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# Women's Writing



**Special Issue: Cosmopolitan Endeavours**  
Guest Editor: Enit Karafili Steiner

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**Special Issue: Cosmopolitan Endeavours**

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support each other



## INTRODUCTION: COSMOPOLITANISM AS A PRACTICABLE ORIENTATION

Enit Karafili Steiner

English Department, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland

a few great cosmopolitan souls, who break through the imaginary barriers between peoples and, following the example of their sovereign creator, include the whole human race in their benevolence.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* (1755)<sup>1</sup>

This issue of *Women's Writing* was conceived and prepared during chilling debates about the proper order: what comes first, national concerns or a set of priorities with worldwide consequences? The most pointed articulation was the question bouncing across the Atlantic: should one strive to improve one's own country or the planet that we share? It was and is a moment that speaks to proponents and opponents of cosmopolitanism, for the very notion of order is at the root of cosmopolitanism.

*Cosmos*, in classical Greek, before signifying the world, signifies order, and because order implies beauty, cosmos also stands for adornment. It means both a moral and aesthetic evaluation. Aesthetically, it can be translated as “fitting order”, whereas the moral aspect implies good order, decent behavior, for example, employed by Aeschylus in *Agamemnon* (458 BC). Homer used its opposite *kata cosmos* to convey the idea of bad, shameful order. The Greek word comprehended the physical world as “an orderly arrangement, a display of palpable things (and so it may be conceived as a whole universe only because of its aesthetic and moral fittingness)”.<sup>2</sup>

From the word go, cosmopolitanism combined two ordered spaces: the ordered cosmos and the ordered city in both senses, the aesthetically fitting order and the morally good order. As we learn from Diogenes Laertius, Diogenes of Sinope appears to be the first to subordinate the order of the polis to that of the cosmos, when he shed his allegiance to Athens and proclaimed to be a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the cosmos. Retrospectively, the attitude that negates obligations toward a human-made city in the name of a cosmos governed by natural laws is called Cynic cosmopolitanism. Greek Stoics and later Roman Stoics infused the Cynic tradition with more civic-mindedness, allotting to the polis rejected by the Cynics the status of an “imperfect analogue to

the true 'cosmic polity'.<sup>3</sup> Both traditions advocated living according to nature, but whereas for the Cynics self-sufficiency represented the most natural way of life, the Stoics interpreted the laws of the cosmos as inscribing each individual's duty to serve unbounded by the laws of one's own community of birth or residence. According to cosmic laws, humans are connected by bonds of humanity and not by bonds of convention, for example, by the fact that they happen to inhabit a certain polis. To serve human beings, although full knowing that one can not serve all of them equally well, is to live a cosmopolitan life. For the Greek Stoics, it was important not to limit this service to the humans living in one's own polis. For the Roman Stoics, although local citizenship was important, the cosmopolitan outlook remained one that chose among several options the service with the greatest benefits to human fellows.<sup>4</sup> A third current that grew from and beyond the Cynic and Stoic traditions ran through the field of historiography, producing the new "Universal History", which, unlike earlier historiography, did not record the events of disconnected places, but offered

a view of history which was capable of giving an account of the entire new world opened up by the conquests of Alexander [the Great], of incorporating the experiences of the *barbaroi* as something less than exotic, and of providing [...] a sense of unity within diversity.

Universal History took into account the connections that governed people's daily lives and sought to reflect on "the international experience which they were living out".<sup>5</sup>

This very cursory overview of what are considered the origins of cosmopolitan ideas that preoccupy cosmopolitan studies today shows that the question about the fitting order between service to the cosmos and service to the polity mattered from the start. It also suggests that cosmopolitanism's origins are steeped in a critical position: first, the Cynics' critique of the exclusive expectations of the polis, then the Stoics' critique of the Cynic's wholesale exclusion of the polis. The emergence of the Universal History testifies to the practical dimension developed from metaphysical and politico-theoretical cosmopolitanisms.

Between these origins and the present worries about inward-looking politics and severe climate change lies this introduction's epigraph containing Rousseau's eulogy of "a few great cosmopolitan souls" that cross imaginary (another word for conventional) borders and strive to imitate in their actions the benevolent intelligence behind the ordered cosmos. The seventeenth and eighteenth century produced many definitions of the cosmopolitan soul and mind. Some celebratory, others disparaging. Rousseau himself can be cited to showcase both trust and dismay toward cosmopolitanism. His educator (and specifically not philosopher) in *Emile, or on Education* (1762) warns his readers: "Distrust those cosmopolitans who go to great length in their

books to discover duties they do not deign to fulfill around them. A philosopher loves the Tartars so as to be spared having to love his neighbors".<sup>6</sup> It was a critique that resonated then and remains a concern for philosophers and practitioners of cosmopolitanism. Forty years after Rousseau's educational text, Amelia Opie in her novel *Adeline Mowbray* (1801) took to task a female philosopher redolent of the one discredited by Jean-Jacques:

Nor had she [Mrs Mowbray] even leisure to observe, that while she was feeling all the generous anxiety of a citizen of the world for the sons and daughters of the American independence, her own child was imbibing, through her means, opinions dangerous to her well-being as a member of any civilized society.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, several critics have convincingly demonstrated the cosmopolitan orientation of Rousseau's work.<sup>8</sup> As for Opie, she goes on to write a novel not devoid of cosmopolitan ethos.

I draw attention to these paradoxes, because the present issue, among other things, aims to produce readings that examine the complexity, difficulty and sometimes inconclusiveness, of cosmopolitan positions in the long eighteenth century. In this respect, we consider the paradoxes of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism dialectically, not as dead ends but as points of departure for investigation. In the case of Rousseau and Opie, we are confronted with the fear of evasion contained in a philosophy that recognizes the pitfalls of its universal ambitions when it fears that lip-service to an abstract humanity might eclipse our embodied service to immediate fellow beings. As Christian Godin resolves the tension in Rousseau's writings, the natural commiseration of the "cosmopolitan spirit" that extends itself across boundaries merits Rousseau's praise because it has the political implication that an affectation of humanity lacks. Such diatribes are cautionary tales of cosmopolitan blindness that Opie, just like the empiricist Rousseau, locates in ethical withdrawal, moralistic complacency and self-indulgence, in the possibility that a person "allowed individual suffering in her neighborhood to pass unobserved and unrelieved", all the while philosophizing about a fundamentally unsubstantiated, "unbounded love for the great family of the world".<sup>9</sup> We could see these Enlightenment discussions as driving a wedge between cosmopolitan words (if not empty-mouthing) and cosmopolitan action. Or we could plausibly argue that such paradoxes demand that cosmopolitan words and actions to be coextensive, and thus frame a cosmopolitan critique which contemplates potential blind spots and raises the empirical stakes for cosmopolitanism to be what Mary Jacob calls "a lived category" and I would call a practicable orientation.<sup>10</sup> This is important to note against the assumption that cosmopolitanism has an exclusively theoretical orientation. As David Inglis and Raoul Robertson insist, cosmopolitanism from its beginnings involved activism and practical expression.<sup>11</sup> Part of this issue's contribution is to enrich the history of Western cosmopolitanism as a practicable orientation, where practicable



describes the activity of writing and the ideas lived out in particular, biographical or fictional circumstances.

Time and again, the inconclusiveness of cosmopolitanism has been a source of frustration. Detractors have begrudged cosmopolitanism's lack of definition. Defenders have exacerbated such frustration by contending that "specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an unc cosmopolitan thing to do", a conclusion that I endorse.<sup>12</sup> By the same token, however, this interdiction invites the question: is it a cosmopolitan thing to claim that something else is unc cosmopolitan, hence, undesired? This is a question about the role of censure in cosmopolitan thought and practice, one that renders clear-cut definitions a thorny matter. But the lack of a definite specification imposes a work of precision at every step that we invoke cosmopolitanism rather than the dismissal of the concept and its traditions. This appears to me the strongest proof that cosmopolitanism is very much concerned with the particular, or the specific and, therefore, yields insights about the correlation between particulars and the horizon of the whole in which particulars unfold.

My use of the word "horizon" is a deliberate substitute for the word "center", which has been brought to bear on cosmopolitanism's lack of definition. The discrepancy between the many ways cosmopolitanism is invoked can reveal that "cosmopolitanism has no true ideology – there is no centre of cosmopolitanism", one critic writes.<sup>13</sup> But center does a disservice to cosmopolitanism, which presupposes an outward, centrifugal orientation. Even the Cynics, who professed and lived a life of detachment from human convention, looked outward to nature and held the cosmos and its plurality as the horizon of their actions. The cosmopolitan way of life wonders about, engages with, and factors in alterity; it requires that the self perceives and responds to (at the center of its own being in the world, or to put it in Heideggerian terms, its being toward the world) whatever appears on the horizon of the experience. If cosmopolitanism has a center, then that is a hospitable self, mindset, attitude. Frustration about a missing center may also stem from the problematic, and sometimes inescapable, confusion between cosmos and universe. As James Hillman explains, the Latin universe meant "turning around one, or one turn, or turned into one" and "the adverb *universum* meant whole, in general, generally". The world as universe involves a centripetal movement toward "universals, general principles, and away from sensate particulars, which are the very concern of kosmos".<sup>14</sup> These particulars are as unbounded as the horizon itself.

However, once we think of the cosmopolitan horizon rather than center, a work of specification that investigates of our premises becomes indispensable. We need to ask straightforwardly: what underlies my choice when I use the word cosmopolitan rather than, say, international? Let me give a brief example. It is a common assumption that Lord Byron was an international and cosmopolitan figure, two attributes which more often than not appear

interchangeably. But whereas international may unproblematically describe Byron's formation and the characters that populate his writing, especially during and after his Grand Tour, cosmopolitan fits his contribution to the Greek War of Independence against Ottoman imperial occupation. His political implication in Greece is cosmopolitan in the Stoic sense and practice of the word, in that it was not limited to his country. If we agree with Pauline Kleingeld and Eric Brown that for the Stoics "a cosmopolitan considers moving away in order to serve" in other countries, "whereas a non-cosmopolitan does not", then Byron's decision was a distinctly cosmopolitan one. Consequently, the ethical implications of such a decision are couched through a reference to cosmopolitanism rather than internationalism. This example elucidates why I find helpful Galin Tihanov's procedure, which suggests that we might come to provisional definitions of cosmopolitanism through *a via negativa*, for example, by contrasting cosmopolitanism with its siblings, or occasionally, false friends: universalism, internationalism, transnationalism, multiculturalism. As briefly differentiated in the etymological discussion of cosmos and universe, cosmopolitanism differs from universalism in that it "does not obliterate but incorporates difference"; unlike internationalism, it does not see in "the nation and the nation state the sole embodiments and building blocks of that difference"; it does not rest on "a value-free descriptive framework" as does transnationalism; lastly, it opts for an "interactive appreciation and assertion of otherness", unlike "the isolationist model of multiculturalism".<sup>15</sup> The existence of censure, in the form of "this or that is an unc cosmopolitan thing to do" entails that cosmopolitanism is not value-free, but presupposes some sort of foundational value. Cosmopolitanism "has always, explicitly or tacitly, built on the assumption of a shared (and accessible if not necessarily immediately transparent) human constitution that is being mobilized, or at least addressed, as the cosmopolitan project makes its case".<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the anti-foundationalist stance of critics like Richard Rorty seems unable to rid itself of some kind of shared assumption, even if that assumption is mere pragmatism.<sup>17</sup>

Work conducted in the field of eighteenth-century and Romantic studies has also come against the need for precision. In an important article on works by British women writers, Anne K. Mellor ends her analysis with a question about qualification: "How much 'cosmopolitanism' justifies the use of the term in relation to either literary texts or to political positions", then and now; "[s]hould we require a commitment to an 'embodied' cosmopolitanism"?<sup>18</sup> In the literary works she discusses, "embodied cosmopolitanism" is represented by an enduring interfaith, interracial, or international marriage. Karen O'Brien's *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (1997) sheds light onto what qualifies as cosmopolitan history. She finds in the historiography written by Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, and Scottish historians a commitment to a view of connected histories that positions

one's nation in the larger network of European relations. This method, one might add, resonates with that of the Universal History produced under the influence of Cynic and Stoic cosmopolitanism in the Hellenistic age. Michael Scrivener's *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in the Age of Revolution and Reaction, 1776–1832* (2006) makes explicit the cosmopolitan bearings of feminism, abolitionism, and Jewish emancipation, in addition to compelling a revision of the claim that cosmopolitanism rests with a (vaguely defined) elite. The dissemination of voices that call for racial, gender and religious equality in the public sphere promoted by print and coffeehouse culture defies an elitist circling of cosmopolitanism. Esther Wohlgemut's *Romantic Cosmopolitanism* (2009) evinces awareness of the unstable definitions attached to the cosmopolitan attitude in the long eighteenth century. This study brings precision by defending two claims: that British Romantic cosmopolitanism, largely coinciding with the years of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, does not represent a rupture with Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, and secondly, that it incorporated attention to the local, the nation and patriotism.<sup>19</sup> These book-length studies followed, after a hiatus of more than twenty years, Thomas Schlereth's *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in Enlightenment Thought* (1977), which argued for the emergence of a class of European literati simultaneously with political and economic internationalism. Schlereth's learned investigation of European and transatlantic networks was improved upon by textually-minded analysis such as Wohlgemut's and Scrivener's, which turn to literary texts, fictional or autobiographical and link cosmopolitan ideas to questions of form. This textual engagement shows both the resilience and adaptability of cosmopolitanism.

The main field of inquiry that the present issue is inspired by and hopes to enrich is explored by Adriana Craciun's *British Women Writers and the French Revolution: Citizens of the World* (2005). Craciun and Mellor, more than other scholars, take an interest in the cosmopolitan orientation of works written by women and the cosmopolitanism developed through women's representations. Except for one article, which examines the notion of cosmopolitan solidarity embodied by the mixed-race female "citizen of the world" of an anonymous novel, the articles in this issue focus on the writing produced and lives lived by women writers of the long eighteenth century. They also retain an interest in the literariness of the texts discussed, taking into account relevant formal qualities.

Two key attempts to define typologies of cosmopolitanism in Enlightenment Europe facilitate our analysis. First, Pauline Kleingeld's distinction of six varieties of cosmopolitanism in late-eighteenth century Germany and Margaret C. Jacob's five axes in Early Modern Europe that "seized on the notion of cosmopolitanism as a form of virtue".<sup>20</sup> Kleingeld, acknowledging that her contribution refers to just "a segment" in the complex trajectories of eighteenth-century cosmopolitan ideas and practices, distinguishes

between moral cosmopolitanism, international federative cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan law, cultural cosmopolitanism, market cosmopolitanism and Romantic Cosmopolitanism. Jacob's trans-European survey groups what she calls "cosmopolitan behavior" along the axes of religion, science, markets, freemasons, and revolution. In her work, the long eighteenth century features prominently. The very title of her book *Strangers Nowhere in the World* is drawn from one of the century's definitions in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1752): the cosmopolitan is "étranger nulle part".<sup>21</sup> The articles in this issue are mindful of the divergences within this entry (an almost verbatim replication of the 1721 *Dictionnaire* of Trévoux) that signals that the cosmopolite appears to be both the rootless individual, as well as the person capable of growing roots anywhere in the world. Our approach has been to refrain from speaking of cosmopolitan orientations in pure and absolute terms. Rather, we examine specific circumstances that are lived out in relatively cosmopolitan ways, in order to show that cosmopolitanism converses with the local, and, as Richard Holton rightly argues, "this applies not merely to practical, but also to philosophical categories, which are equally grounded in time and space, whatever their universalistic aspirations".<sup>22</sup>

Angela Sanmann-Graf offers a good example of the immediate influence of universal aspirations on the work of German writer Sophie von La Roche and how these aspirations affected human rights for women and non-whites. Sanmann-Graf focuses on the notion of a "just love of humanity" as the foundation of La Roche's understanding of a female citizen of the world, or *Weltbürgerin*. For La Roche the condition of slavery that European Christians had imposed on their fellow humans becomes the testing ground of a "just love of humanity". In her activities as editor, translator and writer, La Roche was deeply attracted to the abolitionist ideas of the Quakers. Sanmann-Graf reveals a network and circulation of ideas behind La Roche's work that she deploys not only to advocate for a decidedly cosmopolitan position that brings together European and non-European perspectives, but also closely links her abolitionist commitment with her dedication to women's rights.

Leah Grisham's essay investigates "plantation cosmopolitanism" in Mary Robinson's *Angelina* (1796) and Charlotte Smith's "The Story of Henrietta" (1800), highlighting connections between cosmopolitanism, or perversions of it, and slave economy in the British colonies. Grisham reminds us that slave economy made cultural and material cosmopolitanism vulnerable to the sort of appropriation that furthered corruption and consumption, and opposed cosmopolitanism's call for a universally shared humanity. Both Robinson and Smith articulate a critique of plantation cosmopolitanism through female protagonists who are treated as exchangeable commodities or are touched by the uncertainties of race produced by slave economy. In this reality, rebellion towards oppression appears to offer, as Kant argued

and the Maroon uprisings and later the Haitian Revolution showed, stepping stones toward a more cosmopolitan world order.

Enit K. Steiner ponders the term “citizen of the world” by turning to cosmopolitan approaches to justice that align local and universal justice in the anonymous novel *The Woman of Colour* (1808). The essay expands on the notion of embodied cosmopolitanism proposed by Mellor. Steiner argues against the mutually exclusive relationship between cosmopolitanism and solidarity and for the allegorical function of the cosmopolitan solidarity embodied by the mixed-race, middle class, female protagonist. By theorizing the notion of cosmopolitan solidarity in a tropological narrative, *The Woman of Colour* tropicalizes Enlightenment cosmopolitanism in that it draws on allegory to request the radical fulfillment of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism through the abolition of slavery in the British colonies and not merely the abolition of the slave trade.

In “The Feminized Cosmopolite Eiron in Elizabeth Hamilton’s *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796)”, Elizabeth Taskers offers an expanded understanding of “embodied cosmopolitanism”. Satire is paramount to Tasker’s argument, for it creates gender fluidity through the device of irony and the character of the *eiron*. Hamilton’s protagonist Zāärmilla enriches eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism by bringing a feminized outsider’s perspective and spiritual knowledge to bear on his transnational encounters with a cast of foreign and British characters. Satire enables individuals of the counterflow – real or fictional foreigners who visited Britain – to voice a critique of colonial exploitation, even from within a rather accepting position of the British India Company.

Natasha Duquette’s essay establishes Helen Maria Williams’s Dissenting, as opposed to “revolutionary”, cosmopolitanism, by illustrating how Williams brought patterns of Dissenting sociability and conversation with her to France during the Revolution. Duquette finds fruitful Kwame Appiah’s view of conversations across religious or national boundaries, whether in person or via the reading of a literary text, as “properly” cosmopolitan if they result in a respectful acknowledgment and allowance of difference. William’s life in Paris, in freedom or captivity, cultivates such conversations through the activity of interpersonal interactions and through writing and translation. Her hospitable Dissenting cosmopolitanism – in London and then in Paris – could be understood along the lines of Elijah Anderson’s notion of “cosmopolitan canopies”. Ultimately, the essays shows that Williams maintained that the ideal of *liberté* must include the multitudes of enslaved and indigenous people, e.g. like the Peruvians.

Finally, Carmen Casaliggi examines a different facet of late-eighteenth century cosmopolitanism in Germain de Staël’s Coppet and her fiction *Corinne, or Italy* (1807). Rather than situating cosmopolitan life exclusively in the life of the traveller and taking the nomad as the only representation

of the cosmopolitan, Casaliggi’s essay stresses the sustainable cosmopolitanism that unfolds in de Staël’s host country, Switzerland. Here, mobility appears to have changed direction: the world travels to de Staël’s salon in Coppet and the exchanges there imprint on de Staël an enduring influence that she then resends into the world through her novel *Corinne*. The character of Corinne is, for Casaliggi, a presence of reconciliation between domestic and cosmopolitan orientations. Corinne’s very vocation as an *improvisatrice* underscores the foreignness of an otherwise homely heroine.

