of Indee, going over to marry wid de prince in England.”⁷⁶ As landscape painting is displaced by character portrait, so does Olivia’s affectual focus switch from returning to alleviate the pain of others on her isle to curbing her “desolating revulsion of every feeling,”⁷⁷ and then further on to refining her moral sentiment so as to fit her intended role as Augustus Merton’s betrothed.

Put differently, her restorative nostalgia turns reflective, and her sentimental self-education begins to entertain the possibility that “home is not one,” as Boym comments on the split domestic loyalties of migrants.⁷⁸ As Adela Pinch shows in her study of “emotional extravagance” in the writings of the early nineteenth century, the location of feelings was often assumed to be intrinsic, interiorised and to mark the limits of individuality, but there was also “a concomitant tendency to characterise feelings as transpersonal, as autonomous entities that [...] wander extravagantly from one person to another.”⁷⁹ It is quite telling that in a narrative concerned with skin as an affective boundary between herself and the others, Olivia conveys a lesson in abolitionist sentiment to young George through the medium of their touching hands.⁸⁰ In this scene, which reorients the circulation of affect, skin also functions an emotional interface with the now distant world of her “more immediate brethren,”⁸¹ whose emancipation she demands. This, I would say, marks a different point of inflection in the narrative, when Olivia’s reflective nostalgia converts into its obverse, restorative nostalgia.

Olivia’s self-image as an affectless automaton carried across the ocean to

strengthen the political alliance between imperial margin and centre reveals her awareness of the role of emotion in restructuring colonial relations. "I frequently think," she says, "that I can talk as coolly, and with as little *mauvaise honte* of this intended alliance as if I was a mere state machine!— conveyed over the water at the instigation of political contrivance."⁸² What then makes her tone down the tenor of overblown individual suffering that would render her a reflective nostalgic, and to summon the restorative force of the re-imagined home community? "Whence," one might ask, as Olivia does, "is [the] change of sentiment"⁸³ that galvanises her sense of self-agency and fuels her return to Jamaica, the home where she can reform that political alliance and pursue her melioristic agenda? One of the answers lies in the fact that Olivia's dislocation fosters a "multilocular"⁸⁴ experience of emplaced emotion. This ultimately leads her to reconcile her initially misaligned notions of home. In other words, there is a transition from a schematic, formulaic, clichéd responsiveness to place in the initial tableau of the idyllic plantation and the mode of "environmental affectivity"⁸⁵ she cultivates on her journey and in England. There an individual perception of nature is channelled through the aesthetic frames of the sublime and the picturesque.⁸⁶

Upon setting sail to the eastern Atlantic shores, place-less Olivia is not yet equipped to envision England, but she is also no longer able to distinctly remember Jamaica. As seen above, estrangement starts by breeding "anticipatory nostalgia,"⁸⁷ but retrospection and reflection are then recruited to relieve homesickness. As a reflective nostalgic, Olivia explores

different constructs of place that can reactivate a memory of home past the sterile reiteration of clichéd *passeistic* idyllism. Her recourse to the pastoral mode in her musings on the New Park and Fairfield holdings may signal the glaring failure of her reformist goals, as Julie Murray shows.⁸⁸ However, the pastoral is superseded by a diversity of aesthetic framings of the landscape that Olivia's cosmopolitan mobility facilitates. Frequent references to the elegiac poetry of William Cowper distil an antiquarian fascination with the ruins of "a remote age" into the melancholy cast of her "solitary meditations."⁸⁹ Reading *The Tatler* validates her exchange of riveting nostalgia for the "calm and elegant satisfaction" of delightful melancholy.⁹⁰ In Svetlana Boym's terms, these affectual adjustments to the discomforts of homesteading are a sign of the migrant's growing sense of *diasporic intimacy*: a form of individually, rather than collectively, felt "precarious affection" for the place of exile that emerges in compensation for a dissipating pain of dislocation.⁹¹ Tied to the pleasures of solitariness and privacy, diasporic intimacy is a mode of binding the individual to an ever-expanding world, beyond the constricting limits of community and nationhood.⁹² It is associated with distrust in the shibboleth "of a single home, in shared longing without belonging,"⁹³ complicating and delaying the recuperative work of nostalgia.⁹⁴ Even though her "Utopian scheme of domestic happiness"⁹⁵ eventually fails, it is still possible, as Olivia discovers in her Welsh retreat, to find "a very snug habitation," as cosy as her tranquil nook in the Caribbean, in the picturesque western countryside surrounded by "wild and romantic scenery."⁹⁶ The picturesque, in particular, with