Ultimately, the writers of these essays hope that the present issue proves right Michael Scrivener’s conviction that “[one] could do worse than studying Enlightenment cosmopolitanism in search of a useable past for the intellectual models of multiculturalism in the global village”.<sup>23</sup>

## Notes

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, ed. Patrick Coleman and trans. Franklin Philip (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), p. 69.
2. James Hillman, “Cosmology for Soul: From Universe to Cosmos”, *Philosophical Intimations*, ed. Edward S. Casey (Thompson: Spring Publications, 2016), pp. 85–100, 88.
3. John L. Moles, “Cynic Cosmopolitanism”, *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*, eds. R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California U P, 1996), pp. 105–20, 119. Louisa Shea delineates greater divergences between Cynic and Stoic traditions. See *The Cynic Enlightenment: Diogenes in the Salon* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2010), p. 86.
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5. Mortley Raoul, *The Idea of Universal History from Hellenistic Philosophy to Early Christian Historiography* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1996), p. 1. See also David Inglis and Roland Robertson, “From Republican Virtue to Global Imaginary: Changing Visions of the Historian Polybius”, *History of the Human Sciences* 19.1 (2006): 1–18.
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7. Amelia Opie, *Adeline Mowbray: Or, The Mother and Daughter* (London, Boston, and Henley: Pandora Press, 1986), p. 14.
8. Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), p. 25, 168; Michael Scrivener, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in the Age of Revolution and Reaction, 1776–1832* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), p. 27, 84.
9. Opie, *Adeline Mowbray*, p. 3.
10. Margaret C. Jacob, “The Cosmopolitan as a Lived Category”, *Daedalus* 137.3 (2008): 18–25.
11. Inglis and Robertson, “From Republican Virtue to Global Imaginary”, pp. 1–18.
12. Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Beckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Cosmopolitanisms”, *Public Culture* 12 (2000): 577–89, 577.

13. Rebecka Lettevall, "The Idea of Kosmopolis: Two Kinds of Cosmopolitanism", *The Idea of Kosmopolis: History, Philosophy and Politics of World Citizenship*, eds. Rebecka Lettevall and My Klockar Linder (Huddinge: Södertörns Högskola, 2008), pp. 13–30, 14.
14. Hillman, "Cosmology for Soul", p. 89.
15. Galin Tihanov, "Cosmopolitanism in the Discursive Landscape of Modernity: Two Enlightenment Articulations", *Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism*, eds. Galin Tihanov and David Adams (Oxford: Legenda, 2011), pp. 133–52, 134.
16. Tihanov, "Two Enlightenment Articulations", p. 135.
17. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1989).
18. Anne Mellor, "Embodied Cosmopolitanism and the British Romantic Woman Writer", *European Romantic Review* 17.3 (2006): 289–300, 297.
19. Esther Wohlgenut, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 3–4.
20. Pauline Kleingeld, "Six Varieties of Cosmopolitanism in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60.3 (1999): 505–24; Margaret C. Jacob, *Strangers Nowhere in the World: The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2006), p. 3.
21. <http://encyclopédie.eu/index.php/science/1111734492-philosophie/1384355917-COSMOPOLITAIN>
22. Richard Holton, *Cosmopolitanisms: New Thinking and New Directions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 71.
23. Michael Scrivener, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal*, p. 1.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

*Enit K. Steiner* is Senior Lecturer in eighteenth-century and Romantic literature at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. Among others, she is author of *Jane Austen's Civilized Women: Morality, Gender and the Civilizing Process* (2012), editor of Frances Brooke's *The History of Lady Julia Mandeville* (2013) and of the essay collection *Called to Civil Existence: Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (2014). Her work has appeared in *Studies in Romanticism*, *European Romantic Review*, and *Criticism*. Currently, she is working on a book-length project titled *Cosmopolitan Moments in the Long Eighteenth Century*.



# "THE EXERCISE OF A JUST LOVE OF HUMANITY": SOPHIE VON LA ROCHE AS FEMALE COSMOPOLITAN

Angela Sanmann

University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland

## ABSTRACT

This article deals with Sophie von La Roche as a female cosmopolitan by addressing a central but hitherto barely examined text from her journal *Pomona for Germany's Daughters* (*Pomona für Deutschlands Töchter*). The text, a plea for the abolition of slavery entitled *The Exercise of a Just Love of Humanity by Joseph the Second in Europe – and in America by a Quaker Antoine Benezet*, proves to be a concealed translation from the *Lettres d'un cultivateur américain* (1783) by St. John de Crèvecoeur. This makes La Roche one of the first people to have mediated the reception of this author in German. Against the background of the German reception of Crèvecoeur in the late eighteenth century, this article demonstrates how La Roche pedagogically adapts her contribution for her predominantly female readership. She not only advocates for a cosmopolitan position that brings together European and non-European perspectives, but also links her abolitionist commitment with her dedication to women's rights. For the first time, "The Exercise" will be recognized as early evidence of La Roche's cosmopolitan thinking. It can be linked to her emigration novel *Appearances at Lake Oneida* (1798), where the act of translation as a cosmopolitan practice turns out to be an essential part of her story-telling.

**KEYWORDS** Sophie von La Roche; "Pomona für Deutschlands Töchter"; cosmopolitanism; translation; Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur; abolitionism; "Appearances at Lake Oneida"

Recently, the writer, editor, and translator Sophie von La Roche (1730–1807) has been repeatedly characterized as a cosmopolitan, and this not only in relation to her language skills and European travels.<sup>1</sup> Whereas for a long time her *Anglophilia* was in the foreground, particularly present in her epistolary novel *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* (1771);<sup>2</sup> at least a partial reassessment of La Roche's image is now emerging, which has hitherto been mainly based on her late emigrant novel set in North America, *Appearances at Lake Oneida* (*Erscheinungen am See Oneida*, 1798).<sup>3</sup> However, the question of whether or not La Roche represented decidedly cosmopolitan positions earlier in her career has been only sporadically, if variously, discussed up until now.



This is especially the case for her journal *Pomona for Germany's Daughters* (*Pomona für Deutschlands Töchter*, 1783-84), which includes portraits of France, England, and Italy and numerous translations of literary and educational texts. Gudrun Loster-Schneider's and Wilfried Barner's assessments of the cosmopolitan ambitions in *Pomona* were rather restrained; in their view, while it exhibited "Europe-centric curiosity"<sup>4</sup> and thus "European perspectives",<sup>5</sup> it "did not realistically expect Germany's daughters to make cosmopolitan excursions".<sup>6</sup> Further, in addition to emphasizing *Pomona's* "European perspective" within its *Anglophilia*, Hilary Brown<sup>7</sup> recognized cosmopolitan perspectives evidenced by the large number of translations (Elystan Griffiths has made the same point).<sup>8</sup>

By analyzing a contribution in *Pomona* which has been so far largely neglected, the present article aims at showing why and in which respect La Roche can, in fact, be identified as a female cosmopolitan. In her text entitled *The Exercise of a Just Love of Humanity by Joseph the Second in Europe – and in America by a Quaker Antoine Benezet* ("Uebung gerechter Menschenliebe von Joseph dem zweyten in Europa – und in Amerika von einem Quaker Antoine Benezet"),<sup>9</sup> La Roche opens her horizon beyond Europe and confronts her readership with a highly topical political issue of global relevance: slavery (America) and serfdom (Bohemia) and the injustices respectively associated with them.

Referring to Pauline Kleingeld's distinction between six varieties of cosmopolitanism in late eighteenth-century Germany,<sup>10</sup> La Roche's position can, in a first step, be described as a form of "Cultural Cosmopolitanism", ideally represented by thinkers like Georg Forster and Johann Gottfried Herder and based on two fundamental convictions: human equality and cultural pluralism. Thus, Kleingeld defines "cultural cosmopolitanism" as "the view that humanity expresses itself in a rich variety of cultural forms, that we should recognize different cultures in their particularity, and that attempts to achieve cultural uniformity lead to cultural impoverishment".<sup>11</sup> Starting from the basic assumption of a "common humanity" shared by all human beings, regardless of their ethnicity, class or religion, Forster, Herder and La Roche consequently refuse prejudices about a "natural inferiority of non-Europeans" and refute all forms of slavery, slave-trade and serfdom.

These cosmopolitan convictions exemplarily become manifest in La Roche's "Exercise of a Just Love of Humanity" (hereafter "Exercise"), published in the eighth issue of her monthly magazine *Pomona* in 1783. Here, La Roche positioned herself in the incipient Europe-wide debate on cosmopolitanism, even before the publication of key cosmopolitan texts such as Immanuel Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* (1784) and Christoph Martin Wieland's *Secret of the Cosmopolitan Order* (1788). La Roche, distrustful of the ideas of a world-encompassing brotherhood which, however, excluded women and serfs through their elitist and selective

constitution (thus demonstrating their own absurdity), insisted on a non-elitist position explicitly including the idea of female cosmopolitans.

The present article intends to demonstrate, for the first time, that La Roche articulated cosmopolitan ideas already in her magazine *Pomona* in 1783, thus long before her *Oneida* novel (1798) and that she combined these ideas with her commitment to female education and social participation. Against the backdrop of Kleingeld's concept of "Cultural Cosmopolitanism", it will be shown that La Roche put her cosmopolitan ideas into (literary) practice in her triple role as a writer, translator and editor. Thus, La Roche's cosmopolitanism proves to be not a mere idea, but, in Margret C. Jacob's words, a "lived category",<sup>12</sup> a "lived experience" and an "intellectual endeavor[r]"<sup>13</sup> that becomes manifest in the productive interplay between her own literary writings and foreign textual sources – both in the "Exercise" and *Oneida*.

### The "Exercise" as Concealed Translation and Adaptation of Crèvecoeur's Letter

The nearly five-page long contribution entitled "The Exercise" turns out to be essentially a concealed translation. With the research tools available today, the original source can be found quickly; the illusion must have been far less transparent for the readership of *Pomona*, since the title obscures all traces leading to the source text. At the core of "The Exercise" is one of the *Lettres d'un cultivateur américain* by the French-American writer Hector Saint John de Crèvecoeur (1735-1813), which had been pre-published in the *Mercure de France* in January 1783. The fictitious letter tells the story of the Quaker Walter (Warner) Mifflin (1745-1798), one of the first American landowners to become aware of the injustice of slavery, which led him to free his slaves.<sup>14</sup>

Crèvecoeur, who decisively influenced the European image of America with his letters from the New World, is considered to be one of the most widely read American authors of his time.<sup>15</sup> His complete series of letters appeared in two different versions – English and French (*Letters of an American Farmer*, 1782 / *Lettres d'un cultivateur américain*, 1784) – and were rapidly translated into several languages. However, in the first extensive German translation by Karl Gottfried Schreiter in 1784, the story of Mifflin and the slave Jakob is missing.<sup>16</sup> The unveiling of La Roche's concealed translation from 1783 shows that the beginning of the reception of Crèvecoeur's abolitionist story must be set six years earlier, as until now it was assumed that the first translation appeared only in 1789.<sup>17</sup> While it was already known that La Roche appreciated Crèvecoeur's writings, her reading of the *Cultivateur* was previously thought to have happened in the context of the creation of *Oneida* in the 1790s. "The Exercise" proves that La Roche had already discovered the successful author about fifteen years earlier.

The present article combines a historical perspective with a translation analysis in order to illuminate both the role of the "Exercise" in *Pomona*

and the cosmopolitan ideas it implies. La Roche's individual approach will be elucidated through a comparison with two other German versions by Johann Ernst Kolb (1789) and Johann Gottfried Herder (1793). Two claims will be pursued here. First, the criticism of slavery in the "Exercise" reflects a core theme of enlightened cosmopolitanism and initiates the German reception of a key text by Crèvecoeur. La Roche's free translation invites *Pomona's* female readership to broaden their Eurocentric perspective and to consider actual political issues. Second, La Roche's reception of Crèvecoeur in *Pomona* initiates a cosmopolitan current in her oeuvre which will be present up until her late novel *Appearances at Lake Oneida*.

### The "Exercise" and the German Reception of Crèvecoeur

Published in the eighth issue of *Pomona*, "The Exercise" has not yet received detailed analysis and its original source, one of Crèvecoeur's letters, has been hitherto unidentified. Consequently, Angela Kuhk's wide-ranging study of the German-speaking reception of Crèvecoeur does not mention it.<sup>18</sup>

The original source for "The Exercise" is a fictitious letter written from the point of view of a Russian traveler to America called Ivan.<sup>19</sup> The letter entitled *Deuxième lettre de Ivan A-X, Barlisle Pounty, 14 Novembre* was not only pre-published in *Mercure de France* in January 1783, but also appeared a month later in *L'Esprit des Journaux, François et Etrangers*.<sup>20</sup> It cannot be said with any certainty which of these magazines was available to La Roche. But it is noteworthy that, in view of the limited number of antislavery writings available in Germany in the 1780s, La Roche's concealed translation of Crèvecoeur's letter is of great importance. To my knowledge, she was the first to publish a German translation of Crèvecoeur's text on slavery. Thus, it was not just "Götze, Kolb, Herder and Kotzebue"<sup>21</sup> who had brought the subject into German. The second German translation of Mifflin's story was published in 1789 in Kolb's collection *Stories of the Customs and Destinies of Negro Slaves*<sup>22</sup> under the title "The Quaker Mifflin and his Negro".<sup>23</sup> Herder on his part realized a poem called "The Birthday", based on Kolb's version, which is included in his *Letters for the Advancement of Humanity* (1793–1797).<sup>24</sup>

The following comparison between La Roche's translation and the versions by Kolb and Herder will highlight the translators' different approaches.

### The *Pomona* Translation Compared to Kolb's and Herder's German Versions

The "Exercise" presents itself as an original work, but proves to be a hybrid between translation and adaptation. *Pomona's* readership might have assumed that the text has been written by La Roche herself because no other author's name is mentioned. In view of the many references between the "Exercise"

and her *Oneida* novel (see below), it seems even more obvious to assume that La Roche is the author. For reasons of space, the following analysis focuses in particular on two central aspects: how does La Roche pedagogically adapt her version for her female readership? And how does she reinterpret the act of Jacob's liberation in order to get around the specifically religious motivation articulated by the Quaker Mifflin? Selective comparisons with Kolb's and Herder's versions will shed further light on La Roche's approach.

First, it is striking that La Roche omitted the names of both Ivan and Crèvecoeur, the fictitious author and the real author of the letter. Since Crèvecoeur was barely known in Germany in 1783, one can assume that his name would probably have gone unrecognized by *Pomona's* readership. This lack of symbolic capital is one possible explanation why La Roche refrained from mentioning Crèvecoeur and focused entirely on her cause: the commitment for the worldwide abolition of serfdom and slavery. To this end, she drafted an extensive, cosmopolitan title: *The Exercise of a Just Love of Humanity by Joseph the Second in Europe – and in America by a Quaker Antoine Benezet*, which emphasizes the equality of all human beings and love of humanity as a global phenomenon. Further, two names appear in the title: Joseph II and Antoine Bénézet representing the "Just Love of Humanity" in Europe and overseas. La Roche anticipates the fact that this transatlantic parallelization – which also provides the framework for her contribution – may seem unfamiliar to her readers by inserting a long dash between the chiasmatically entangled elements of the title. The innovative potential of the "Exercise" is contained in precisely this leap from Europe to America.

A comparison of the different titles chosen by the translators highlights their extremely heterogeneous approaches:

Crèvecoeur (1783)	La Roche (1783)	Kolb (1789)	Herder (1793)
<i>Deuxième Lettre de Ivan A-X, Barlisle Pounty, 14 Novembre 1773</i> <sup>25</sup>	<i>Uebung gerechter Menschenliebe von Joseph dem zweyten in Europa – und in Amerika von einem Quaker Antoine Benezet</i> <sup>26</sup>	<i>Der Quaker Mifflin und sein Neger</i> <sup>27</sup>	<i>Der Geburtstag</i> <sup>28</sup>

Crèvecoeur's fictitious letter presents itself as a historical document with a date and location. This deliberately created illusion of authenticity undergoes significant changes in the German versions. While La Roche portrays the "Just Love of Humanity" as a world-encompassing phenomenon that transcends religion and class, Kolb and Herder render Mifflin's story in a literary way, a fact which should be understood against the background of the respective publication contexts: Kolb's Mifflin translation appeared in his *Stories of the Customs and Destinies of Negro Slaves*, while Herder's adaptation constitutes one of his five *Negro-Idylls* (*Neger-Idyllen*).<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly enough, Kolb's title emphasizes the status quo of Jacob's enslavement instead of underlining the abolition of exploitative property

relations, which is the topic at the heart of the story. Herder, for his part, translates Mifflin's story into a poem of blank verse with a crucial content-related addition. In his version, Jacob's liberation coincides with the (eponymous) "birthday" of Walter Mifflin – an idea which cannot be historically confirmed. One possible interpretation would be that both the Quaker and Jacob celebrate their birthday on the liberation day because, in a metaphorical sense, they both begin a new life: through Jacob's release Mifflin ends the injustice he had committed, and Jacob is basically born again once he gains his freedom. The motivation behind the choice of the title becomes clearer once the final verse of the poem is considered, because it states that Mifflin understands his "good deed" less as a "gift" than as a "duty".<sup>30</sup> In a certain sense, Mifflin gives the birthday present more to himself than to Jacob.

Overall, the comparison shows that La Roche, unlike Kolb and Herder, employs the title of her translation to guide her readership in moral and pedagogical matters. Although the aesthetic choices of the two later translations certainly take the expectations of their readers into account, their purposes are not unequivocally clear from the beginning. La Roche's programmatic title is followed by a brief statement on Emperor Joseph II, who in 1781 had "used his royal power for the noble command of abolishing serfdom".<sup>31</sup> As I will show later, this statement refers to a previous contribution in the same issue of *Pomona* dedicated to the reforms made by the Austrian heir to the throne. The Quaker Antoine Bénézet serves as a counterpoint to Joseph II. He, Bénézet, is said to have "written a book about the injustice of buying people as property. He travelled the country preaching his principles, and also got what he desired when every Quaker liberated his slaves".<sup>32</sup> Here, La Roche summarizes the historical impact of the Huguenot Antoine Bénézet (1713-1784), who fled to Philadelphia via Holland and England. Together with John Woolman, Bénézet founded the abolitionist movement in America, and in 1773 enforced the abolition of slavery in Pennsylvania. The presentation of Bénézet is followed by the story of Mifflin and Jacob, which, according to Ivan, "moves one to tears".<sup>33</sup> The German renderings of this "melodramatic narrative"<sup>34</sup> could hardly be more different, as the scene of Jacob's liberation shows:

Crèvecoeur (1783)	La Roche (1783)	Kolb (1789)	Herder (1793)
Jacques, surpris d'une scène si nouvelle, si touchante, si inattendue, fondit en larmes, comme si on lui eût dénoncé le plus grand des malheurs. L'effet soudain de l'étonnement, de la reconnaissance & de plusieurs autres sentimens lui gonflèrent le cœur, & produisirent même des mouvements convulsifs. Il pleura amèrement, & à peine put-il exprimer: Ah, mon maître, que ferai-je de ma liberté? (7) <sup>35</sup>	Jakob, erstaunt und gerührt, weint, und wird bis zu Konvulsionen bewegt, als ob ihm das grösste Elend angekündigt würde. O mein Herr! was soll ich mit meiner Freyheit machen? (802) <sup>36</sup>	Man wird leicht einsehen, daß Jakob diesen Antrag nicht mit trocknen Augen annehmen konnte. "Herr, sagte er, lieber Herr, was soll ich mit meiner Freyheit machen?" (55) <sup>37</sup>	"Herr! Lieber Herr! antwortet Jakob, was/ Soll ich mit meiner Freiheit tun?" (684) <sup>38</sup>

La Roche is the only author to preserve – albeit in shortened form – the moving description of Jacob's emotional outburst which is caused by extreme fear. Apparently, the editor of *Pomona* places top priority on the sympathetic identification of her readers. While Herder launches straight into direct speech without providing any commentary, Kolb significantly transforms the passage in a didactic, intrusive manner. He attempts to pre-condition reader response and call forth their appropriate sentimental reaction. By replacing the description of Jacob's tearful and incredulous astonishment with the narrator's distanced comment ("Man wird leicht einsehen ..."), he reduces the degree of empathy. Kolb's transformation is surprising since his *Stories about Customs and Fates of the Negro Slaves* are described in the subtitle as *A Moving Reading for Good People*, thereby expressly declaring to any reader that emotional appeal is his goal.

What makes Crèvecoeur's story about a freed slave so particular, is the fact that Jacob is apparently afraid of his future life as a free man. Jacob argues, amongst other things, that he would be thrown back on his own in case of sickness, while previously he had been able to rely on the devoted care of Mifflin's wife. Jacob's temporary resistance to freedom proves to be a very ambivalent phenomenon. One has to be careful not to abuse such a narrative to excuse or even whitewash the slave-keepers from the oppression, injustice and cruelty they are guilty of. In a certain way, Crèvecoeur's story tends to exonerate slave-keepers like Walter Mifflin and his wife who are depicted as responsible and caring.

At the same time, one has to consider the fact that Mifflin and his wife belonged to the Quakers and that their caring attitude towards their slaves (good supply with food and clothing, medical care and comfort in case of illness) certainly stem from their religious convictions. In this sense, Crèvecoeur's description of their behavior seems credible. Furthermore, as the Quakers published a first anti-slavery resolution already back in 1688,<sup>39</sup> it can be assumed that some of the slave-keepers of this religious community actually held a self-critical position toward slaves labor even before the abolition was enforced in 1773. Nevertheless, it remains to be noted that Crèvecoeur – and with him La Roche – risk to convey a distorted image of slavery by telling an antislavery story in which freedom is not unambiguously embraced by the slave population.

Crèvecoeur, on his part, especially emphasizes the caring attitude of Mifflin's wife towards the slaves through the use of direct speech. In the given scene, it is Jacob who remembers her words of consolation

during his illness. The German translators render the emotional appeal very differently:

Crèvecoeur (1783)	La Roche (1783)	Kolb (1789)	Herder (1793)
Quand nous étions malades, notre bonne & tendre Maîtresse venoit à côté de notre lit, nous disant toujours quelque chose de consolant: <i>Eh bien, Jacques, eh bien, mon bon garçon, qu'est-ce que tu as? Ne te décourage point; le Médecin va bientôt venir; j'aurai soin de toi; souffre avec patience, c'est le premier remède.</i> (10) <sup>40</sup>	[...] wenn wir krank waren, so kam unsere gute Frau an unser Bett, tröstete uns, und sprach uns Muth ein. — Jakob! guter Junge! — was fehlt dir? fürchte nichts, der Arzt kommt bald, und ich will auch Sorge für dich tragen. Sey indessen geduldig, dieß ist das erste Hülfsmittel.— (802f.) <sup>41</sup>	Sind wir krank, so sorgt unsere gute Frau lieblich für uns, sie besorgt unsere Verpflegung und tröstet uns durch ihre milden Reden. (55f.) <sup>42</sup>	In Krankheit pflegete/ Mich Eure Frau als Mutter, tröstete/ Mich lieblich. (684) <sup>43</sup>

La Roche keeps the direct speech of Mifflin's wife in her German version and thereby highlights the importance of female care that coincides with her own ideal of womanhood as it appears throughout *Pomona*. Kolb's version, on the contrary, sums up the words of Mifflin's wife as "gentle", and therefore strikes one as much more abstract. Herder's version also does not retain the direct speech, although this is more the exception than the rule in his text.

La Roche's translation is not only marked by an increased attention towards *Pomona*'s female virtue, but also by a particular stance vis-à-vis Mifflin's religiously motivated renunciation of slavery. This is made clear in the announcement of Jacob's liberation:

Crèvecoeur (1783)	La Roche (1783)	Kolb (1789)	Herder (1793)
Tu aurois dû, comme nos frères blancs, être libre à vingt-un. La religion & l'humanité m'enjoignent de te donner aujourd'hui la liberté, & la justice m'ordonne de te payer huit ans & demi de travail, qui, à 270 liv. par an [...] fait la somme de 2295 liv. que je te dois (9) <sup>44</sup>	Du hättest sollen mit 21 Jahr frey seyn, wie die Weisse. Aber du sollst es heut werden, und ich gebe dir das Geld, welches du in diesen acht Jahren durch deine Arbeit verdient hättest, in der Summe von 2295 Liv. — (801) <sup>45</sup>	Religion und Menschheit befehlen mir, dir nun die Freyheit zu geben, und die Gerechtigkeit, daß ich dir für acht und ein halb Jahr ... 2295 Livres bezahle (54) <sup>46</sup>	Menschheit und Religion spricht dich gleich allen weißen Menschen frei (684) <sup>47</sup>

Crèvecoeur identifies religion and humanity as central motivations for the Quaker Mifflin to free Jacob. While Kolb and Herder remain close to the French original, Roche eschews using external arguments to legitimize Jacob's release by basing Mifflin's actions solely on his recognition that all human beings should begin a self-determined life at the legal age of twenty-one. Thus, La Roche does not exclusively stick to the argument of a

religiously-motivated love of humanity, but puts forward the equality of rights, regardless of people's skin color. Interestingly, in the same sentence, La Roche omits Crèvecoeur's term "brother", thereby rejecting the male connotated cosmopolitan metaphor of "brotherhood".

In sum, La Roche adjusts Crèvecoeur's antislavery argument depicted in the given scene not only by dissolving the mutual dependency between abolitionism and Quakerism, but also by strengthening the role of common rights like the legal age. All these aspects lead to the titular "just love of humanity" that, on the one hand, embraces every human being no matter his or her ethnicity, and that, on the other hand, can be exercised by everyone regardless of his or her class affiliations (including noblemen like Joseph II) or religious convictions.

However, La Roche's attenuation of the religious component of the Mifflin story does not result in a complete removal of the religious frame, as is shown by the following comment towards the end of the text:

Crèvecoeur (1783)	La Roche (1783)	Kolb (1789)	Herder (1793)
L'homme peut-il offrir un encens plus agréable à la Divinité? (11) <sup>48</sup>	Ist es möglich, theure Leserinnen! Daß ein Mensch Gott ein gefälligeres Opfer geben kann, als die Gesinnungen eines solchen Herrn, und eines solchen Sklaven? — wer sollte nicht wünschen, vor den Augen seines ewigen Richters dieses Zeugnis aus dem Munde seiner Untergebenen zu erhalten! — wie süß müssen die letzten Augenblicke eines Walter Mifflin und seiner Frau seyn! (805) <sup>49</sup>	Kann ein Sterblicher der Gottheit wohl ein gefälligeres Opfer bringen, als dieser Walter Mifflin mit der Freiheit seiner Schwarzen? Ist dieser Freygegebene fest bei seinem Vorsatze geblieben, so hat er gewiß auch nichts durch Jakobs Freylassung verlohren. Konnte der Sklave aber seinem Herrn mit so vieler Ergebenheit und Zuneigung dienen, wie konnte man da zweifeln, daß der Freye nicht dem Manne treu dienen sollte, dem er das Kostbarste aller Schätze zu danken hatte. (57f.) <sup>50</sup>	

Crèvecoeur uses a rhetorical question to present Jacob's liberation as the highest form of sacrifice that Mifflin could offer God. La Roche, addressing her female audience directly, expands the focus to bring not just Mifflin but also Jacob into view. In La Roche's view, it is "the convictions [Gesinnungen] of such a master and such a slave" that make both men pleasing in the eyes of God. Here, she reintroduces the figure of a judging God every human being has to respond to. Herder on his part does not translate the rhetorical question. Kolb, who notes that Mifflin "has surely not lost anything through Jacob's liberation", as Jacob will continue to work for his former master as a paid laborer, makes the religiously motivated renunciation of the slave trade conditional upon an economic perspective: the preservation of the slave-holders' economic interests. This purely opportunistic perspective disavows all other religious or ethical motivations.



La Roche's efforts to ground her abolitionist activism in a "just love of humanity" and to give it a broader ethical foundation than a merely religious, Christian one, are diametrically opposed to such considerations. The titular term "just love of humanity" sums up La Roche's cosmopolitan activism against serfdom (in Bohemia) and slavery (in America), combining European and non-European issues. The last sentence of the "Exercise" depicting Mifflin together with his wife, shows that La Roche explicitly conceived of this activism across gender divisions and not just across class and religion. The exclamation "how sweet must be the last moments of a Walter Mifflin and his wife!" suggests that Mifflin's wife, who, we know as readers, cared about the physical wellbeing of the slaves, shares her husband's abolitionist convictions.

It is important to note that La Roche's "Exercise" does not appear in isolation in the eighth issue of *Pomona* but follows another antislavery text about the abolition of serfdom through Joseph II: the short contribution "On the abolition of serfdom in Bohemia – by a young lady of merit (*Ueber die Aufhebung der Leibeigenschaft in Böhmen – von einer verdienstvollen jungen Dame*)" is signed by "Juliana von M". The young female author apparently preferred to only reveal her gender and not her full name.<sup>51</sup> Yet we can identify her as Juliana Giovane de Girasole, née baroness von Mudersbach (1766–1805).<sup>52</sup> This was one of her first publications and in it she celebrates "the abolition of serfdom in Bohemia [...] as a triumph of freedom".<sup>53</sup>

The publication of Mudersbach's text reveals another crucial aspect of La Roche's worldview: her support of a young female author and the abolition of slavery go hand in hand. La Roche secures publication for a hitherto unknown female author and, at the same time, advances the question of slavery into the foreground. The Mudersbach text on Joseph II and her Crèvecoeur translation complement each other by illustrating La Roche's conviction that the renunciation of slavery and serfdom can be religiously motivated – but does not need to be. Further, La Roche's editorial logic follows her pedagogical principles: Having first introduced her readership to the abolition of serfdom in Europe (Bohemia), she then, in a second step, turns their attention towards the abolition of slavery in America.

### La Roche's Cosmopolitanism: From *Pomona* to *Lake Oneida*

Sophie von La Roche had already positioned herself as a cosmopolitan and as an abolitionist in *Pomona* in 1783, which is fifteen years earlier than previously thought. This is important because it clearly refutes the assertion that *Pomona* left aside issues exceeding the private sphere.<sup>54</sup> The given article has shown that La Roche included political topics like slavery and serfdom and strived to sensitize her female readership for the injustice the slave keepers in America as well as the aristocracy in Bohemia were guilty of.

The cosmopolitan impulses present in the "Exercise" shine through in La Roche's emigration novel *Appearances at Lake Oneida* (1798), especially in two perspectives: First, the island in Lake Oneida where the French couple named Wattines, escapees from the French Revolution, decide to settle, is depicted as a "colonial contact zone"<sup>55</sup> for European and Indigenous people. According to Linda Dietrick, "the island [is] a space of transition and mediation. Its boundaries are permeable and open to fruitful cultural interchange that is noncoercive and reciprocal".<sup>56</sup> The "fruitful cultural interchange" in *Oneida* becomes manifest not only in human encounters, but also in the intellectual exchange related to the "cosmopolitan book collection" (kosmopolitische Textbibliothek) the Wattineses brought to America.<sup>57</sup> In the following, I will focus on the references between *Oneida* and the *Pomona* project on three (interconnected) levels: the choice of authors and sources; the subject of abolitionism and translational practice.

It comes as no surprise that the library of the Wattineses, this "treasure of all sciences collected for millennia", also draws upon sources that were introduced in *Pomona*, for example James Thomson's poem *The Seasons*.<sup>58</sup> Aside from specific works, the focus was on foreign journals like *Universal Magazine* or *Mercure de France*, and here again especially on the volumes from 1783 in which Crèvecoeur's *Deuxième lettre de Ivan A-X* was published.<sup>59</sup> These volumes also play a role in *Oneida* and show that La Roche maintained interest in them through various stages of her œuvre.<sup>60</sup>

Certain authors enjoy a special status within the *Oneida* novel, including Crèvecoeur and his *Lettres d'un cultivateur américain*. According to her correspondence, La Roche obtained the book in 1797.<sup>61</sup> As Gudrun Loster-Schneider has shown, the depiction of the male protagonist Carl Wattines as the "ideal type of a gentleman farmer" and certain aspects of his life were influenced by Crèvecoeur.<sup>62</sup> Further, one can see the interplay between the "Exercise" and the late novel on the level of citations from Crèvecoeur's *Lettres*. In a scene towards the end of the third volume of *Oneida*, the German traveller Friedrich, who sojourns with the Wattineses for several months and records their experiences in the New World, reads a letter to the Wattineses in which Crèvecoeur praises America as a propitious, promising land for Europeans. The French original reads as follows:

N'est-il donc étonnant que parmi tant de Savans Européens, aucun n'ait encore daigné venir nous visiter? – Et pourquoi serions-nous si ignorés? – Notre étendue géographique ne nous annonce-t-elle pas à tous les autres peuples? La somme de notre industrie n'est-elle pas enregistrée dans les douanes angloises? – Non, c'est vers la Grèce dégénérée, c'est vers l'antique Italie que cheminent tous les voyageurs. – Encore si l'on pouvoit recueillir dans ces contrées quelques étincelles de leur ancien génie, si l'on pouvoit y retrouver le tombeau des Socrates & des Aristides, des Catons & des Fabius, je leur pardonnois, – je passerois la mer moi-même pour offrir mon encens à ces précieuses reliques.<sup>63</sup>

It's interesting to note that La Roche makes her protagonist Friedrich use her own German translation of Crèvecoeur's letter (while creating the illusion that he's quoting from the French original, as the Wattineses do not (yet) understand German):

Warum kommen die Europäer nicht zu uns, neue Tugend und Glück zu sehen? Warum gehen sie in das ausgeartete Griechenland, in das alte Italien, wo sie nichts mehr von dem alten Glanze finden, wo niemand das Grab des Socrates und des Aristides, des Catons und des Fabius zeigen kann? sonst würde ich selbst diese Reise machen [...].<sup>64</sup>

As a comparison with Crèvecoeur's original text shows, La Roche slightly shortens her German version, omits some questions and makes an important addition. Right at the beginning, La Roche introduces the terms "virtue and happiness" ("Tugend und Glück") that do not exist in the French original. In La Roche's view, virtue and happiness characterize the inhabitants of the New World and make it a counterpoint to Europe, where the tradition of Greek and Roman thinkers seems to be forgotten and where, one could add, the French Revolution has spread violence and tyranny the Wattineses had to flee from.

One of the "American" key virtues La Roche might have had in mind is the striving for the abolition of slavery, another common topic of the "Exercise" in *Pomona* and in the "cosmopolitan book collection" of her *Oneida*. Churchmen who fought for the abolition of the slave trade, like Abbé St. Pierre, and Quakers like Antoine Bénézet are mentioned repeatedly alongside Crèvecoeur.

Friedrich once reads to the Wattineses a shortened excerpt from Herder's *Letter for the Advancement of Humanity* (No. 115, 1797) that explicitly honors the accomplishments of the Quakers for the liberation of slaves. Here is the shortened version read by Friedrich:

Herder sagt, daß [die Quäker] von Penn an eine Reihe verdienstvoller Männer nennen, welche zum Besten der Menschheit mehr gethan haben, als tausend anmaßende Weltverbesserer: die thätigsten Bemühungen zu Abschaffung des Negerhandels und des Sklavendienstes kamen von Quäkern, und auf dem Denkmal im Vorhof des Tempels allgemeiner Menschlichkeit [...] werden die Namen von Quäkern glänzen.<sup>65</sup>

Herder's concept of "allgemeine Menschlichkeit" seems to resonate with La Roche's vision of a "just love of humanity", as both terms overcome racial, ethnic and class categories. By quoting Herder's letter No. 115 in her *Oneida*, La Roche reunites different ways of the German-speaking reception of Crèvecoeur's antislavery writings. In 1783, she translated Crèvecoeur's story of the Quaker Walter Mifflin and his slave for *Pomona*; ten years later, Herder used the same source for his poem *The Birthday* included in his *Letter* No. 114. In 1798, in turn, Friedrich, one of the protagonists of La

Roche's novel, quotes from Herder's *Letter* no. 115, emphasizing the Quakers' role for the abolition of slavery. This quote reveals the complex interplay of different text sources on abolition in *Oneida*.

Numerous translational acts like this are depicted in La Roche's novel where Friedrich translates a text for the Wattineses and vice versa. In some scenes, the protagonists use German translations from French or English sources made by La Roche herself; in others, they use (more or less modified) original German texts. While the readership of the *Oneida* novel is exclusively confronted to a German-speaking text corpus, it has to imagine that all the sources have been translated into French, the language Friedrich and the Wattineses communicate in. These (real or imagined) translational acts are not only relevant as a form of intercultural dialogue and exchange within the given scene. They also reflect La Roche's own literary practice, intertwining the activities of writing, translating and adapting. Her contribution "The Exercise of a Just Love of Humanity" is one striking example for this interplay between foreign sources and her own world of ideas.

Translation proves to play a major role in La Roche's oeuvre and in her cosmopolitan thinking, and this in two respects: On a content-related level, it is about the dissemination of cosmopolitan ideas like human equality, the striving for abolition etc.; on a performative level, the translational act as creative transfer across cultural and language borders turns out to be itself a cosmopolitan practice *par excellence*. In an earlier work, I have shown that La Roche, in her magazine *Pomona*, not only discusses cosmopolitan ideas like the striving for the abolition of slavery and serfdom, but also reflects on her cosmopolitan self-image. In her translation of a satirical tale from the French author Fanny de Beauharnais, she grabs the opportunity to secretly insert the new ideal of a female cosmopolitan ("Weltbürgerin").<sup>66</sup> Behind the mask of the faithful translator, La Roche puts this notion into circulation.<sup>67</sup> This idea of a female citizen of the world reuniting cosmopolitan convictions and traditional female virtues will continue to influence her writings, from the *Pomona* project through her novel *Oneida*. Beyond elitist and non-egalitarian concepts, La Roche insists on a female cosmopolitanism put into practice: By intertwining her own writings with (free and sometimes concealed) translations of texts often carrying cosmopolitan values, she strives for a creative mediation of literary works crossing linguistical and cultural borders. In this sense, for La Roche, cosmopolitanism represents a "lived category" (Jacobs, 18), i.e. a posture she theoretically reflected upon and employed practically – with a feminist-minded inflection.

To sum up, La Roche's cosmopolitanism, as it becomes manifest in *Pomona* and in her *Oneida* novel, can be described on at least five levels:

1. La Roche explicitly promotes cosmopolitan values like cultural pluralism and human equality directly linked to her striving for the abolition of slavery and serfdom – either in her own or in translated texts.

2. Imbued with these values in her triple role of writer, translator and editor, La Roche incarnates the figure of a female cosmopolitan and "Weltbürgerin" and invites her readership to identify with it.
3. The act of translation as a form of cosmopolitan practice is an essential part of La Roche's story-telling, as Friedrich and the Wattineses frequently translate and adapt foreign texts by Crèvecoeur or Herder in order to share enlightened ideas about human equality and virtue.
4. In La Roche's own translations, she foregrounds characters incarnating female and cosmopolitan values, like Mifflin's wife, and thereby insists on the compatibility of traditional female virtue and cosmopolitan thinking.
5. Her magazine *Pomona* offers young female authors like Juliana Giovane de Girasole the opportunity to publish their works on political issues like serfdom. Apparently, La Roche's striving for abolition and her commitment to the empowerment of women cannot be separated. From *Pomona* to *Oneida*, she practiced a form of intersectional solidarity *avant la lettre*.<sup>68</sup>

These five levels simultaneously prove the independence and the interconnectedness of La Roche's cosmopolitan position whose complexity awaits further investigation.