its connotations of pleasurable immersion in place, allows for Olivia's de- and re-familiarisation with the idea of home. By committing herself to what Boym calls "a survivalist aesthetics of estrangement and longing,"⁹⁷ Olivia's sensibility repertoire expands her juvenile exaltation into a nuanced range of emotions: from "enchantment" with the "romantically picturesque" cliffs of Bristol, to quietly despondent reflections on the vanity of human endeavour around the tombs inside Westminster Abbey, or to the ominous gale that darkens her wedding day, exceeding the terrific turbulence of any "hurricane that I ever witnessed in the West Indies."⁹⁸

Images of storms, fittingly used to represent interiorised tumult or foreboding anxiety, punctuate moments of emotional crisis. They allude to the fact that Olivia's transcultural compass has integrated a Burkean sensibility for the sublime. In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Edmund Burke talks about the potential of a multi-sensorial exposure to sublime atmospheric phenomena such as "raging storms" to "overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror" and, at the same time, to arouse "a great and awful sensation in the mind."⁹⁹ Familiar with the opposite operations of fear and terror, the anonymous author lifts Olivia from her paralysing oceanic phantasm straight into the elemental turbulence of a tempest. "I was awakened," she says, "from this agonising trance to the tumultuous waves, which hove the ship with boisterous violence."¹⁰⁰ As the locus of emotion shifts from the individual self to the perturbed sea and back, the trajectory of feeling also changes from downhearted gloom to uplifting terror.

This is also indicated by the Wordsworthian echoes of calmly reminisced emotion: "The storm still rages in my mind's eye."¹⁰¹ As soon as the storm fully abates, the immensity of the ocean – "an object of no small terror" and sublimity, in Burke's view¹⁰² – expands inwards. It instils in Olivia a sense of becalming peace: "I sat for two hours of the last evening on the deck watching the mildly radiant moon, and the thousand sparkling rays which were caused by her shadow on the tranquil ocean; no longer heaving with tumultuous waves as on the preceding night, but peaceful as the translucent lake."¹⁰³ Even the groundless environs of the ocean, Olivia appears to have learnt, can heave into view the promise of safe haven for an un-homed traveller.

As Edward S. Casey notes in his study on the extroversion of affect, it may be possible to think of emotion as extra-subjective and not just as inter-subjective, as in Adela Pinch's model of "extravagant" sympathy or in Sara Ahmed's thesis about the emotive interstices of "individual and collective bodies."¹⁰⁴ What is generally understood as interiorised emotion may in fact be experienced in the "affective force fields" of the "circumambient world."¹⁰⁵ Sailing the ocean and then strolling on different estates in the English south-west, Olivia can sense how the world opens up to become "a reservoir of emotionality"¹⁰⁶ for her. At New Park, there are times when she feels intimately attached to the canopy of trees that arch their boughs "to screen me from the fervid sun" or to "the wind, whistling through their branches, [...] to waft me the answer in a long-drawn sigh."¹⁰⁷ There are other moments, following the collapse of her marital idyll, when "[t]he park was damp, the branches of the trees lay on the

ground; it seemed as if even the inanimate objects had felt the recent shock which had shattered my nerves."¹⁰⁸ Such instances of immersive reflection on the "inter-affective"¹⁰⁹ processes of homesteading point to Olivia's expansion of sensibility beyond the nostalgic commotion she anticipated in the beginning.

A "symptom of place pathology," nostalgia, the pain triggered by home-lessness is, as Casey says, a specifically "modern malaise."¹¹⁰ It is easy to see that in sustaining the "illusion of completeness,"¹¹¹ nostalgia both incites and cramps Olivia's determination to keep close tabs on her "progress [...] in self-knowledge."¹¹² Her self-inquiry, which covers a spectrum of nostalgic regress and utopian foresight, bespeaks her modern subjectivity as a woman who decides to go off the domestic orbit of a conventional sentimental heroine¹¹³

and re-lay her home world on the sensible foundations of morality and compassion. Her compulsion to develop a Romantic aesthetic responsiveness to landscape, which grounds her sensibility and helps her feel more naturally emplaced in her new country, as well as her stoic gymnastics of controlled effusion, enable her to withhold self-centred pathos and to contemplate a (re)connection to her kinsmen – not just the English branch of her birth family but also, as this open-ended "melancholy tale"¹¹⁴ suggests, her diasporic circumatlantic community.