## Notes

1. See the substantial analysis of Wilfried Barner, "Sophie von La Roche im Feld kosmopolitischer Literatur der späten Aufklärung", *Ach, wie wünschte ich mir Geld genug, um eine Professur zu stiften*. *Sophie von La Roche im literarischen und kulturpolitischen Feld von Aufklärung und Empfindsamkeit*, ed. Gudrun Loster-Schneider, Barbara Becker-Cantarino with Bettina Wild (Tübingen: Francke 2010), 27–44 and Gudrun Loster-Schneider, "O nein, nein, lieber sterben als erworbene Kenntnisse verlieren". *Sophie von La Roche als Feld-Pionierin des 'Amerika-Romans'?*, Loster-Schneider/Becker-Cantarino, op.cit., pp. 190–209.
2. Michael Maurer, *Aufklärung und Anglophilie in Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), pp. 142–78.
3. Sophie von La Roche: Erscheinungen am See Oneida. Vollständige Neuauflage mit einer Biographie der Autorin. Hrsg. von Karl Maria Guth. Berlin: Hofen-berg 2015. Der Text dieser Ausgabe folgt: Sophie von La Roche: Erscheinungen am See Oneida. Bändchen 1–3. Leipzig, bey Heinrich Gräff 1798. – See Barner and Loster-Schneider.
4. Loster-Schneider, p. 190.
5. Barner, p. 43.
6. Barner, p. 40.
7. Hilary Brown, "The Reception of the Bluestockings by Eighteenth-Century German Women Writers", *Women in German Yearbook*, 18 (2002): 111–32 (118).
8. Elystan Griffiths, "Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Women's Education: The European Dimensions of Sophie von La Roche's Journal *Pomona* für

- Deutschlands Töchter* (1783–84)", *Oxford German Studies*, 42.2 (August 2013): 139–57.
9. Sophie von La Roche: *Pomona für Deutschlands Töchter*, Heft 8/1783, Speier (= Nachdruck, Bd. 2. Hrsg. mit einem Vorwort von Jürgen Vorderstemann. München, K.G. Saur Verlag, 1987), 801–5.
10. Pauline Kleingeld: "Six Varieties of Cosmopolitanism in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 60.3 (1999): 505–24. Kleingeld distinguishes Moral Cosmopolitanism, International Federative Cosmopolitanism, Cosmopolitan Law, Cultural Cosmopolitanism, Market Cosmopolitanism and Romantic Cosmopolitanism.
11. Kleingeld, p. 515.
12. Margaret C. Jacobs, "The Cosmopolitan as a Lived Category", *Daedalus*, 137.3 (2008): 18–25, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40543794> (Last consulted: 13 September 2018).
13. Jacobs, p. 25.
14. Gary B. Nash, *Warner Mifflin: Unflinching Quaker Abolitionist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
15. Michael Boyden, "Crèvecoeur's Ambivalent Cosmopolitanism and the Odoriferous Soil of Slavery", *Revue française d'études américaines*, 138 (2014): 10–24. DOI: 10.3917/rfea.138.0010 (Last consulted: 8 September 2018).
16. Hektor St. John, *Sittliche Schilderungen von Amerika*. [Übersetzt von Karl Gottfried Schreiter] (Liegnitz/Leipzig: Siegert, 1784). Cf. Angela Kuhk, *Vielstimmige Welt: die Werke St. John de Crèvecoeurs in deutscher Sprache* (Münster/Hamburg: Lit, 2001), p. 424.
17. Cf. Kuhk (p. 279) who refers to Johann Ernst Kolb's translation of 1789 (see note 23). Actually, there is even another German translation prior to Kolb's: by Johann August Ephraim Götze, published in 1788. It can be found in the first volume of Götze's translation of Crèvecoeur's letters: *Briefe eines Amerikanischen Landmanns an den Ritter W. S. in den Jahren 1770 bis 1781*. Aus dem Englischen ins Französische von \*\*\* und jetzt aus dem Französischen übersezt und mit einigen Anmerkungen begleitet von Johann August Ephraim Göze, erstem Hofdiaconus der St. Servatii-Kirche zu Quedlinburg. Erster Band. Leipzig, 1788. Bey Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius. p. 4–17.
18. Kuhk 2001.
19. Weckel assumes that it is a Benezet translation. See Ulrike Weckel, *Zwischen Häuslichkeit und Öffentlichkeit: die ersten deutschen Frauenzeitschriften im 18. Jahrhundert und ihr Publikum* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), p. 241, footnote 75.
20. *L'Esprit des Journaux, François et Etrangers, par une Société de Gens-de-Lettres*, Tome II, Douzième Année, (Février 1783): 225–34. Cf. Kuhk, p. 275.
21. Kuhk, p. 137.
22. Kuhk, p. 279.
23. Johann Ernst Kolb, "Der Quaker Mifflin und sein Neger", *Erzählungen von den Sitten und Schicksalen der Negersklaven. Eine rührende Lektüre für Menschen guter Art* (Bern: Haller, 1789), pp. 54–8. PURL: <https://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/id/PPN812722884>. Accessed 14 September 2018.
24. Johann Gottfried Herder, "Der Geburtstag", *Neger-Idyllen, Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität* (= Herder, *Werke*, Vol. 7), ed. by Martin Bollacher (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker-Verlag, 1991), pp. 674–85 (684f.). See Anne Löchte,

- Kulturtheorie und Humanitätsidee der 'Ideen, Humanitätsbriefe und Adrastea' (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), p. 106. See also Kuhk, p. 280.
25. *Second Letter by Ivan A-X, Barlisle Pounty*, 14 November 1773.
  26. *The Exercise of a Just Love of Humanity by Joseph the Second in Europe—and in America by a Quaker Antoine Benezet*.
  27. *The Quaker Mifflin and his Negro*
  28. *The Birthday*.
  29. It is striking that both Kolb and Herder repeatedly use the term "Neger", while La Roche only uses the term "Mohrin" once when speaking about Jakob's future wife. For the different (pejorative) implications of these terms and their changing use in eighteenth and nineteenth century Germany, see: Alexander Honold/Klaus Scherpe, *Mit Deutschland um die Welt. Eine Kulturgeschichte des Fremden in der Kolonialzeit* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), p. 175.
  30. Philip Allison Shelley, "Crèvecoeur's Contribution to Herder's 'Neger-Idyllen'", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 37.1 (1938): 48–69 (63).
  31. *Pomona* (8/1783), p. 801.
  32. *Pomona* (8/1783), p. 801. The allusion presumably refers to Bénézet's book *Some Historical Account of Guinea and of the Slave Trade* (1771).
  33. *Mercure de France*, p. 8.
  34. Boyden, p. 14.
  35. Surprised by such a new, touching and unexpected scene, Jacques burst into tears, as if the greatest misfortune had been announced to him. The sudden effect of astonishment, gratitude & several other feelings swelled his heart, & even provoked convulsive movements. He wept bitterly, & could hardly speak: Ah, my master, what will I do with my freedom?
  36. Jacob, amazed and touched, cries, and is moved to convulsions, as if the greatest misery has been announced to him. O my Lord! what shall I do with my freedom?
  37. It will be easy to understand that Jacob could not accept this proposal with dry eyes. "Lord, he said, dear Lord, what shall I do with my freedom?"
  38. Lord! Dear Lord! answers Jacob, what shall I do with my freedom?
  39. Brigitta Bader-Zaar, "Abolitionismus im transatlantischen Raum: Organisationen und Interaktionen der Bewegung zur Abschaffung der Sklaverei im späten 18. und 19. Jahrhundert", *Europäische Geschichte Online (EGO)*, ed. Vom Institut für Europäische Geschichte (IEG), Mainz, 3 December 2010. URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/baderzaarb-2010-de> URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-2010092123 [Last consulted 3 February 2019], 7.
  40. When we were sick, our good & tender Mistress came to our bed, always telling us something comforting: Well, Jacques, well, my good boy, what is wrong with you? Don't lose courage!; the Doctor will be here soon; I will take care of you; suffer with patience, that is the first remedy
  41. When we were sick, our good woman came to our bed, gave us comfort and courage. — Jakob! good boy! — what is wrong with you? don't be afraid, the doctor will be here soon, and I will also take care of you. Be patient in the meantime, this is the first aid.
  42. When we are sick, our good wife lovingly cares for us, she feeds us and comforts us with her gentle words.
  43. In sickness nursed / Me your wife like a mother, comforted me / Lovingly.
  44. You should have been free at twenty-one, like our white brothers. Religion & humanity command me to give you freedom today, & justice orders me to

pay eight and a half years of work, which is 270 pounds per year [...] that makes a sum of 2295 pounds that I owe you.

45. You should have been free at the age of 21, like the whites. But you shall become it today, and I give you the money that you would have earned in these eight years by your work, the sum of 2295 pounds.
46. Religion and mankind command me to give you today freedom and justice, so I pay you for eight and a half years ... 2295 pounds.
47. Mankind and religion set you free like all whites.
48. Can a man offer a more pleasing sacrifice to the deity?
49. Is it possible, dearest women readers! That a man may offer to God a more pleasing sacrifice than the attitudes of such a Lord, and of such a slave? who would not wish to receive this testimony from the mouth of his subordinates before the eyes of his eternal judge! -- How sweet the last moments of Walter Mifflin and his wife must be!
50. Can a mortal offer a more pleasing sacrifice to the deity than Walter Mifflin by freeing his black people? If this freed man has stuck firmly to his resolution, then he certainly has nothing lost by freeing Jacob. If the slave served his master with so much devotion and affection, how could it be doubted that the free one should not serve faithfully the man to whom he owed the most precious of all treasures.
51. Cf. Kord 1996.
52. Christiane Baier, "Zu Sophie von La Roches Lektüre von Frauenliteratur in der Zeit der *Pomona*", *Meine liebe grüne Stube. Die Schriftstellerin Sophie von La Roche in ihrer Speyerer Zeit (1780–1786)*, ed. Klaus Haag, Jürgen Vorderste-mann (Speyer: Marsilius-Verlag, 2005), pp. 101–28 (109).
53. Mechthild Vahsen, *Die Politisierung des weiblichen Subjekts: deutsche Roman- autorinnen und die Französische Revolution (1790–1820)* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2000), p. 45.
54. Britt-Angela Kirstein, *Marianne Ehrmann: Publizistin und Herausgeberin im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Dt. Univ.-Verlag 1997), p. 148.
55. Linda Dietrick, "Swim across with me to the huts of our neighbors': Colonial Islands in Sophie von La Roche's *Erscheinungen am See Oneida* (1798) and Jacques Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788)", *Sophie Discovers Amerika: German-Speaking Women Write the New World* (2014): 16–29 (18).
56. Dietrick, p. 22.
57. Loster-Schneider, p. 192.
58. La Roche: *Oneida* III, p. 288. Translations from Thomson's poems can be found in the issues 1, 5 and 8 of *Pomona*.
59. Loster-Schneider, p. 197.
60. Friedrich reports a lecture from "Mercure de France 1783" to Emilie. La Roche: *Oneida* III, p. 26. Cf. Loster-Schneider, p. 197.
61. "La Roche [...] asks Johann Isaak Gerning in 1797 whether he has paid for the 'Cultivateur améri[c]ain'. Quoted in Claudia Bamberg, *Sophie von La Roche* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Freies Deutsches Hochstift, 2007), p. 115; cf. also Loster-Schneider, p. 199.
62. Crèvecoeur-inspired motives in *Oneida* are, among others: Carl's bee trapping and Emilie's visits to workers in the fields cf. Loster-Schneider, 208, footnote 139.
63. Crèvecoeur, p. 45. See Philippe Micha, "Deuil et commémoration dans l'œuvre de Sophie von La Roche", *Études Germaniques*, 52.3 (1997): 365–92 (392).
64. La Roche: *Oneida* III, p. 289.



65. *Oneida* III, p. 238. Herder's original reads as follows:

Die *Quacker*, an welche der Brief denkt, bringen von *Penn* an eine Reihe der verdienstvollsten Männer in Erinnerung, die zum Besten unsres Geschlechts mehr getan haben, als tausend Helden und pomphafte Weltverbesserer. Die tätigesten Bemühungen zu Abschaffung des schändlichen Negerhandels und Sklavendienstes sind ihr Werk; wobei indeß überhaupt auch Methodisten und Presbyterianer, jeder schwachen oder starken Stimme jedes Landes ihr Verdienst bleibt, wenn sie taubsten Ohren und härtesten Menschenherzen, geizigen Handelsleuten, hierüber etwas zurief. Eine Geschichte des aufgehobenen Negerhandels und der abgestellten Sklaverei in allen Weltteilen wird einst ein schönes Denkmal im *Vorhofe* des Tempels allgemeiner Menschlichkeit seyn [...]; mehrere Quakernamen werden an den Pfeilern dieses Vorhofes mit stillem Ruhm glänzen. (695f.)

66. *Pomona* (2/1783): 164–83.

67. Angela Sanmann, "Weltbürgerin (in)visible: déguisement et diversion chez Fanny de Beauharnais et Sophie von La Roche", in A. Sanmann, M. Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, V. Cossy: *fémin|in|visible. Women Authors of the Enlightenment. Übersetzen, schreiben, vermitteln*, Cahiers du Centre de traduction littéraire, Théories N° 58 (2018): 125–46.

68. On the relationship between women's rights and antislavery see: Kathryn Kish Sklar/James Brewer, *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

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## Notes on contributor

Angela Sanmann is Assistant Professor for Translation Studies at the German Department of the University of Lausanne (Switzerland) and a collaborator of the *Centre de traduction littéraire* since 2015. Her PhD-thesis *Poetical Interaction: Translations of French Poetry by Friedhelm Kemp, Paul Celan, Ludwig Harig, Volker Braun* (De Gruyter, 2013) analyzes the work of four German speaking poet-translators in the twentieth century. She is currently working on a new book focussing on the activity of women translators in the German and French speaking literary fields of the eighteenth century.



# PLANTATION COSMOPOLITANISM IN MARY ROBINSON'S *ANGELINA*: A NOVEL AND CHARLOTTE SMITH'S "THE STORY OF HENRIETTA"

Leah Grisham

English Department, George Washington University, Washington DC, USA

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the ways in which slave owners appropriated a superficial manifestation of the cosmopolitan ethos for their own ends in Mary Robinson's *Angelina: A Novel* (1796) and Charlotte Smith's "The Story of Henrietta" (1800). Plantation owners such as Smith's Mr. Maynard and Robinson's Sir Edward Clarendon are not interested in promoting cosmopolitan ideals of shared humanity across difference but use a façade of cosmopolitanism to get rich while suppressing the rights of all subordinates – including slaves and women. Rather than simply using slavery as an analogy for the subjection of British women, or vice versa, this essay shows how both writers are invested in tracing the extent of corruption that the slave trade and plantation cosmopolitanism wrought on everyday life in England, especially for women. Slavery created an economic system that rendered the slave owner all-powerful. As in Immanuel Kant's writings on cosmopolitanism, violence – particularly inspired by contemporary slave and Maroon uprisings – plays a vital role in purging society from tyranny and moving toward an enlightened cosmopolitanism.

**KEYWORDS** Charlotte Smith; Mary Robinson; slavery; cosmopolitanism; violence; Maroon wars

This essay examines Mary Robinson's *Angelina: A Novel* (1796) and Charlotte Smith's "The Story of Henrietta" (1800) within the fraught nexus of cosmopolitanism and the plantation system.<sup>1</sup> These narratives expose the ways in which slave owners appropriate visible markers of cosmopolitanism as a means to signal and enable authority: a habit I term plantation cosmopolitanism. The respective plantation cosmopolites – the villains within the narratives – are uninterested in espousing cosmopolitan ideals, such as sustained engagement with other cultures or a respect for shared humanity across difference, but instead adopt a superficial façade of cultural engagement to perpetuate their own interests. Robinson's Sir Edward Clarendon fills his estate with Orientalized, commodified objects that, rather than demarcating a commitment to cosmopolitanism, betray his eagerness to obscure the source of his

wealth. Mr. Maynard, Smith's villain, objectifies the enslaved women on his plantation; he has many intimate interactions with representatives of other cultures that are exploitative rather than cosmopolitan. Indeed, Robinson and Smith show that plantation cosmopolitanism hinges on oppressing subordinate groups, such as the enslaved and women, and it is in the connections these narratives forge between oppressed groups that the authors' own cosmopolitan perspective emerges.

It is useful to delineate how this essay understands cosmopolitanism and how – precisely – plantation cosmopolitanism perverts it. Drawing on the work of Galin Tihanov, Enit Karafili Steiner explains: “the cosmopolitan favors interaction over multicultural isolationism; that is, the disengaged living next to each other of difference and otherness. Cosmopolitanism acknowledges and incorporates difference ... it is premised on a shared human constitution”.<sup>2</sup> The concept of a “shared human constitution” is especially important to cosmopolitanism's configuration in this essay, since it insists humans share a common humanity that demands respect when different cultures interact with each other. However, achieving this state is complicated, according to Niamh Reilly, when the subjects are historically-oppressed members of society, such as women. Reilly's essay “Cosmopolitan Feminism and Human Rights” defines a more inclusive, feminist version of “moral cosmopolitanism” that is grounded in applications of cosmopolitanism in which “all persons are equal moral, reasoning, and autonomous beings. Consequently, everyone is entitled to be treated with equal concern and not as means to ends and, equally, everyone has a duty to treat others in the same way”.<sup>3</sup> Feminist cosmopolitanism focuses on how cosmopolitan notions of shared humanity and cross-cultural interaction are applied to lived reality in an emancipatory, anti-patriarchal, anti-capitalist manner: ideologies in which *Angelina: A Novel* and “The Story of Henrietta” are deeply invested. These narratives show how plantation cosmopolitanism appropriates markers of cosmopolitanism to further the corrupted self-interest of the plantation owner. The first section of the essay explores material manifestations of plantation cosmopolitanism that plantation owners utilize in their attempts to disguise the power-hungry inner workings of the slave trade. The latter portions of the essay, then, explore the ways in which plantation cosmopolitanism in fact subverts the very ethos it claims to adopt through violations of moral cosmopolitanism perpetuated against the enslaved and women: plantation cosmopolitanism necessitates oppression.

### Material Manifestations of Plantation Cosmopolitanism

In Mary Robinson's *Angelina: A Novel* (1796), Sir Edward Clarendon is introduced as a cruel father, crass bore, and absentee plantation owner who buys his way up the social ladder with his ill-begotten fortune. As Lord Acreland (a

nobleman who plans on marrying Sir Edward's daughter Sophia to replenish his dwindling bank account) puts it, Sir Edward is the “most complete savage in the universe” whose “name is proverbial in the city for everything low, sordid, illiterate, and unfeeling”.<sup>4</sup> However, as Robinson shows, the significant fortune he's amassed via the slave trade (he is, in fact, described as the wealthiest merchant in London) facilitates social acceptance through an appropriated, corrupted vision of cosmopolitanism.

As an absentee planter, Sir Edward reaps the financial benefits of slavery while holding a high social position in the metropole. Absenteeism held a contentious place in British society, which Eric Williams refers to as “the curse of the Caribbean”:

Returned to England, the planters' fondest wish was to acquire an estate, blend with the aristocracy, and remove marks of their origin ... Their colossal wealth permitted lavish expenditures which smacked of vulgarity and excited the envy and disapproval of the less opulent English aristocracy.<sup>5</sup>

Absentee plantation-owners like Sir Edward were disparaged for the ways they amassed and flaunted wealth, yet this wealth undoubtedly bought social influence. As Simon Gikandi notes, “through their patronage of art and taste, the slave-owning plantocracy, like Indian nabobs, laundered its ill-gotten money and refashioned its identity”.<sup>6</sup> Seemingly free from the taint of slavery, absentee planters thus attempted immersion into polite society.

The degree to which such ostentatious luxury and money laundering, as Gikandi terms it, are in fact perversions of cosmopolitan cultural engagement incapable of disguising the oppressive reality behind the pelf is on display in *Angelina: A Novel*. Robinson shows how Sir Edward corrupts the notion of being at home in the world and attempts to display the world within his home; he is nothing more than a “black traffic[er]” who commodifies cultural exchange.<sup>7</sup> This is especially obvious at Clarendon Abbey, Sir Edward's country seat, which Sir Edward renovates in a gaudy, Orientalized style. The East played an important role in the development of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism; as Gerard Delanty remarks, “[m]any of the major philosophers of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century were greatly interested in and inspired by Asian cultures ... which cannot all be dismissed as a fascination with the pursuit of the exotic”.<sup>8</sup> Such philosophers perform what Amanda Anderson terms “inclusionary cosmopolitanism”, which “finds expression through sympathetic imagination and intercultural exchange”, rather than through a more Eurocentric, exclusionary lens.<sup>9</sup>

Attempting to gain the appearance of a global, inclusionary cosmopolite through his home-improvement projects, Sir Edward's attempt is exposed as shallow materialism contingent upon the profits of slave labor. The gothic-style Abbey and grounds are grand, but Sir Edward's renovations

strip the estate of its charm and render it ridiculous. A crass Corinthian portico is one example; he believed it would add stateliness, but the result is an awkward architectural mash-up contingent on Europeanized configurations of Eastern architecture. Another augmentation is the Turkish pavilion, a free-standing, luxuriously-decorated, Orientalized structure for entertaining guests. "[A] leaden Mercury ... a bust of Julius Caesar, or Pompey, or Jupiter" adorning the top will, he thinks, add the finishing touch, but again the uncouth tackiness of his aesthetic is revealed.<sup>10</sup> Sir Edward's insatiable appetite for exotic buildings and viands are combined via the pinery and enclosed orange groves erected on the premises, meant to impress guests with exotic fruits, while upcoming renovations include tearing down a Roman-era arch to make way for a Chinese pagoda.

An outgrowth of materialist cosmopolitanism, Sir Edward's plantation cosmopolitanism provides an example of what Marx and Engels later critique in *The Communist Manifesto*. "The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country", they explain, alienating meaning, craft, and even the laborer from products and using the profits of their exploitation for their own benefit.<sup>11</sup> In Sir Edwards, however, Robinson shows that cosmopolitan ideals themselves are not necessarily the root of social inequality except where they become corrupted. Sir Edward's international, Orientalist tastes highlight his appropriation of cosmopolitanism; his interactions with other cultures are used for their status-conferring value. Sir Edward has no interest in genuine cultural exchange with anyone from Turkey or China, for example, but he appropriates Western interpretations of their cultures, as he (erroneously) believes these home design elements showcase his wealth, authority, and good taste while removing the stains of slavery.

Commercializing cosmopolitanism to further plantation interests was a popular practice in this period; Robinson's depiction of Sir Edward is likely inspired by families such as the Beckfords, who gained a fortune through their West Indian sugar plantations and subsequently bought their way into society. In fact, the Beckfords were often viewed as England's wealthiest family, which furthers the connection between them and Sir Edward, England's wealthiest merchant. Alderman Beckford was a massively wealthy Jamaican sugar planter who successfully parleyed his fortune into political power after moving to London in 1723, where he was twice elected Mayor. In 1745 he purchased the Fonthill Estate, which he extensively renovated in his own unique style. Gikandi describes it as: "clearly a house built on Creole money; its penchant for ostentatiousness was a sign of the owner's desire to display new wealth" that featured an "unabashedly orientalist interior, complete with an entrance known as the Egyptian Hall and a Turkish Room".<sup>12</sup> In 1795, just one year before the publication of *Angelina: A Novel*, Alderman Beckford's son William (author of the 1786 novel

*Vathek, An Arabian Tale*) erected Fonthill Abbey on the property, which rivaled the Orientalist luxury of his father's estate with a Turkish Room and a "suite of Oriental apartments, opulently furnished with Chinese and Japanese effects".<sup>13</sup> William considered himself a cosmopolitan; Fonthill Abbey was undoubtedly meant to showcase his extensive travels, the cultures he experienced, and the art he acquired along the way.<sup>14</sup> The fictional Sir Edward mimics the opulence of the Beckfords and their ilk. He "mistakes profusion for hospitality, and magnificence for taste: his attention fatigues and his conversation disgusts".<sup>15</sup> In *Angelina: A Novel*, materialistic, Orientalized displays of wealth only highlight distance from genuine cosmopolitan engagement with other cultures, evidencing instead crass, Orientalist consumerism built upon the backs of the enslaved.

Smith's "The Story of Henrietta" also includes commentary on the ways in which plantation cosmopolitanism mimicked outward manifestations of cosmopolitanism as markers of power while concealing its inextricable connection to slavery. Unlike *Angelina: A Novel's* absenteeism, readers are here introduced to Smith's depiction of life on the plantation itself. Though they differ in their specifics, both Sir Edward's and Maynard's usages of plantation cosmopolitanism hinge upon appropriating cosmopolitan symbols as mechanisms for displaying power: whether political, as in Sir Edward's case, or over the lives of his subordinates, as in Maynard's. In fact, the latter's reputation for luxury precedes him, as the Captain of the ship conveying Henrietta from England to Jamaica "speaks of the luxury of the table at my father's house; of the number of slaves kept solely for domestic purposes; of the quantity of wine consumed at his table, and of his consequence in the island".<sup>16</sup> Like Sir Edward, Maynard augments his personal comfort with the profits of his plantation. This outward luxury is framed in opposition to any positive personal traits. "But why do I hear nothing of his benevolence; of his private friends; of his kindness to his people, and of his being beloved as well as feared?" Henrietta muses in response to the captain's panegyrics toward her father's wealth.<sup>17</sup> Plantation wealth – and plantation cosmopolitanism – are antithetical to any sense of humanity or morality, according to Smith, since West Indian plantation homes – and their contents – projected the might of their owner.<sup>18</sup>

In "The Story of Henrietta", Smith reveals plantation cosmopolitanism as a mechanism by which this projection occurs, especially in terms of the people with whom Maynard populates his home. Though his first and second wives are deceased, Maynard has many children "by a variety of other women of every various shade, from the quadroon to the negro of the Gold coast, he had many other children, who were brought up by their mothers on his estates".<sup>19</sup> These individuals, Henrietta is shocked to find, are her half-siblings her father utilizes as house slaves, perhaps due to their sex, beauty, or half-English parentage. Women on the plantation, then, are doubly enslaved:

their labor is exploited – both in the fields and in the home – and, as Henrietta's discovery attests, they are victims of Maynard's sexual caprices.

Writing of Charlotte Smith's commitment to cosmopolitanism, Anne K. Mellor argues that she (and other female Romantic writers) exhibit a practical version of cosmopolitanism that effectively models how British society could move forward in a "lived daily practice" of "embodied" cosmopolitanism through embracing "international, interfaith and inter-racial marriages" that result in "hybridized children", as Steiner references in the Introduction to this volume.<sup>20</sup> Mellor focuses on positive constructions of lived cosmopolitanism in Smith's late novels *Desmond* (1792), *The Banished Man* (1794), and *The Young Philosopher* (1798), but in "The Story of Henrietta" readers see a corrupted version of this ideology at work in Maynard, whose interracial relationships are inherently exploitative. In fact, Henrietta notes "the awkwardness I felt when I was first under the necessity of addressing myself to them, seemed very wonderful to the people here, who see nothing extraordinary or uncommon in such an arrangement".<sup>21</sup> She is disconcerted by their presence in her home, as they provide daily reminders of her father's violence, but for others on the island it is simply a matter of course that Maynard exploits enslaved women in this manner. Philip D. Morgan explains that white men in the Caribbean had sexual relationships with black and creole women at high rates, usually through rape or similar coercive measures, so Maynard's situation is common.<sup>22</sup> These "strange female faces of many shades" highlight an uncanny proximity to cosmopolitanism via the façade of multi-cultural relationships they invoke, yet, wrought in sexual and chattel slavery, the predatory nature of these interactions strips away any semblance of an "embodied" cosmopolitan ethos.<sup>23</sup> Maynard is unconcerned with the innate humanity of the women he uses, nor does he truly appreciate their cultural differences, but instead objectifies them as symbols for his power as the plantation owner.

### Digging Deeper: Social Oppression and Plantation Cosmopolitanism

As the above discussion of Maynard reveals, plantation cosmopolitanism is characterized by deep abuses of power in addition to its superficial façade of cosmopolitan engagement with other cultures. The power that plantation cosmopolites, like Sir Edward and Maynard, garner from their ability to disguise the immorality of their wealth is applied to everyone under their control. The remainder of this essay highlights the extent to which plantation cosmopolitanism is contingent upon and reinforces the oppression of women and slaves, keeping in mind Reilly's argument that feminist "moral cosmopolitanism" demands "all persons are equal moral, reasoning, and autonomous beings": notions stripped away by plantation cosmopolitanism but

reintroduced in the conclusions of Robinson's and Smith's novels.<sup>24</sup> These authors are unique among their contemporaries in that they show material connections between chattel slavery and the oppression of British women, rather than calling on slavery as a descriptor for the mistreatment of British women that is removed from in-depth consideration of the slave institution: a common rhetorical move in the late eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Robinson and Smith show that, despite enacting a cosmopolitan façade, Sir Edward's and Maynard's plantation cosmopolitanism violates core cosmopolitan tenets. As Amanda Anderson has shown, cosmopolitanism "insist[s] on the need for informing principles of self-reflexivity, critique, and common humanity", and it "places a value on reciprocal and transformative encounters between strangers variously construed".<sup>26</sup> Plantation cosmopolites disregard cosmopolitanism's call for shared humanity and self-reflexivity, as Reilly and Anderson describe, and instead hinge their bid for power upon actively oppressing both the enslaved and women who fall under their rule. In *Angelina: A Novel* and "The Story of Henrietta", this anti-cosmopolitan oppression is perpetuated explicitly for commercial profits and the interest of the plantation.

In *Angelina: A Novel*, Sir Edward's daughter Sophia is depicted as the primary victim of his oppression, but his sense of authority over her is rooted in his role as a slave owner. The novel's primary conflict occurs because Sir Edward, who believes "a name is everything", demands Sophia marry Lord Acreland so he can reap the benefits of Acreland's aristocratic lineage, which he believes will provide him with more political clout.<sup>27</sup> The novel posits such behavior as mercenary: "[w]e constantly behold young women of little birth, and great fortune, as indelicately exposed to sale, as our horses or our hounds", Lord Acreland observes, remarking on the ways in which young women of means are mercilessly bartered via marriage for political and aristocratic connections.<sup>28</sup> Though recently knighted, Sir Edward is "eager in the pursuit of more substantial honors" and sees Sophia as his opportunity for gaining these, which he believes will further increase his standing in society.<sup>29</sup>

Determined to avoid this unwanted marriage, Sophia runs away from Clarendon Abbey, for which her aunt, Lady Watkins, praises her, noting that it shows an "independent spirit".<sup>30</sup> This is meant as a compliment, but Sir Edward's reaction is telling. "Independence is the stalking horse for all sorts of absurdities", he exclaims, "I should like to know what would come of my plantations if such doctrines are encouraged ... Hav'n't I made a fortune by slavery! and I warrant independence had nothing to do in the profits of *black traffic*".<sup>31</sup> Quashing any sense of independence in his slaves is crucial to his success; Sir Edward applies that same principle of dominance to his relationship with his daughter. His comments reveal connections between the slave industry and the treatment of women within the domestic



commodity and Maria as the culmination of generations of race- and gender-based oppression.

### Violence's Role in a more Cosmopolitan World Order

The connection between Henrietta and Maria is just one of the mechanisms through which "The Story of Henrietta" advocates for a more cosmopolitan order to replace the plantation cosmopolitanism women and the enslaved faced. The fates of Henrietta and the enslaved are also linked through the violence that releases them from Maynard's reign of terror. According to one of the most prolific philosophers of cosmopolitanism, Immanuel Kant, violence is an unfortunate but necessary step in propelling societies toward cosmopolitanism.

[F]inally, after devastations, revolutions, and even complete exhaustion, [Nature] brings them to that which reason could have told them at the beginning and with far less sad experience, to wit, to step from the lawless condition of savages into a league of nations.<sup>39</sup>

Violence and war, then, are stepping stones for societies to reach cosmopolitan right and peaceful prosperity. As Michael Scrivener says,

[t]he hidden purpose of wars, Kant argued, as bloody and barbaric as they were, was to develop necessary aspects of human nature until the species would be compelled to find cosmopolitan law as the most suitable form of international relations.<sup>40</sup>

In Smith's account – as in Robinson's, discussed below – violence proves useful to those oppressed by Maynard.

Drawing on ubiquitous contemporary accounts of slave rebellions, including the Second Maroon War (Jamaica, 1795-6) and the Haitian Revolution (Saint Domingue, 1791-1804), Smith's depiction of slaves and Maroons highlights the justification for violently rebelling against their tyrannical master in hopes of obtaining a society in which their humanity is not erased. Maynard spends most of his time "engaged, deeply engaged, in quelling those unhappy people whom they call Maroons", since, as Henrietta explains, they encourage and harbor runaway slaves.<sup>41</sup> So horrific are the "modes of revenge" he utilizes to suppress the Maroons and runaways that Henrietta must leave the room when he discusses them. However, as readers find out later, it is this very violence that leads to Maynard's downfall. Denbigh narrates:

I found one of Mr. Maynard's plantations had been destroyed by the Maroons, (to whom he was particularly obnoxious,) joined by some of his own runaway-negroes; that, urged to more than his useful extravagance of passion by this outrage, he had indulged his vindictive temper in great and unjustifiable severities towards the people upon all his estates; severities which served only to irritate the minds even of those who had till then most faithfully adhered to him.<sup>42</sup>

It is Maynard's violence that turns his slaves against him; they band together and revolt, killing him and opening the door for many slaves to escape into the Maroon communities, mirroring contemporary slave uprisings. As the above quote makes clear, however, their violence is justified by Maynard's extreme cruelty: it is warranted, retributive violence. Furthermore, when Denbigh claims "all upon" Maynard's estates suffered "great and unjustifiable severities", he refers to more than the slaves: this encompasses the liminal half-daughters of the estates and Henrietta, as well. "Misery", Henrietta's uncle explains, "is, indeed, the certain concomitant of slavery. It follows with undeviating step the tyrant who imposes, and the slave who endures the fetters".<sup>43</sup> The destruction and misery wrought by the slave trade are profuse, infecting every aspect of life on the plantation. As the miseries of those oppressed by slavery are intertwined, however, so too is their freedom. The slave revolution nullifies the betrothal between Henrietta and Sawkins, subsequently facilitating her marriage to her beloved Denbigh. Esther Wohlgenut argues "the 'cosmopolitan purpose' behind Kant's idea of a universal history is thus the development of humanity's capacity for reason, its ongoing process towards enlightenment".<sup>44</sup> It is, I argue, this "ongoing process" at work in Smith's novel. While the ending does not necessarily bring a comprehensive cosmopolitan world order, what it does show is progress toward a world in which individuals – especially women and Africans (and their descendants) in the West Indies – are closer to having their humanities recognized, rather than denied.

Existing criticism of "The Story of Henrietta" often asks if an abolitionist message is present within the narrative. George E. Boulukos, Adriana Craciun, and Moira Ferguson conclude that, ultimately, there is no abolitionist stance within the text; as Boulukos puts it, "brutalization can produce enlightenment in whites, but only serves to confirm the inherent brutality of Africans".<sup>45</sup> These critics draw on the fact that Smith's representation of West Indian slaves collapses into racist stereotypes, especially in the house slave Amponah who threatens to rape Henrietta and the violent Maroons who capture her when she runs away from the plantation. Such depictions, I suspect, stem from the sources that Smith consulted while researching Jamaican slavery such as Edward Long's massively-racist *The History of Jamaica* (1774). Smith appears to accept his depictions of African slaves and their West-Indian born descendants – especially men – as potentially threatening and lascivious, which she then capitalizes on in part to heighten the terrors that Henrietta experiences. This racism should not be excused, but it should be considered in relation to the narrative as a whole, which fosters connections between the enslaved and Henrietta. Usefully, Joel Quirk distinguishes eighteenth-century abolitionist ideology from cosmopolitanism, noting that though they often overlap, cosmopolitanism centered on shared notions of equality and humanity, rather than just the end of the slave

trade; abolition was a political stance that often maintained racist assumptions about the inferiority of Africans even among those who believed the trade immoral.<sup>46</sup> Cosmopolitanism, then, is more focused on finding the humanity within difference and respecting that humanity despite the circumstances, making it a more useful analytic for deciphering "The Story of Henrietta" than abolitionism.

Smith's biography also reveals personal connections to the slave trade that both complicate her relation to the abolition movement and reveal a deep-seeded disdain for the slave trade and its agents. Smith's father-in-law Richard owned several Barbadian sugar plantations that Smith dealt with directly after her estrangement from her wastrel husband Benjamin. Often desperate for money, the revenues from these plantations were at times her only hope of income. While, on the one hand, it is somewhat shocking to read letters in which Smith matter-of-factly discusses selling enslaved persons, on the other hand her letters betray the hatred and mistrust she felt toward plantation overseers; she was often frustrated by her epistolary encounters with them, finding them rude and unhelpful. She also suspected someone in Barbados was embezzling money from the plantations but was unable to pinpoint the source. Indeed, shortly before her death she referred to "Barbados traders" as "Men who are notorious for their total want of honesty and who do not even affect the semblance of it".<sup>47</sup> Additionally, she blamed the Smith plantations for the death of her son Charles, who died there while looking into the plantation's mismanagement. In fact, in 1804 Smith suggested that her son might have been murdered by someone on the plantation, writing of Charles' dealings with a local agent in Barbados that: "of His death, the wretch took advantage, & such is my opinion from long & fatal experience of the people in Barbados that I should not be surprised if his death had been hasten'd".<sup>48</sup> So low was Smith's opinion of the men who ran the British West Indian sugar industry that she believed them capable murder or foul play for financial gain. It is no wonder, then, that in "The Story of Henrietta" such men are represented as the worst examples of insurmountable corruption. Though the letters in which she addresses her family plantations are characterized by their anger toward the overseers and exclude discussion of the immorality of the slave trade itself, fictional works like "The Story of Henrietta" address the topic openly.

In studying Smith's personal dealings with sugar plantations in connection to the narrative, we see that the sugar industry corrupts everything it touches, including family relationships and governing institutions that care more about profits than humanity and which turn a blind eye to the violence of slavery and the mercenary marriage practices to which young women were subjected. In "Henrietta's Tale" unauthorized rebellion, as opposed to institutional changes, emerge as the only possibility for escaping unjust oppression. As Henrietta is justified in her refusal to obey her father's command

that she marry Sawkins and in her decision to run away to escape his tyranny, so too are the slaves and Maroons vindicated for deposing the figurehead of the plantation system. In this sense, "The Story of Henrietta" should be read as an anti-slavery text, but one in which emancipation (from slavery and from tyrannical family ties) is initiated by the subjects themselves rather than through any institutional assistance.

Though it takes place in the heart of England rather than within a plantation setting, *Angelina: A Novel* also includes a discussion of slavery that yolks the shared humanity of the heroine and those enslaved on her father's plantation. As Sharon Setzer concludes, "there is not simply an analogy between Sir Edward's attitudes toward his slaves and his daughter but a causal connection".<sup>49</sup> In Robinson's account, the subjectivity of the enslaved is especially emphasized. Lady Watkins expresses a wish that men with "black hearts", like Sir Edward, would be exposed to the public and sent to Africa, where:

they would then behold the miseries they deride; they would then confess, that the poor negro can feel the scourge – can faint in the burning rays of noon – can hope, can fear – can shrink from torture and sigh for liberty as well as the European.<sup>50</sup>

She humanizes slaves and highlights the miseries that men like Sir Edward bring, referring to the physical "torture" they endure, the emotional trauma of the slave experience, and their innate desire for liberty. Humanizing African slaves in this way presents a more egalitarian ethos to counter scientific theories of race which, as Roxann Wheeler has shown, crystalized by the 1780s.<sup>51</sup>

Robinson, like Smith, employs a measure of retributive justice that removes Sir Edward from his position of authority based on associations with slave uprisings, linking Sophia's freedom from her father to a more cosmopolitan world order in which the humanities of both women and the enslaved are respected. Near the end of the novel Sir Edward imprisons Sophia in a tower as punishment for her refusal to marry Lord Acreland. Just when her situation is at its worst Sir Edward must travel to London to deal with "losses of considerable consequence, news of the most unpleasant nature" from the West Indies that "require[s] his immediate attention".<sup>52</sup> Readers do not learn the exact nature of this "unpleasant" news, but from Sophia's reaction we know it is bad: Sir Edward faces financial ruin. Given the publication date of *Angelina: A Novel*, (1796) readers are likely meant to associate this disturbance with a slave or Maroon uprising. Both the Haitian Revolution and Second Maroon War were on-going in 1796. As Miles Ogborn points out, these disturbances featured heavily in print news coverage, making it likely that readers would have associated Sir Edward's troubles with contemporary accounts of the West Indies.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, Sir Edward's last name – Clarendon – is also the name of the Jamaican county where one of the first major

(British) slave rebellions took place in 1690. Though this took place over 100 years before the publication of *Angelina: A Novel*, it was commonly cited in the many historical (or quasi-historical) accounts of Jamaican history that became popular during the later eighteenth century. Robinson's use of the surname "Clarendon", combined with popular interest in West Indian rebellions in the 1790s, indicates a violent uprising has likely taken place on Sir Edward's plantation.