*This work was supported by a grant
of the Romanian Ministry of Research,
Innovation and Digitalization,
UEFISCDI, project number
PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-1234.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahern, Stephen, *Affected Sensibilities. Romantic Excess and the Genealogy of the Novel 1690-1810*, New York, AMS Press, 2007.
- Ahmed, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004.
- Aljoe, Nicole N., Kerry Sinanan, and Mariam Wassif, "Introduction," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 35, no. 1, January 2023, pp. 1-26.
- Barnett-Woods, Victoria, "Models of Morality: the Bildungsroman and Social Reform in *The Female American* and *The Woman of Colour*," *Women's Studies*, 45, 7, 2016, pp. 613-623.
- Barr, Rebecca Anne, "Sentiment and Sexual Servitude: White Men of Feeling and *The Woman of Colour*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 35, no. 1, January 2023, pp. 82-102.
- Boym, Svetlana, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York, Basic Books, 2001.
- Braga, Corin, "Anarchetype: Reading Aesthetic Form after 'Structure'," in Alexandru Matei, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian (eds.), *Theory in the "Post" Era: A Vocabulary for the 21st-Century Conceptual Commons*, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, pp. 122-123.
- Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.
- Carpenter, Olivia, "'Rendered Remarkable': Reading Race and Desire in *The Woman of Colour*," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 50, 2021, pp. 247-263.
- Casey, Edward S., "The world of nostalgia," *Man and World*, 20, 1987, pp. 361-384.
- Casey, Edward S., *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993.

- Casey, Edward S., *Turning Emotion Inside Out. Affective Life beyond the Subject*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2022.
- Cassidy, Conny, "You speak like a *perfect* English woman': Dissembling through Quotation in *The Woman of Colour*," *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 70, 2021, pp. 91-103.
- Clifford, James, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology*, 9 (3), 1994, pp. 302-338.
- Cox, Octavia, "I am Disappointed in England': Reverse-Robinsonades and the Transatlantic Woman as Social Critic in *The Woman of Colour*", in Krueger, Misty (ed.), *Transatlantic Women Travelers, 1688-1843*, Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 2021, pp. 144-166.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth, "Gendering the oceanic voyage: Trespassing the (Black) Atlantic and Caribbean," *Thamyris*, 5, Autumn 1998, pp. 205-31.
- DeVere Brody, Jennifer, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity and Victorian Culture*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1998.
- Dominique, Lyndon J., "Introduction," in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, Lyndon J. Dominique (ed.), Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2008.
- Ellis, Markman, *The Politics of Sensibility. Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Festa, Lynn, "Sentimental Visions of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Studies," *Literature Compass*, 6/1, 2009, pp. 23-55.
- Fielder, Brigitte, "*The Woman of Colour* and Black Atlantic Movement," in Mary McAleer Balkun and Susan C. Imbarrato (eds.), *Women's Narratives of the Early Americas and the Formation of Empire*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 171-185.
- Harol, Corinne, Brynn Lewis, and Subhas Lele, "Who Wrote it? *The Woman of Colour* and Adventures in Stylometry," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 22/2, 2020, pp. 341-353.
- Huggins, Sofia Prado, "Reading Slantwise: Dido in *The Woman of Colour* (1808)," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 35, no. 1, January 2023, pp. 27-42.
- Lubey, Kathleen, "*The Woman of Colour's* Counter-Domesticity," *Studies in Romanticism*, 61, 1, Spring 2022, pp. 113-123.
- Murray, Julie, "The Country and the City and the Metropole in *The Woman of Colour*," *Lumen* 33, 2014, pp. 87-99.
- Pinch, Adela, *Strange Fits of Passion. Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Pratt, Mary Louise, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992.
- Reed, Jennifer, "Moving Fortunes: Caribbean Women's Marriage, Mobility, and Money in the Novel of Sentiment," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 31, no. 3, Spring 2019, pp. 509-528.
- Roach, Joseph, *Cities of the Dead. Circum-Atlantic Performance*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2022.
- Salih, Sara, *Representing Mixed Race in Jamaica and England from the Abolition Era to the Present*, New York and London, Routledge, 2011.
- Sinanan, Kerry, "The Wealth of Worlds': gender, race, and property in *The Woman of Colour* – a roundtable on *The Woman of Colour* (1808): pedagogic and critical approaches (Roundtable)," *Studies in Religion and the Enlightenment*, 2(2) 2021, pp. 53-56.
- Snader, Joe, *Caught between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction*, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2000.
- The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, Lyndon J. Dominique (ed.), Peterborough, ON, Broadview Press, 2008.
- Thompson, Carl, *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Zacek, Natalie, "Favoured Isles: Selfishness and Sacrifice in the Capital of Capital," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 35, no. 1, January 2023, pp. 113-132.