Ultimately, Sir Edward does not lose as much of his fortune as he initially believed, but for the remainder of the novel he is a humbled, passive figure: the diametric opposite of the overbearing tyrant to whom readers are first introduced. Indeed, he is hardly mentioned throughout the rest of the novel as Sophia descends from the tower in which she was entrapped and marries her beloved Belmont, a match that Sir Edward forbade before the West Indian disaster. Until this point Sir Edward was a constant source of violence and terror but when his plantation and profits suffer a loss, so does his authority over Sophia. Robinson's mention of the almost-disaster on his plantation is coded as a source of retribution for his past violence. In fact, Adriana Craciun argues that violence is a significant theme across Robinson's work. She asserts that Robinson "insist[s] that women enlarge their understanding of honor and take up arms to actively defend it and themselves".<sup>54</sup> The violence of *Angelina: A Novel*, then, shows that violence can have positive impacts, especially for those who have little recourse to other sources of power.

In this way, the endings of *Angelina: A Novel* and "The Story of Henrietta" mirror each other; both the enslaved and women are oppressed by a tyrannical plantation cosmopolite who takes advantage of his subordinates to enrich himself, emphasizing the connections between the two subordinated groups. By the ending of the novels, however, the slaves have violently rebelled against this master, freeing both themselves and the heroines from his wrath. While Sophia and Henrietta more explicitly regain their individual humanity and autonomy – it is ambiguous what exactly happens to the slaves in the end – the contemporary contexts of slave rebellions and Maroon wars suggest that in addition to eradicating the cruelest type of slave master, some likely escaped to freedom among the Maroon communities. While the abolition of slavery and legal enfranchisement of women are not the ultimate outcomes in these cases, Robinson's and Smith's narratives do depict incremental progress toward a world that better espouses cosmopolitanism.

In *Angelina: A Novel* and "The Story of Henrietta" Robison and Smith address the ways in which the plantation system appropriates a corrupted version of cosmopolitanism that perpetuates the abuses of slavery. Maynard engages in coerced sexual relations with women of all colors; his encounters with women from other cultures are conducted without respect to their dignity or will, and the offspring of these relationships are further exploited

through their forced labor on the plantation. Sir Edward's approach to plantation cosmopolitanism involves his commodification of cultural exchange in a slightly different manner: through his obsessive, Orientalized displays of wealth within his home. Deposing these tyrants – in violent fashion – releases British society (at home and abroad) from the hold of slavery and the oppression it encourages.

## Notes

1. Charlotte Smith, *The Story of Henrietta*, ed. Janina Nordius (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2012); Mary Robinson, *Angelina: A Novel*, ed. Sharon Setzer (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009).
2. Enit Karafili Steiner, "'Not to Abandon the Whole': Cosmopolitanism and Management in *The Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan* (1810)", *European Romantic Review*, 29.5 (2018): 658. See also: Galin Tihanov, "Cosmopolitanism in the Discursive Landscape of Modernity: Two Enlightenment Articulations", *Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism*, ed. David Adams and Galin Tihanov (London: Legenda Publishing, 2011), pp. 134–5.
3. Niamh Reilly, "Cosmopolitan Feminism and Human Rights", *Hypatia*, 22.4 (2007): 182.
4. Robinson, *Angelina*, 6.
5. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, third edition (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1994), pp. 85–6.
6. Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011), p. 149.
7. Robinson, *Angelina*, p. 240, italics in original.
8. Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), p. 39.
9. Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), p. 73.
10. Robinson, *Angelina*, 91.
11. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Jeffrey C. Isaac (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 77.
12. Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 135.
13. Peter Lindfield and Dale Townshend, "Reading *Vathek* and Fonthill Abbey: William Beckford's Architectural Imagination", *Fonthill Recovered: A Cultural History*, ed. Caroline Dakers (London: UCL Press, 2018), p. 291.
14. For more on Beckford as a cosmopolitan, see: Elinor Schaffer, "William Beckford in Venice, Liminal City: The Pavilion and Interminable Staircase", in *Venetian Views, Venetian Blinds: English Fantasies of Venice*, ed. Manfred Pfister and Barbara Schaff (Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 1994), pp. 73–88; Diego Saglia, "William Beckford's 'Sparks of orientalism' and the Material-Discursive Orient of British Romanticism", *Textual Practice*, 16.1 (2002): 75–92. Schaffer contends outright that "Beckford was a cosmopolitan", while Saglia argues Beckford's work vacillates between a cosmopolitan world view and Orientalism (77).
15. Robinson, *Angelina*, 48.
16. Smith, "Henrietta", 23.
17. *Ibid.*, 8.

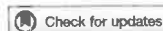
18. See Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 116. As Gikandi puts it, "the association between opulence and excess in the conception and execution of the 'English' buildings in the colonies was not incidental. As an icon of Englishness and money, the great house in the tropics represented what Ragatz aptly describes as 'an imposing structure'".
19. Smith, "Henrietta", p. 7.
20. Anne Mellor, "Embodied Cosmopolitanism and the British Romantic Woman Writer", *European Romantic Review*, 17.3 (2006): 292.
21. Smith, "Henrietta", p. 29.
22. Phillip D. Morgan, "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans, circa 1600-1780", in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Phillip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 157-219. Morgan explains: "the six or so white men living on one Jamaican estate in the early nineteenth century were twice as likely as the ninety black men there to sire a slave baby" (178).
23. Smith, "Henrietta", p. 28.
24. Reilly, "Cosmopolitan Feminism and Human Rights", p. 187.
25. Writers from both ends of the political spectrum called on this analogy. For example, socially-conservative Hannah More does so in her 1805 essay "Hints towards forming a Bill for the Abolition of the White Slave Trade, in the Cities of London and Westminster", as does the more radical Mary Hays in her essay "An Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women" (1798). Even Mary Wollstonecraft, who (as cited in this article) recognized the material connections between slavery and the oppression of women uses "enslave[d]" to describe the state of white women in other works, such as in her unfinished novel *Maria, or the Wrongs of Women* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), p. 86. Obviously this is a troubling descriptor given the fact that actual chattel slavery existed in the period.
26. Anderson, *The Powers of Distance*, p. 30, 31.
27. Robinson, *Angelina*, p. 76.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 240. Italics in original.
32. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, ed. Janet Todd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 232.
33. Robinson, *Angelina*, p. 278.
34. Smith, "Henrietta", p. 8.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 30, italics in original.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
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## Notes on contributor

*Leah Grisham* is a PhD candidate at George Washington University, where her project *Heroic Disobedience: The Forced Marriage Plot, 1748-1880* examines the ways in which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels use the marriage plot to interrogate the impact of oppressive financial structures on women. Her work appears in *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* (summer 2017) and *Victorian Periodicals Review* (spring 2019).



## LESSONS OF SKIN: COSMOPOLITAN SOLIDARITY IN THE WOMAN OF COLOUR

Enit Karafili Steiner

English Department, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland

### ABSTRACT

This essay discusses the implications of the phrase a “citizen of the world” in the anonymous novel *The Woman of Colour* (1808), a novel that begs attention for locating moral world citizenship in the mixed-race female body. The essay ponders views of cosmopolitan justice, emphasizing those based on cosmopolitan solidarity. It proceeds by first, historicizing the phenomenon of solidarity within the abolitionist movement prior to 1807; and second, by drawing attention to a process of literalization that debunks skin myths in the name of a shared humanity and in the service of the abolition of slavery in the British colonies that would be achieved in 1833. The essay’s final proposition is to read the woman of colour and her cosmopolitan political catechism in the tradition of Christian allegorical exegesis. This tradition rejects abstraction and guards intact the (interracial) embodiment and historicity of text.

**KEYWORDS** Solidarity; cosmopolitanism; justice; epidermalization; allegory; citizen of the world

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an incapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.

Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”, 1963<sup>1</sup>

When Martin Luther King Jr. predicated the non-violent African American struggle for equal Civil Rights on an understanding of justice as one single garment vulnerable to its suffering threads, he was pointing to a kind of relationality that signals the hallmark of the cosmopolitanism produced by Enlightenment philosophy. His words echo those of Immanuel Kant in *Perpetual Peace* (1795), from which twentieth-century scholarship of globalization draws the idea of cosmopolitan justice and peace:

The growing prevalence of (a narrower or wider) community among the peoples of the earth has now reached a point at which the violation of right at any one place of the earth is felt in all places. For this the idea of cosmopolitan right is no fantastic or exaggerated conception of right.<sup>2</sup>

In this essay, Kant put in the possession of every human the right to visit any spot of the planet and not be harmed by the laws of the host country. This was a freedom of mobility, however, that Kant restricted by disallowing the freedom of settlement. The reason that Kant was as determined to claim the right to visit as he was to curtail the right to settle lies with the European imperial expansion that occurred once visitors usurped the right to become settlers in foreign lands. The relationality of justice and the concern with a world in need of justice towards those whose rights have been violated by the rapacious European colonial enterprise connects Kant and King, and, by implication, the trading, shuffling and bondage of human bodies during the transatlantic slave trade. Kant and King may seem a spectacularly mismatched pair, keeping in mind Kant’s infamous racism. However, a diachronic reading of Kant’s thought, as the one offered by Kantian scholar Pauline Kleingeld, makes this pairing compatible. As Kleingeld shows, Kant had relinquished many of his racist assumptions by the time he wrote *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795): from then on, “[h]e explicitly strengthens the juridical status of individuals regardless of race”.<sup>3</sup> It is this shift that enables him to critique European practices like colonialism and the slave trade and strengthen the position of non-whites through the notion of cosmopolitan right and justice.

My interest in these cosmopolitan approaches to justice – that is, approaches that align local and universal justice – in the (post)colonial context is prompted by a novelistic cosmopolitan endeavour only recently made available to contemporary readers. I refer to the anonymous novel *The Woman of Colour*, published in London in 1808 only a year after the abolition of the British slave trade, and edited by Lyndon J. Dominique in 2008.<sup>4</sup> The title’s woman of colour, Olivia Fairfield, is an orphaned mulatto heiress, the offspring of a West-Indian planter and an African slave. She is the native human product of slave economy in the West Indies, the offspring that Jamaican historian Lucille Mathurin Mair calls “problem children, requiring special handling” by colonial law.<sup>5</sup> After her father’s death, Olivia must travel from Jamaica to England to fulfil a condition in his will that entails her inheritance to marriage to a white British cousin. The novel is extraordinary on several grounds and not least because it centres on a coloured protagonist by opting for the epistolary form that made Pamela, Clarissa, and Evelina, household names. The *Woman of Colour*’s narrative consists of the packages of letters that Olivia Fairfield sends to her white governess in Jamaica, letters that record her passage to and encounters in the metropole. The novel also contributes to the historical and aesthetic imagination related to a group of people that has left little trace, people of colour living in Britain at the height of the nation’s slave economy. Thus, literary imagination complements historiographical research like Kathleen Chater’s *Untold Histories* (2009) that seeks to gain insights into the ways people of colour lived and colour of skin



affected their lives and integration in white society. In particular, the novel contributes to imagining the lives of mixed-race people, a group that Chater finds the least recorded.<sup>6</sup> The novel is also a rare representation of interracial marriages unfolding in the heart of Britain, and not in its colonial margins, where, according to Felicity Nussbaum, contemporary writers relegate interracial alliances.<sup>7</sup> The time of publication is doubly significant: first, the novel appeared in the years of the unfinished business between the abolition of the slave trade (1807) and the abolition of slavery in the British colonies (1833). Second, it predates by 23 years the focalization on female black subjectivity that would emerge in slave narratives like *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave* (1831).

The choice of an anonymous novel in a collection of essays that privileges women's writing begs explanation. The title page, attributing the novel to E. M. Foster, a prolific and conservative woman writer of the late eighteenth century, would justify this choice, had this attribution not been refuted by the editors of *The English Novel 1770–1829*.<sup>8</sup> It is striking that only *The Monthly Review*, one of the three contemporary reviewers, assumes the author to be a woman.<sup>9</sup> Possibly this reviewer knew of Mrs. E. M. Foster's earlier works, or found the matter of the story close to a woman writer's sensibility and style. At least, among readers who took the word of *The Monthly Review*, the novel circulated as one written by a woman. I do not wish to stress this point more than it is necessary to emphasize the centrality of readership and reception that motivates my choice of the novel. It is the cultural labour, first, set in circulation by the letters of the woman of colour and, second, elevated to allegorical function by the editor of the letters that make this enterprise a woman's endeavour. The present reading then privileges the gender work produced by the female protagonist in the cognitive archive of its readership over the gender of the author, important as this may be in other respects.

Out of the wealth of themes broached by *The Woman of Colour*, I dwell on the cosmopolitan impulse of solidarity and argue its allegorical function. Allegory and inhabitants of the colonies constitute the focus of Srinivas Aravamudan's seminal study *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688–1804*. I take from Aravamudan his insistence on the agency of the tropicopolitan, the colonized subject who is a "fictive construct of the colonial tropology and actual resident of the tropical, object of representation and agent of resistance".<sup>10</sup> Despite this shared point of departure, our method and conclusions differ. Aravamudan argues that, read allegorically, the figure of the tropicopolitan tropicalizes the Enlightenment, "challeng[ing] the developing privilege of the Enlightenment cosmopolitans", which leads him to cast the term tropicopolitan as the Other of the cosmopolitan. Such distinction should ensure that the tropicopolitans be not subsumed by or subordinated to the figures of the metropolitan and cosmopolitan, figures which channel nationalist narratives.<sup>11</sup> Subordinated to the cosmopolitan, the tropicopolitan would

succumb to the metaphor of the white-washing that is at the heart of the tropical allegory scrutinized by Aravamudan. The cosmopolitan, as the big Other of the tropicopolitan, helms and closes the body of his study. However, for a figure that serves as the contrasting backdrop against which the contours of tropicopolitans emerge, Aravamudan's cosmopolitan is sorely undertheorized, especially in a century that kept revisiting the term, imbuing it with new associations. Its absence in the index of *Tropicopolitans* is symptomatic of this methodical omission. It is to this omission that the present essay speaks, by theorizing the notion of cosmopolitan solidarity in a tropological narrative, however aware that it is a modest contribution to a heterogeneous philosophical field. Read in the light of solidarity in Jamaica's planter society, the narrative of *The Woman of Colour* tropicalizes Enlightenment cosmopolitanism in that it requests and allegorizes the latter's radical fulfilment rather than annulment.

The subtitle of this essay may constitute an oxymoron, since solidarity and cosmopolitanism share common ground but can also be mutually exclusive. Indeed, solidarity can work against the inclusive principle that defines cosmopolitanism. The common ground they share is an ethos of care and moral responsibility. But, while solidarity can describe obligations toward a community with which one is affiliated, cosmopolitanism responds to obligations towards the whole human community that go against one's partiality for one's community.<sup>12</sup> Solidarity can be the opposite of cosmopolitanism when particular affiliations, ethnic, national, religious, take precedence over one's commitment to the worldwide human community. In this logic, where cosmopolitanism invokes a global outlook through detachment from local partialities, solidarity can defend the interest of particular communities, often communities to which one is related through some principle of likeness, such as ethnic, religious, economic, etc. By contrast, cosmopolitan solidarity, as one of the definitions goes, motivates persons to engage in "redistributive arrangements" of justice "drastically different from those that would maximize their own self-interest".<sup>13</sup> My argument in this analysis of *The Woman of Colour* considers a particular white-oriented solidarity and a cosmopolitan, black-oriented solidarity. Building on Dominique's insights, I select what I believe to be the most telling moment on solidarity and cosmopolitanism in the novel: a confrontational dialogue between the biracial protagonist and a little white boy who bluntly associates coloured skin with uncleanness.<sup>14</sup> I read this moment as looking forward to actions that strive for inclusion and claim the equal and inalienable dignity of the coloured body, actions that would lead to the abolition of British slavery, but also be part and parcel of the ideology behind movements like the Civil Rights. I suggest that we read the novel allegorically, whereby the bi-racial body atypically – that is, against empirical evidence – performs cosmopolitan solidarity, prioritizing one of its two competing heritages in the name of universal

justice. To prioritize in this context means to avoid the "fallacy of the possible middle", a most acute temptation to compromise between the two extreme positions occupied by the hybrid subject, white/British and black/African.<sup>15</sup> In this novel, the bi-racial body voices the extreme position of black-oriented solidarity, in itself an expression of cosmopolitanism. Before arguing this crucial point, I briefly place solidarity and the approaches to justice that open this essay in the light of the abolitionist discourse of the late eighteenth century.

While Kant puts faith in a nature that pursues the rectification of injustice and a cosmopolitan distribution of rights, King's public address both berates lawmakers and appeals to the solidarity of the masses with the African American cause of Civil Rights. King's non-violent appeal for nationwide solidarity is cosmopolitan because it bridges the local anywhere and the universal everywhere and hopes for white and upper-class black Americans to surmount the comfort of race and class privilege. Although wary of presentism, I refer here to King's appeal for solidarity because it is grounded in anti-racism and delivers a good definition for cosmopolitan solidarity, challenging readers "to rise above the narrow confines of our individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity".<sup>16</sup> Rising to this challenge aims to transform meaningfully the interconnected world, in King's words, from a geographical "neighbourhood" into a "brotherhood".<sup>17</sup> In comparison, although a touchstone of cosmopolitan law and right, Kant's piece leaves little to no room for the cosmopolitan solidarity of worldwide brotherhood. Kant's rather counterintuitive faith rests on the assumption that humans' unsociable sociability causes social conflict, but this social conflict has the beneficiary outcome of forcing humans to use reason and, eventually, after periods of warring, to recognize the unreasonableness of war. Compelled by individualistic concerns, humans come to identify world peace as the most satisfying condition towards which all rational governments and social arrangements should gear. Just as individuals, exhausted by antagonism, abandon the state of nature to form a state, so states subscribe to the cosmopolitan federation, which is the structure that best serves the self-interest of states and individuals.<sup>18</sup> Solidarity, for Kant, grows out of self-interest.

Self-interest and solidarity feature prominently in the transatlantic abolitionist discourse. They are both present from the early days of abolitionist sentiment in the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century. Self-interest would principally appear as financial benefit and as a religious fear of divine retribution. Self-interest as fear invoked a Christian God that would reckon with the slave-trading nations for the sins ingrained in slave labour. As Christopher Leslie Brown astutely remarks, "Often activists took up the issue of slavery less because they cared about Africans than because they regretted its impact on society, on the empire, on public morals, or on the collective sense of self".<sup>19</sup> This strand of the abolitionist

discourse foregrounds white affiliations and the moral health of white communities, eclipsing concern for Africans. Although planters felt threatened because they saw in this attitude the breach of white solidarity, reminding their compatriots of the immense national wealth accumulated by slave economy, the self-interest at the root of this strand of abolitionism was distinct from forthright solidarity with slaves. Financial self-interest would resurface at several moments during the last third of the eighteenth century and muddle the story of the complicity of abolitionism with economy. The most recent contribution in explaining the relationship between abolitionist action and economic profit comes from David Beck Ryden, whose book-length study sheds light on the grounds and strategies that brought to fruition the abolitionist bill in the House of Commons and the House of Lords in 1806. Ryden demonstrates that "the humanitarian argument" based on solidarity with African slaves dominated in the House of Commons. However, in the House of Lords, which had refuted earlier bills that were argued on the injustice of the slave trade, the argument of financial self-interest carried the day. Knowing his audience, Lord Grenville defended the bill before the Lords urging them "[t]o abolish the importation of Slaves from the Coast of Africa, not for humanity, or upon considerations of justice, but upon the ground of policy, and to prevent the ruin of those islands".<sup>20</sup> Grenville, aware that the Lords had been impervious to appeals for solidarity with slaves, emphasized the financial hazard of speculations fuelled by the decline of sugar economy under the pressures of the Haitian Revolution and brought the House to the conclusion that imperial fiscal prudence and self-interest demanded the abolition of the slave trade. Finally, what Grenville proposed was prudential solidarity with plantocracy.

Solidarity mattered in the daily practice of the transatlantic slave trade. The planter class anxiously sought to uphold the appearance of white solidarity in front of the enslaved population, while eroding solidarity among slaves through a system of negative incentives (infliction of pain, execution, or post-mortem violence) and positive incentives (promotion of few selected slaves as skilled labourers, companions, as well as recipients of material gifts and privileges).<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, white unity was to be potentiated by the erosion of slave solidarity, so that the slave community would come to believe in the cohesive and impenetrable sturdiness of white investment in slave economy. Despite its motivation (self-interest or solidarity with blacks), abolitionist sentiment and action were doubly damaging to plantocratic rule, tearing at the fabric of white unity and shifting solidary sentiments towards the slaves.

In light of this historical development of solidarity, I turn now to *The Woman of Colour*, where the biracial protagonist enjoys a privileged position but also articulates what Aimé Césaire considers to be a political form of solidarity of *négritude* that is horizontal. As Souleymane Bachir Diagne explains,

inscribes the failure of satire: derisive laughter cannot get to the heart of "the moment of panic [...] where cultural differences contingently and conflictually touch".<sup>30</sup> It is striking that the black body continuously stands as the emblem of cultural incomprehension (and, therefore, of apprehension) in contexts as historically removed as that of a nineteenth-century novel, the experience of a postcolonial subject like Fanon, but also as early as in John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), where Locke sees the confrontation of the child with the black body as a crisis of definition marking the child's transition from simple to complex ideas.

Locke explains that "the child can demonstrate to you that a Negro is not a man, because white colour was one of the constant simple ideas of the complex idea he calls man".<sup>31</sup> The child in *The Woman of Colour* displays a simple understanding of the human but also literalizes the prejudices that, as Roxann Wheeler has demonstrated, from the 1770s onwards correlated moral and mental capacity with skin colour, and even half a century earlier in the colonies reduced black slaves to chattel as did the Jamaican Slave Act of 1696.<sup>32</sup> Such associations lie behind Olivia's fear of epidermization throughout the novel, the fear of repelling her future husband ("my person", as in appearance or complexion, "may disgust him!", 53), before the child enters the scene claiming that black skin is black from dirt. Her fear is justified when her husband confesses: "I 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!" (*Woman of Colour* 102). Consequently, Olivia's reaction to the child centres on the boy who literalizes the racial prejudice brewing in adult silence. But what is Olivia Fairfield's reaction to the child? Is she petrified and unable to react like Fanon, and like him, does she feel responsible for her "body, race and ancestors"?<sup>33</sup> First, Olivia refuses all adult attempt to silence the child and handles this moment as what King called a moment of "creative" tension that brings out in the open prejudice in its literal shape.<sup>34</sup> Second, Olivia's reaction stays attuned to her dual heritage. Like her white ancestor, Richardson's Pamela, she draws attention to her body as a source of truth. To demonstrate the truth of the bodies of her African ancestors, she tests British prejudice on her coloured body. Literally. White body on black body:

"I took him on my lap, and holding his hand in mine I said? You see the difference in our hands?"

"Yes, I do, indeed", said he, shaking his head. "Mine looks *clean* and *yours* looks *not so very dirty*".

"I am glad it does not look so *very dirty*", said I; "but you will be surprised when I tell you that mine is quite as clean as your own, and that the black woman's below, is as clean as either of them". (78-9)

Placing a handkerchief in the child's hand and compelling him to observe and experiment with her own skin literalizes the dirt implied in the metaphorical whitewashing that circulated in print and oral culture. Literalization here is a bringing out in the open of myths that feed discrimination, a literalization of skin-related similes like King's approach to injustice which is "Like a boil that can never be cured as long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its pus-flowing ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light".<sup>35</sup> The child-subject, the recipient of racial slurs and metaphors, moves from the margins of cultural spectatorship to the centre stage of the event. He "should prove the truth" of dark skin, Olivia insists when she gives him the handkerchief (79). Empiricism is applied to teach the white boy about African genetic heritage. This simple experiment demonstrates what Robert Boyle, Fellow of the Royal Society, had concluded in his *Experiments and Considerations Touching Colours* (1664) that the difference between white and black skin is skin-deep and not the result of climatic conditions or divine curse: "the Seat of that Colour seems to be but the thin Epiderme, the outward Skin".<sup>36</sup> Underneath this thin layer of difference, Boyle confirmed, there is the commonality of human flesh.

After demystifying the mysophobia of white racial hygiene, Olivia's teaching asserts commonality in origins. Drawing on the religious discourse of The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1787), she grounds a shared humanity in the same divine agency of creation. The physical contact with her lap, the maternal receptacle, triggers the unfolding of new ideas in the child. The scene resembles that of William Blake's poem "Little Black Boy", where "She [the mother] took me on her lap and kissed me", before explaining through a Christian creationist metaphor that God has clothed humans with clouds, some black, some white, to cover the souls until the time comes where all clouds disappear.<sup>37</sup> The insertion of such an emblematic scene in which a child is the subject of anti-racist teaching concurs with the rise of anti-slavery sentiment in the children's literature of the late-eighteenth century. *The Woman of Colour* absorbs within the body of the novel the rising genre of children's literature, putting faith in a generation that in the 1830s would declare the institution of slavery untenable. But there is a significant reversal in this absorption: while children's literature assumed a knowledgeable, morally-superior adult audience whose teaching targeted the young, this scene of childhood from *The Woman of Colour* has an immediate double audience: the child and the adults. In view of this audience that includes and rebukes the adult, this scene of instruction has something in common with the interludes of anti-colonialist philosophes such as Diderot, interludes known as political catechism (*catéchisme politique*).<sup>38</sup> Her anti-racist political catechism is but "half a victory" until she has proven that not just biracial skin but the skin of her black servant is not dirty, until the little boy reforms his opinion: "She [Dido] is *very dirty*",

quickly correcting himself with due embarrassment, "I mean *very black*" (80). When her sister-in-law sneeringly dismisses Dido as "a poor negro", Olivia counters: "She is the most faithful of creatures [...] and I love her dearly" (80). As someone with her own story, although a secondary character, Dido appears personalized, not a cipher, but a woman whose life is interwoven with the Fairfield estate. Being born to enslaved parents on the estate, Dido's and Olivia's lives have been bound together. To the surprise of her sister-in-law, Olivia acknowledges this bond and the foundational equality between Dido and herself. Olivia extrapolates from Dido's life the fate and future of slaves, attributing any existing differences to socialization and economic privilege: "God Almighty created them men, equal with their masters, if they had the same advantages, and the same blessings of education" (80). Created by the same God, possessor of the same human principle, masters and slaves share "in the same garment of destiny", to say it with King's words.

The novel is sensitive to white solidarity in that it evinces knowledge of pro-planter logic in the assumptions of Mrs. Merton. Racial prejudice and pro-planter logic lead Mrs. Merton to expect Olivia's faithfulness toward her planter father and the slave economy that makes a mixed-race planter's daughter a covetable match for her white cousin. Planter logic requires the daughter of a West Indies planter to be an anti-abolitionist. The educated mulatto, the product of plantocratic benevolence, is expected above all to place her solidarity with her white parentage. On a more pragmatic level, Mrs. Merton also reminds Olivia that abolitionist action goes against Olivia's self-interest because it kills the very source of riches that enables her to move in British society and to claim equality. Dislikeable though Mrs. Merton may be, her shrewdness inures the reader against the fantasy of mixed-race offspring as a progressive presence, or, as David Hollinger puts it, "the country's salvation".<sup>39</sup> Lucille Mathurin Mair's research on the biracial woman in plantocratic Jamaican society refutes this fantasy. Mair describes the mulatto's relationship to her dual heritage as one of dual resentment, confirming thus Mrs. Merton's assumption:

If the mulatto nursed a resentment against the white society that would never fully accept her, she bore an even greater resentment against the black ancestry which made her unacceptable. If, on the one hand, she could exploit her command of white male attention, on the other, she could exercise the extreme of prejudice and discrimination against her black kin. In a crisis, she could be relied on to throw her lot in with the white interest, which always promised promotion, which accommodated, albeit uneasily the brown skin, as long as it wore its mask.<sup>40</sup>

In view of this sobering empirical indication, Olivia's solidarity is unusual. Her solidarity becomes cosmopolitan when the "feelings of humanity" and Christian principles impel her to reject "this disgraceful traffic" and "be anxious for the emancipation of my more immediate brethren" (*Woman of*

*Colour* 81). What imparts a cosmopolitan impulse to solidarity here is the heroine's conscious alignment with her African heritage. Without negating her white lineage, she nonetheless abandons the historically prudent choice for Jamaican mulattos and sheds white solidarity based on a principle of human equality that unmasks epidermal myths. Her words, "my more immediate brethren", seal her choice to insert herself primarily into the family of Africa and consciously make this branch of her heritage more "immediate". There is no fantasy or "fallacy of the middle ground" here, no compromise between white profit-thirsty interest and black emancipation, no pro-slavery, ameliorationist project is coveted. However, Olivia's dual roots are intact, as she simultaneously inserts herself into the discourse of brotherhood of the French Revolution, which, according to Hauke Brunckhorst, appropriated for the political realm the Judeo-Christian idea of solidarity among a community of believers, where there was neither Jew nor Gentile.<sup>41</sup> The brotherhood of white European Enlightenment itself is shown to be the unfinished business behind the institution of slavery.

The very structure of the novel, opening with an epigraph from William Cowper's *The Task* (1784), – an indictment of the white man who "finds his brother guilty of a skin not colour'd like his own", – and concluding with a hortatory epilogue, requests the fulfilment of inclusive brotherhood, including women (*Woman of Colour* 51). The epilogue echoes the epigraph, formally sustaining the pronouncement of solidarity of the mulatto protagonist. Olivia aborts her father's courtship scheme, a fact deplored by the contemporary reviewers at the expense of the novel's emancipatory agenda, and decides to return to Jamaica as a widow, after discovering that she has been living in concubinage with her already married cousin. A widow in full possession of her inheritance and reluctant to marry another virtuous white suitor. On her passage back to the Fairfield estate, she contemplates her mission and future work for the improvement of the situation of "our poor blacks" (*Woman of Colour* 188). This inclusive marker – "our" – could stand for a biracial female household, including Dido and Olivia's white governess, led by the mixed-race widow. Financially unencumbered widowhood represents a state of significant female empowerment and agency in novels by as diverse women writers as Sara Scott, Frances Brook, Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the future of a socially-engaged, wealthy widow at the head of a predominantly female household dissociates Olivia from the stereotype of the Tragic Mulatto that rose to prominence in American literature throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>43</sup> The open future of *The Woman of Colour* sheds with remarkable relief the vicissitudes of courtship, turning toward the problems of black folks in the colonies. In doing so, the novel's ending eschews one of the key charges raised against the stereotype of the Tragic Mulatto, that of detracting from the hardships of blacks through concentration on the difficulties of miscegenation.

The precedent that *The Woman of Colour* sets for the stereotype of the Tragic Mulatto deserves thorough discussion. For reasons of space, I confine my analysis to the following considerations. First, the novel is a double-edged precedent: on the one hand, it belongs to the set of abolitionist writing that employed the figure of the "tragic octoroon" to elicit empathy for the enslaved and propagandize their liberation.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, the novel's abandoned marital scheme skirts but also surmounts the stereotype, by transforming the mulatto from a figure of pity to a figure of double emancipation. Here, gender matters greatly, because for women who are subject to double colonization, that is, under the rule of colonial masters and men in their own communities, emancipation from the white master must come in tandem with emancipation from the father or husband. Second, gender matters with respect to the novel's solidary and assertive mulatto protagonist. Werner Sollers, after surveying a wide-ranging and at times contradictory scholarship on the Tragic Mulatto, postulates that Western literary tradition has produced a gendered paradigm of the stereotype: the mulatto as the "forward-looking, prophet of the future" is often a defiant, unacknowledged male prophet "who denounces accidents of birth and trammels of the past", driven by "a tempestuous, patricidal, or fratricidal disposition". The female mulatto, beautiful but burdened by the biracial inheritance that hinders marriage, expends her mental and libidinal energies in melancholia, self-sacrifice, and suicide.<sup>45</sup> The protagonist of *The Woman of Colour* amalgamates feminine beauty and melancholia in face of thwarted love with masculine defiance and prophetic denunciation of racial injustice and reform. Her defiance is not the open war waged by the patricidal or fratricidal mulatto hero, but the slow, pacifist resistance that patiently works to bring the principles of Christian Enlightenment to their radical ends.

Due to such amalgamation, I think it more judicious to speak of the mulatto of *The Woman of Colour* as an allegorical rather than stereotypical figure. The epilogue which comes in the form of a dialogue between the editor and a friend suggests an allegorical reading. The pronouncement of the editor conspicuously dismisses the question of the letters' authenticity, however, without negating historicity. This historicity is couched in the editor's wish, a wish with wide-ranging consequences and worldwide applicability, that motivates the editor to propose these letters to the reader. A wish, one could argue, redolent of the fantasy of salvation through the mixed-race offspring. But rather than of fantasy, it befits the political catechism mounted by the mulatto protagonist to speak of allegory that seeks to call forth reform. Thus, the function of the mulatto protagonist is performative rather than representative. The editor enters the narrative with a plea that the woman of colour be read as an instance of what mixed-race offspring could or should be rather than as a reflection of what the group represents or stands for.

Traditionally, allegory has been viewed as the negation of historicity, starting with the interpretation of Homer's immortal gods and heroes not as historical entities but as stand-ins for struggles of love and power between mortals. This is classical allegory, presupposing a metaphorical meaning that has priority over and replaces the literal.<sup>46</sup> To allegorize, in this tradition, is to say one thing and mean another. But there is another tradition of allegory, as Deborah Madsen shows in *Rereading Allegory* (1994), one that builds on a metonymical relationship between literal and extended meaning that relies on the historical facticity of the text and does not privilege the extended meaning over the literal. In this tradition, allegory does not say one (literal) thing and means another (extrinsic) thing, but one thing involves another, inflects and has inferences for it. The problem with classical allegory is that it "renders the text arbitrary by radically undermining the literal reality of the narrative".<sup>47</sup> Madsen shows that the metonymic tradition is the fruit of Christian exegesis, which could not agree to see in the events and characters of the New Testament purely fictive creations, as the classical interpreters had treated Homer's universe. I read *The Woman of Colour* within this tradition of metonymical relationship, in which "the mundane story is an instance rather than a representation" of a bigger picture (as it is in the classical, metaphorical model). This is a formal quality and a way of interpretation that roots the novel furthermore in Christian Enlightenment modes of reading.

My point is to say that the narrative of *The Woman of Colour* stands in continuation of the world that surrounds and motivates its existence rather than standing in for an extrinsic meaning to be found outside this world. The editor's intervention works as a commentary on Olivia's story. The relationship between them is metonymical, by "relating text [i.e. story] to commentary in a single narrative continuum", and by creating a space for readers to enter this continuum rather than place themselves above its historicity.<sup>48</sup> The editor continues the inclusive and cosmopolitan impetus of the story in a world where slavery survives and racism persists, by expanding the novel's audience from British readers to any "skeptical European [sic]", and by soliciting solidarity not just toward Jamaican slaves or mixed-race population, but toward any "despised native of Africa" (*Woman of Colour* 189). This may be the reason why, amidst the novel's garishly multicultural cast of characters from the western and eastern ends of the empire, only the allegorical mixed-race woman is called "the child of humanity, the citizen of the world" (103).

## Notes

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13. Max Pensky, "Two Cheers for Cosmopolitanism: Cosmopolitan Solidarity as Second-Order Inclusion," *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 38.1 (2007): 165–84, 168.
14. Lyndon J. Dominique, *Imoinda's Shade: Marriage and the African Woman in Eighteenth-Century British Literature, 1759–1808* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012), pp. 223–67. All references will be given parenthetically. All emphasis are in the original unless signalled otherwise.
15. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "Cosmopolitanism and the Circle of Reason," *Political Theory*, 28.5 (2000): 619–39 (624).
16. Martin Luther King, "Facing the Challenge of a New Age", *I Have a Dream*, 14–28 (19).
17. Ibid.
18. See Enit K. Steiner, "Mood, Provisionality, and Planetarity in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*", *Studies in Romanticism*, 58.1 (2019): 3–26; see also Pauline Kleingeld, "Kant's Changing Cosmopolitanism", *Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, eds. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 171–86, 174–7.
19. Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 26.
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21. Ryden, pp. 133, 134–5.
22. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "Négritude", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/negritude/>>. Accessed 24 July 2018.
23. Mair, p. 97.
24. Mair contradicts the going belief that the majority of the fathers manumitted their mixed race offspring. Her research on Jamaican pro-abolition society shows that out of 4000 registered coloured children only 797 were manumitted (272).
25. Dominique, p. 240.
26. Diagne.
27. Brown, p. 23.
28. David Marriott, "The Racialized Body", *The Cambridge Companion to the Body*, ed. David Hillman and Ulrike Maude (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 163–76 (166).
29. My translation from Frantz Fanon, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), p. 90. "Je voulais m'amuser jusqu'à m'étouffer, mais cela m'étais devenu impossible".
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34. King, "Letter", 94.
35. King, "Letter", 91.
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37. William Blake, "Little Black Boy", *Blake's Poetry and Designs*, ed. John E. Grant and Mary Lynn Johnson (New York: Norton, 2008), p. 16.
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39. The country in Hollinger's context is the U.S. David Hollinger, *Cosmopolitanism and Solidarity: Studies in Ethnoracial, Religious, and Professional Affiliation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), p. 4.
40. Mair, p. 97.
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42. Sara Scott's *Millenium Hall* may come closest in ethos and composition to Olivia's future household.
43. Werner Sollers, *Neither Black Nor White, Yet Both* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 220–45. Sollers' survey of research on the tragic mulatto demonstrates that texts rarely fit the stereotype in all the six features proposed by Sterling Brown in 1932 and 1966. See Sollers, p. 238.
44. Sollers, p. 239.
45. Sollers, p. 240.
46. This is also the type of allegory that coincides with the meaning of *trope* or *tropus* that Aravamudan's *Tropicopolitans* takes from Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* (1741): "a word or expression used in a different sense from what is properly signifies." Aravamudan, p. 1.

47. Deborah Madsen, *Rereading Allegory: A Narrative Approach to Genre* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 41.
48. Madsen, p. 75.

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### Notes on Contributor

**Enit K. Steiner** is Senior Lecturer in eighteenth-century and Romantic literature at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. Among others, she is author of *Jane Austen's Civilized Women: Morality, Gender and the Civilizing Process* (2012) editor of Frances Brooke's *The History of Lady Julia Mandeville* (2013) and of the essay collection *Called to Civil Existence: Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (2014). Her work has appeared in *Studies in Romanticism*, *European Romantic Review*, and *Criticism*. Currently, she is working on a book-length project titled *Cosmopolitan Moments in the Long Eighteenth Century*.