NOTES

1. Reproduced in the twenty-first century format of *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, edited by Lyndon J. Dominique (Peterborough, ON, Broadview Press, 2008, p. 51), the frontispiece of the novel's original edition, published in 1808, indicates that the booksellers advertised that they catered for the slave-trafficking East India Company. Attempts to tease out the referent of a missing authorial signature in what Dominique calls a "protest novel" (Lyndon J. Dominique, "Introduction," in *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, p. 38) have yet to tap into the reasons behind the author's suppressed, self-censored or protected identity, or the sarcastic portrait of the Marmadukes. So far, however, one of the most captivating, though unverified hypotheses is Dominique's suggestion that the text might be autobiographical, written by a white planter's mixed-race daughter, Ann Wright, who was willed into a cross-colonial marriage on English soil by "erring" paternal benevolence (*Ibidem*, p. 33). See also Corinne Harol, Brynn Lewis, and Subhas Lele, "Who Wrote it? *The Woman of Colour* and Adventures in Stylometry," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 22/2, 2020, pp. 341-353.
2. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 125.
3. *Ibidem*, pp. 109-111.
4. *Ibidem*, p. 109, emphasis mine.
5. *Ibidem*.
6. *Ibidem*, p. 53.
7. *Ibidem*, p. 128.
8. Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Gendering the oceanic voyage: Trespassing the (Black) Atlantic and Caribbean," *Thamyris*, 5, Autumn 1998, p. 229.
9. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 108. Emphasis in the original.
10. *Ibidem*, p. 111.
11. As Conny Cassity argues, the novel's staging of Olivia's acts of dissemblance is to be read as "an idealised mode of assimilation" that equips her with the tools to both emulate and undercut "whiteness." See Conny Cassity, "You speak like a perfect English woman': Dissembling through Quotation in *The Woman of Colour*," *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 70, 2021, pp. 91, 98, 93. See also Rebecca Anne Barr, "Sentiment and Sexual Servitude: White Men of Feeling and *The Woman of Colour*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 35, no. 1, January 2023, pp. 99-101.
12. See, for instance, Natalie Zacek, "Favoured Isles: Selfishness and Sacrifice in the Capital of Capital," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 35, no. 1, January 2023, pp. 113-132.
13. Carl Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 25.
14. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 110.
15. *Ibidem*, p. 119.
16. *Ibidem*.
17. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 4.
18. Pratt, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
19. See Dominique, *op. cit.*, p. 20. See also Octavia Cox, "'I am Disappointed in England': Reverse-Robinsonades and the Transatlantic Woman as Social Critic in *The Woman of Colour*," in Krueger, Misty (ed.), *Transatlantic Women Travelers, 1688-1843*, Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 2021, p. 144.
20. Augustus Merton labels her thus in the letter he sends to Lionel Monkland, *The Woman of Colour*, p. 102.
21. Salih comments on the rarity, if not straight-out uniqueness, of such a fictional portrayal of a "virtuous brown heroine" in the period. See Sara Salih, *Representing Mixed Race in Jamaica and England from the Abolition Era to the Present*, New York and London, Routledge, 2011, pp. 70-71.
22. Dominique, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

23. Recent scholarly engagement with the intersectional lines of inquiry opened up by *The Woman of Colour* includes the BSECS 52nd Annual Conference “Homecoming, Return and Recovery,” which I attended at the University of Oxford on 4-6 January 2023 and where a round table discussing the novel’s unsettling of the prescripts of the domestic fiction genre involved speakers Ros Ballaster, Victoria Barnett-Woods, M. A. Miller, Meg Kobza and Karen Lipsedge (“What’s Race Got to Do with It?: Interrogating the Norms of Domestic Space, Race and Gender in the Eighteenth-Century Novel”). The conference also hosted a panel of papers on *The Woman of Colour*, delivered by Andrew H. Armstrong, Alison Cotti-Lowel, and Aditi Upmanyu, whose reflections on the topic of homecoming upend some of the earlier radical analyses of the novel. <https://www.bsecs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/BSECS-52nd-Annual-Conference-long-programme.pdf>
24. Jennifer DeVere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity and Victorian Culture*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1998, p. 18. See, for example, Victoria Barnett-Woods’s view of the text as a Bildungsroman that “resists the impositions of Eurocentrism,” in “Models of Morality: the Bildungsroman and Social Reform in *The Female American* and *The Woman of Colour*,” *Women’s Studies*, 45, 7, 2016, p. 623. See also Kathleen Lubey’s focus on Olivia as a “global citizen” who excoriates “polite” society’s condonement of slavery past the slave trade banning moment, in “*The Woman of Colour*’s Counter-Domesticity,” *Studies in Romanticism*, 61, 1, Spring 2022, p. 113.
25. Nicole N. Aljoe, Kerry Sinanan, and Mariam Wassif, “Introduction,” “New Essays on *The Woman of Colour* (1808),” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 35, no. 1, January 2023, p. 7.
26. *Ibidem*, p. 7.
27. Casey, Edward S., *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 274-303.
28. James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology*, 9 (3), 1994, p. 302.
29. *Ibidem*, p. 307.
30. Aljoe, Sinanan, and Wassif, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5.
31. *Ibidem.*, p. 5.
32. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York, Basic Books, 2001, pp. 41-55.
33. Boym, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.
34. See Lubey, *op. cit.*
35. Stephen Ahern, *Affected Sensibilities. Romantic Excess and the Genealogy of the Novel 1690-1810*, New York, AMS Press, 2007, p. 12.
36. Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility. Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 91. Ellis indicates the resurgence of the mode of sentimentalism in the early nineteenth century as instrumental to forging a politicised aesthetics of novels that addressed aspects of abolition, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-128. Jennifer Reed explores this idea in her study on the ideological nuances of travel, “Moving Fortunes: Caribbean Women’s Marriage, Mobility, and Money in the Novel of Sentiment,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 31, no. 3, Spring 2019, p. 510.
37. Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
38. Dominique states that *The Woman of Colour* is a hybrid between the sentimental novel in letters and the exotic epistolary travelogue, *op. cit.*, p. 40. Jennifer DeVere Brody notices the inverse correlation between the transatlantic passageways enciphered in the novel’s epistolary frame, *op. cit.*, p. 15. Fielder remarks that “the novel’s epistolary form embeds [...] black Atlantic relations,” cf. Brigitte Fielder, “*The Woman of Colour* and Black Atlantic Movement,” in Mary McAleer Balkun and Susan C. Imbarrato (eds.), *Women’s Narratives of the Early Americas and the Formation of Empire*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 174. If, as Dominique implies, the referent of the titular character expands to include “a wide swath of disparaged coloured women” (*op. cit.*, p. 24, p. 40), then the very complications of the epistolary structure, with its broken linearity, narrative gaps, interpolated editorial comments, copies of epistles drafted by other characters and inset tales, could be said to reflect the knotted identities hemmed in the figure of Olivia.

39. In Olivia Carpenter's view, Olivia Fairfield emerges as "the hero of a grateful slave narrative," in "Rendered Remarkable": Reading Race and Desire in *The Woman of Colour*," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 50, 2021, p. 256. See also Fielder, *op. cit.*, p. 180.
40. Stephen Ahern, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
41. Lynn Festa, "Sentimental Visions of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Studies," *Literature Compass*, 6/1, 2009, p. 27. Studies focusing on aspects of sentimentality include Sofia Prado Huggins's immersive reading of Dido's silences through the method of critical fabulation ("Reading Slantwise: Dido in *The Woman of Colour* (1808)," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 35, no. 1, January 2023, pp. 27-42), Rebecca Anne Barr's examination of masculine sensibility (*op. cit.*, pp. 82-102), and Natalie Zacek's analysis of the novel's approach to sympathy, in *op. cit.*, pp. 113-132.
42. A concept Corin Braga applies to "works that are decentred, disjointed, anarchic, chaotic, and devoid of a unified meaning," in "Anarchetype: Reading Aesthetic Form after 'Structure'," in Alexandru Matei, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian (eds.), *Theory in the "Post" Era: A Vocabulary for the 21st-Century Conceptual Commons*, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, pp. 122-123.
43. See Ahern, *Affected Sensibilities*, p. 12.
44. Salih, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
45. I am using this term to illustrate Olivia's liminal status as a bi-racial immigrant from a colonial setting.
46. In the sense of "affective elements of consciousness and relationships," Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 132.
47. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 66, emphasis mine.
48. *Ibidem*, p. 73, emphasis mine.
49. Edward S. Casey, *Turning Emotion Inside Out. Affective Life beyond the Subject*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2022, p. 11.
50. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 111.
51. *Ibidem*, p. 188.
52. Casey, *Getting Back*, p. 290.
53. *Ibidem*, p. 291.
54. Casey, *Getting Back*, p. 291.
55. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 69.
56. *Ibidem*, p. 53.
57. *Ibidem*, p. 56.
58. See the triad of hearts that throb with anticipated terror (Olivia), feel with doating fondness (Mr. Fairfield) and respond to humanitarian treatment with gratefulness (Marcia) in the primal scene of domestic separation, *The Woman of Colour*, pp. 53-54.
59. DeLoughrey, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-31.
60. See Ahern, *op. cit.*, p. 143.
61. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 61.
62. *Ibidem*, p. 182.
63. See, for example, the way in which she unnerves Letitia Merton's condescending culinary assumptions about the colonies, *Ibidem*, pp. 77-78.
64. Joe Snader, *Caught between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction*, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2000, p. 3.
65. "The wild and uncivilised African taught a lesson of noble self-denial and self-conquest to the enlightened and educated European," *The Woman of Colour*, pp. 54-55.
66. De Vere Brody, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
67. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 53.
68. According to Joseph Roach, "the concept of a circum-Atlantic world (as opposed to a transatlantic one) insists on the centrality of the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas [...] in the creation of the culture of modernity," *Cities of the Dead. Circum-Atlantic Performance*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2022, p. 4.

69. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 53.
70. *Ibidem*, p. 56, p. 188.
71. Edward S. Casey, "The world of nostalgia," *Man and World*, 20, 1987, p. 370.
72. It is the seat of both Marcia's "gloomy, yet [...] proud sorrow," and the "sorrows of the poor slaves," *The Woman of Colour*, p. 54, p. 56.
73. *Ibidem*, p. 188.
74. *Ibidem*, p. 57.
75. "[A]t intervals I felt [Dido] removing and replacing the combs of my hair, and smoothing it gently down with her hands," *Ibidem*, p. 57.
76. *Ibidem*, p. 57.
77. *Ibidem*, p. 59.
78. Boym, *op. cit.*, p. 337.
79. Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion. Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 3.
80. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 78.
81. *Ibidem*, p. 81.
82. *Ibidem*, p. 59.
83. *Ibidem*, p. 73.
84. Casey, *Turning Emotion*, p. 167.
85. *Ibidem*, p. 177.
86. See Lady Ingot's dismissive rejection of these well-known aesthetic categories in the period, *The Woman of Colour*, p. 118.
87. Boym, *op. cit.*, p. 280.
88. Julie Murray, "The Country and the City and the Metropole in *The Woman of Colour*," *Lumen* 33, 2014, p. 90, p. 89.
89. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 128.
90. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 106.
91. Boym, *op. cit.*, p. 252.
92. *Ibidem*.
93. *Ibidem*.
94. *Ibidem*, p. 254.
95. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 99.
96. *Ibidem*, p. 158.
97. Boym, *op. cit.*, p. xix.
98. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 69, p. 96, p. 138.
99. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1968, p. 82.
100. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 61.
101. *Ibidem*, p. 62.
102. Burke, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
103. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 64.
104. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 1.
105. Casey, *Turning Emotion*, pp. 180, 181.
106. *Ibidem*, p. 181.
107. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 128.
108. *Ibidem*, p. 151.
109. Casey, *Turning Emotion*, p. 182.
110. Casey, *Getting Back*, p. 38.
111. Boym, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
112. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 61.

113. In Kerry Sinanan's view, Olivia's boycott of the matrimonial regime mounts a critique of the "trope of romantic love as colonial conquest." See "The Wealth of Worlds': gender, race, and property in *The Woman of Colour* – a roundtable on *The Woman of Colour* (1808): pedagogic and critical approaches (Roundtable)," *Studies in Religion and the Enlightenment*, 2(2) 2021, p. 53.
114. *The Woman of Colour*, p. 149.