## THE FEMINIZED COSMOPOLITE EIRON IN ELIZABETH HAMILTON'S *TRANSLATIONS OF THE LETTERS OF A HINDOO RAJAH*

Elizabeth Tasker Davis

Department of English and Creative Writing, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, TX, USA

### ABSTRACT

The eponymous Asian narrator of Elizabeth Hamilton's epistolary Oriental satire embodies the role of a feminized cosmopolite outsider who seeks to understand British Enlightenment culture of the late eighteenth century. The Rajah's letters offer a narrative of colonial counterflow through which Hamilton details an agenda of benevolent colonialism and spiritually-based cosmopolitanism. While recent studies have integrated genre and interdisciplinary approaches into their political analyses of Hamilton as a Scots Irish woman writer, satirist, and Orientalist scholar, this essay applies theories of classical and modern satire and cosmopolitanism to read Hamilton's Hindoo Rajah as a free-roaming feminized eiron and cosmopolite. Through her genteel Eastern citizen of the world, Hamilton subtly asserts that politeness and virtue are foundational to Enlightenment cosmopolitan identity and, furthermore, that cosmopolitan spirituality is a necessary ingredient to civil society. The Rajah's insistence on religious foundations for universal benevolence indicates Hamilton's cultural biases. However, as a free-floating feminized eiron, the Rajah significantly broadens the potential of "embodied cosmopolitanism" beyond the tropes of cross-cultural matrimony and hybridized offspring, which critics have already noted in the work of post-French Revolution British female authors.

**KEYWORDS** Satire; eiron; orientalism; enlightenment cosmopolitanism; cosmopolitan stranger; colonial counterflow

In his introduction to *Cosmopolitanism and the Literary Imagination*, Cyrus Patell opines that "Cosmopolitanism is best understood ... as a structure of thought, a perspective that embraces difference and promotes the bridging of cultural gaps."<sup>1</sup> How to embody the ideals of cosmopolitanism—its simultaneous celebration of difference and commonality—is the challenge of literary cosmopolitanism. During the age of the Enlightenment, one literary trend significant in this regard was the rise of the fictional *cosmopolite* figure as an individual citizen of the world. While Enlightenment philosophers debated the

place of universalism, nationalism, individualism, and multiculturalism within the concept of cosmopolitanism, the fictional cosmopolite surfaced as an educated, benevolent, and politically-neutral world traveller who, through episodic journeys and dialogs, could embody and interrogate the cosmopolitan ideal. As Mary Ellen McMurrin notes, "from the 1760s to the 1790s, the cosmopolite developed as a creature of rhetoric rather than as a robust theory."<sup>2</sup> Anne K. Mellor points out that the cosmopolitan individual, or cosmopolite, was supposedly "detached from national and communal allegiances" but also culturally coded as "European, educated and male."<sup>3</sup> Thus, the cosmopolite materializes a conundrum inherent within Enlightenment discourse, which is how to reconcile the dominance of Western masculinity with the egalitarian rhetoric of cosmopolitanism.

Throughout the eighteenth century, European authors challenged cosmopolitan stereotypes through imaginative literature in which the cosmopolite could be critiqued, dissected, and transformed. Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), Oliver Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* (1762), and Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translation of Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796) all enact cosmopolitan critique through a satire of colonial counterflow starring an educated Asian male tourist.<sup>4</sup> In each of these works, the Eastern cosmopolite journeys to Europe and recounts his travels in a series of fictionalized letters. In this way, the European author assumes Oriental masks of imagined Eastern personas ostensibly to enact indirect critiques of his or her own culture but also to reassure readers of the potential for Western progress—if the satirized problems are corrected. As Ros Ballaster notes, Montesquieu's letters expose problems in "the nature and exercise of political authority" in pre-revolutionary France while Goldsmith's letters is to dramatize "the anti-colonial Tory conservative case for [Britain's] scholarly and intellectual—rather than mercantile or missionary—engagement with distant territories."<sup>5</sup> In *Translation of Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (hereafter referred to as *TLHR*), Hamilton's letters also offer political and intellectual critiques of her own society. She overtly defends Britain's colonization of India and participation in the Rohilla war of the 1770s as a Christian mission, but she also highlights the superiority of Hindu moral values compared to secular Enlightenment systems of philosophy. Hamilton's expansive novel strives for cultural authenticity and, in fact, engages more deeply in Oriental study than do Montesquieu's or Goldsmith's. Offering many authentic details on Indian Hindu culture, Hamilton's Oriental motifs also subtly introduce a feminized cosmopolitan perspective into late eighteenth-century conversations on colonial politics, religion, and the treatment of women. Ultimately, Hamilton's epistolary satire argues in favor of cosmopolitan spirituality, which she locates in charitable acts, rural domestic life, and the major texts of world religions.

This essay examines the central character of the *TLHR*, the Rajah Zāār-

briefly reviewing Hamilton's background and recent critical interpretations of political satire and genre-mixing in *TLHR*, I then situate the Rajah as a gender-fluid device of irony, in accordance with classical and modern satire theory, and as a kind of religious cosmopolite within the intellectual realm of eighteenth-century colonial cosmopolitanism. I argue that Zāārmilla introduces a feminized outsider perspective and spiritual knowledge in his transnational encounters with a cast of Indian and British characters. The narrative thread across his early letters, written in India, and later letters, from Britain, evinces a feminized trajectory of learning for the Rajah, who remains a passive cosmopolite stranger throughout the novel. In the final section of my essay, I contend that the Rajah's embodiment and performance as a cosmopolitan stranger venturing across the globe significantly broadens Mellor's designation of *embodied cosmopolitan*, as presented in her essay "Embodied Cosmopolitanism and the British Romantic Woman Writer," where she suggests limiting the term to refer strictly to interfaith, interracial, and international marriages, and "hybridized children" in the works of post-French Revolution British women writers.<sup>6</sup>

### Elizabeth Hamilton as Female Satirist

To further contextualize *TLHR* as a cosmopolitan satire first requires to situate Hamilton's multi-cultural position as a Scots-Irish female satirist writing in the 1790s. Born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1758, Hamilton was still a young child when her parents died. She was separated from her two older siblings and sent to be raised in Stirling, Scotland by her aunt and uncle; however, the family kept close ties, and Hamilton maintained a strong dual connection to her Irish and Scottish heritage. After the passing of her aunt and uncle, Hamilton spent her late twenties and thirties reunited with her brother Charles, a military officer and respected Orientalist who worked for the East India Company. Under Charles' mentorship, Hamilton immersed herself in the work of Britain's leading scholars of Orientalism and pursued a comparative study of the Bible, the Hedeya, the Koran, and renowned works of Orientalist scholarship.

After Charles' sudden death from tuberculosis in 1792, Hamilton began writing *Translation of Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, her first novel, to work through the loss of her brother, finally publishing the work in 1796 when she was thirty-eight. Hamilton's dedication of her novel to Warren Hastings, the first British Governor-General of India, whom she portrays as the liberator of the Hindus in Northern India, is somewhat ironic, given the satire's critique of British cultural elitism.<sup>7</sup> Sonja Lawrenson states that perhaps Hamilton's support of Hastings and the colonial activities of the British East India Company stems from her desire to show loyalty to the memory of her brother, and perhaps it also reflects feminine acquiescence to masculine

political and intellectual authority.<sup>8</sup> After publishing *TLHR*, Hamilton progressed on to a career as a celebrated author known for Christian values, keen wit, and politically-inflected writings.

In their critical edition of *TLHR*, Pamela Perkins and Shannon Russell acknowledge Hamilton's conservative positions on the Jacobin/anti-Jacobin debate and British Indian colonialism, but they caution against oversimplified characterizations of Hamilton's politics, noting the breadth of her interests in philosophy, religion, literature, and science, and her progressive views on female education.<sup>9</sup> Following Perkins and Russell's edition of *TLHR*, and several other critical editions of Hamilton's major works, a steady stream of scholarship on Hamilton has focused largely on her work as a political novelist.<sup>10</sup> Most critics note that in *TLHR*, Hamilton does not present a straight-line conservative bias against progressivism but rather an interweaving of positions on a range of issues. As Claire Grogan explains, Hamilton's satiric novel broadly seeks to "warn her readers of the dangers associated with xenophobic conservatives, English Jacobins, revolutionary agitators, and New Philosophers, all of whom (in her view) advocate or incite violent measures and encourage intolerance."<sup>11</sup>

While parodying the genres of travel narrative and epistolary novel, Hamilton's Orientalist satire projects myriad vices and follies—from greed to nonsense—as the sure outcome of secular materialism. As her primary target, Hamilton attacks progressive systems of rational philosophy, which she terms the "Colossus of Skepticism" and "Atheism."<sup>12</sup> In contrast to her critiques of secular progressivism, Hamilton exalts the devoutness and consistency of Hindu culture in India's northern region and simultaneously supports British imperialism in India. Some critics, however, have read Hamilton's clear appreciation of the colonized culture as evincing an undercurrent of ambivalence toward British colonial authority. Lawrenson, for example, suggests that Hamilton's own experience of otherness as a Scots-woman subsumed into British society, augmented by her "kinship with the Irish" and her friendships with mainstream Irish literati, such as Maria Edgeworth and politically radical Ulster men and women, complicates efforts to read her political inclinations as staunchly pro-British.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to historicizing Hamilton's background to gain insight into her political satire, critics have applied genre-based and interdisciplinary analyses to discover different facets of the novel. Grogan argues that methodologies focused on the late eighteenth-century gendering of genres prove more effective than those focused on political binaries for studying women novelists like Hamilton who occupy a politically middle-ground position.<sup>14</sup> Religion, as a central topic in *TLHR*, offers thematic interdisciplinary opportunity for critics. Fusing the study of religious genres and Enlightenment philosophy, Julie Straight places *TLHR* in context with eighteenth-century treatises on Christian universal benevolence, which called for "the human rights of all persons, particularly those excluded from full British liberties," and through

this reading finds Hamilton's novel aligned with liberal religious reform in "championing both local affection and universal benevolence, setting them not against each other but together against selfishness."<sup>15</sup> Thus, Straight's analysis of universal religious themes suggests cosmopolitan affinities in the novel. In addition, recent studies have examined innovative features of genre-mixing in *TLHR*. Jeanne Britton analyzes Hamilton's use of scholarly footnotes as an act of remediation meant to educate readers about Hinduism, almost as an aside, as a feature through which "Oriental forms . . . fuel domestic satire."<sup>16</sup> These genre-based studies reveal Hamilton's ironic and multi-faceted stand on what we might today call "culture wars," which she delivers through a variety of epistolary voices joined in satiric dialogue.

The epistolary personas of *TLHR* consist of several fictional upper-caste Indian Hindu males who recount their interactions with British people and culture first in British colonial India and then in the British Isles. The majority of these letters are presented as narratives of the eponymous Rajah Zāarmilla. The Rajah's identity as an elite aristocratic male, and his predominant activity of travelling the world for the purpose of intellectual enlightenment, mark him as an eighteenth-century cosmopolite. However, his Eastern ethnicity breaks the Enlightenment cosmopolite stereotype and marks him as a feminized male character.

The Rajah's markers of femininity include his flowery and polite speech; his lack of citizenship and legal status in Britain; his great interest in women's rights and female education; and his affinity for the feminine picturesque aspects of travel rather than the pragmatic masculine concerns of profit and business. However, the Rajah is not completely feminized; he also partakes enthusiastically in the masculine disciplines of philosophy and religion. The gender-fluidity of the cosmopolite Rajah grants Hamilton access to masculine public discourses—of international politics and the literary tradition of satire—while retaining feminine sensibilities and domestic care. As Claire Grogan notes, the Rajah "creates tensions and paradoxes" and "blurs the distinction of male and female."<sup>17</sup> The Rajah's feminine traits subvert his royal masculine authority and rather accentuate his modesty and politeness, which extend from the humbleness demanded by Hindu protocol. To explore this deeply ironic figure, I now turn to satire theory.

### The Feminized Eiron as Enlightenment Cosmopolite

In its most well-known literary formulation, Northrop Frye identifies the *eiron* as a stock figure of ancient Greek comedy noted by Aristotle as "the man who deprecates himself" and gains the sympathy of the audience through witty sarcastic asides.<sup>18</sup> However, Frye's definition is incomplete in depicting the *eiron* figure in its original ancient context, an omission which, I argue, obscures classical variations on the *eiron*'s gendered behavior and



functions. Within classical literary theory, as C. Jan Swearingen explains, *iron* was originally used in pre-Socratic dialogue as “a term of rebuke, meaning ‘dissembling scoundrel,’” but after Plato introduced Socrates’ moral dialectic performances, the figure of the *iron* became synonymous with Socrates and “came to denote a philosophically subtle and aesthetically sophisticated manner of articulation”.<sup>19</sup> This Aristotelean designation of the *iron* fits the profile of the Enlightenment cosmopolite; however, another little known aspect of the Socratic *iron*, as Swearingen notes, is its association with the feminine “maieutic” symbolism of midwifery and its ability to engage audiences with the language of “communal enterprise and mutual care.”<sup>20</sup> Hence, Hamilton employs the Rajah as a satiric midwife to elicit cosmopolitan recognition in her target audience of readers.

In line with the feminine connotations of the *iron* as a type of nurturing dialogic midwife, I am using the term *feminized iron* to represent a figure whose primary role is as a facilitator of conversation, rather than as an authority figure. Because classical and neoclassical rhetorical theory insist on female silence, furthermore, the feminized *iron*’s actions are necessarily self-effacing rather than just self-deprecating. The Rajah’s role in Hamilton’s satire is more that of a commentator, not a participant. As a feminized *iron*, the Rajah Zäärmilla is not overtly managerial or self-deprecating; he is not operating on the Socratic model of an intellectually superior arbiter orchestrating or seeking to elicit evidence of what he already suspects. Rather, he is an unknowing optimist in search of truth. He is ignorant of British culture, but he is not a foolish buffoon. He remains composed, and he is clear on his own Hindu principles, which he hopes share in common morality with Christianity. The Rajah gains further credibility as an *iron*, and as a satiric protagonist, in his willingness to seek first-hand experience.

Zäärmilla’s encounters with other characters provide occasions for Hamilton to employ the device of rhetorical questioning to gently expose the folly of multiple *alazons* (deluded or foolish characters).<sup>21</sup> In rambling picaresque episodes and picturesque vignettes, the Rajah roams as an unattached stranger weighing provincial views and theories of multiple *alazons* against the authority of ancient spiritual texts. The *alazons* include Indian and English characters who boldly assert provincial and myopic points of view. The *alazons* tend to be one-dimensional, fixated, and fated as “predestined victims,” not of the *iron* but of the author as “ironic fiction-writer.”<sup>22</sup> At the beginning of the novel, the Rajah himself is deluded by the picture perfect accounts of British life he receives from Captain Percy, which might suggest that the Rajah also qualifies as an *alazon*, thereby blurring the distinction between the *iron* and the *alazon*. However, the Rajah’s openness to revising his preconceived impressions of the British as he evaluates their observable behaviors shows evidence of his capacity for change. The biases he maintains throughout the narrative are those he shares

with his author: his belief in universal benevolence and his insistence on the morality of a supreme deity.

Hamilton bolsters the Rajah’s credibility as an *iron* through multiple textual elements of Oriental scholarship, including, most notably, her informative preface, entitled “Preliminary Dissertation,” a glossary of terms; and extensive footnotes. As Britton argues, Hamilton’s frequent footnotes remediate the novel’s epistolary voices and offer an “alternative presence” interjected through an editorial voice.<sup>23</sup> Behind the Rajah, lurks an implied author with a satiric eye. Together, they accomplish the *iron*’s dialectical purpose and also participate in Ashley Marshall’s notion of the purposeful dispensing of “distributive justice,” a satiric device that surveys a target for “positive as well as mostly negative examples.”<sup>24</sup> As a device for justice, the cosmopolitan *iron* in *TLHR* pursues a course of qualitative typology, arranging his observations from the frequently negative selfish behaviors he observes to rare sightings of wisdom, charity, and love. The episodic encounters that the novel’s letters describe exemplify a type of negative capability, in which the *iron* must conceive of the greatest good through examples that, in one way or another, are decidedly not good. The scope of Zäärmilla’s observations includes matters of philosophy and religion; national, urban, and rural social practices; the behavior, treatment, and education of women; parenting, children, family, and aging; travel and scenery; rational and empirical approaches to science; literature; poverty, suffering, injury, and death; and, most importantly, love and friendship.

Like Swift’s Gulliver, Zäärmilla brings fresh curious eyes to provincial locales and customs while behaving as a polite and careful listener. Unlike Gulliver, however, Zäärmilla retains his autonomy and distance as an outsider looking in. Zäärmilla’s experiences fit with Frye’s description of “the ingenu form” of satire in which the *iron* is an outsider from “another world” who is unfamiliar with the target society.<sup>25</sup> In this way, Zäärmilla represents the “cosmopolitan stranger” who, as Vince Marotta describes, develops an “in-between knowledge” that allows him to be “both remote and near, detached and involved, and indifferent and concerned.”<sup>26</sup> The cosmopolitan *iron*, then, is a stranger who functions as a destabilizing ironic voice. Like Chaucer’s unnamed narrator in *The Canterbury Tales*, Sancho Panza in Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, and the female scribe who is Cavendish’s avatar in *The Blazing World*, Zäärmilla is a vehicle of satiric irony comically juxtaposed against the “theories and dogmas” that should govern society but which ultimately fail to do so.<sup>27</sup>

The purposes of satire, according to Augustan neoclassical theory, are (1) to expose the real-world folly and vice, (2) to entertain with humorous exaggeration, (3) to convince and correct based on moral standards, and (4) to elicit open-ended inquiry and provocation.<sup>28</sup> Like cosmopolitanism, satire interrogates the relationship between universal standards and local practice.



As Gilbert Leung argues, cosmopolitanism is not only a “philosophy of perpetual peace” in the Stoic and Kantian tradition but also “a call to perpetual provocation” as practiced by the Cynics and noted by Nietzsche.<sup>29</sup> The provocation inherent in the Cynic tradition of cosmopolitanism naturally aligns with satire’s purposeful irreverence, inquiry, and judgement.<sup>30</sup> In the vein of the Cynic cosmopolite, Zāarmilla’s activity of travelling and questioning regional practices equates to a pursuit of active freedom.

The Rajah also fits the mid-eighteenth century innovation of literary cosmopolitanism in which, as Esther Wohlgemut elaborates, an educated character engages in a benevolent “politics of mobility” involving world travel in search of local excellence and the moral improvement of self and others.<sup>31</sup> Zāarmilla’s desire to gain an international view of the world along with his sincere interest in learning about others of all types mark him as both a cosmopolite and an eiron. Milan Vidakovic identifies the eiron as “an independent thinker, someone with the pragmatic approach of questioning ... and/or forging an alternative narrative.”<sup>32</sup> In his many encounters with a parade of alazons across a range of locations, Zāarmilla’s keen attention on domestic care and community signify his satiric purpose specifically as a feminized eiron. However, as a feminized character and a foreign tourist, he does not have the power to enact any social improvements in Britain.

Hamilton further expands her satiric model of the cosmopolite by adding spirituality as a key element of his identity. Through the Rajah’s numerous citations of Hindu texts and elements of Oriental scholarship, *TLHR* participates in a Christian-Hindu version of what Gerard Cohen-Vrignaud calls “biblical Orientalism,” a Romantic device of allegory “which refracted current affairs through Hebrew and Christian holy texts,” offering prayers as “possible solutions” to political problems and furthering “retro- Whiggish” agendas by aligning them with the words of “prophets.”<sup>33</sup> Hamilton employs biblical Orientalism as an allegorical device for comparing sacred Hindu texts to the Bible to demonstrate shared morals between Indian and British culture. In this, Hamilton emulates other eighteenth-century British Orientalists for whom the ideal of colonial cosmopolitanism included preservation of indigenous customs within the larger Christian imperial framework. Colonial cosmopolitanism, as Van der Veer explains, involves a “translation and conversion of the local into the universal,” which can be a movement of “secularity” or alternatively “a discourse around the concept of spirituality.”<sup>34</sup> Regarding spiritual arguments for colonialism, one has only to look across world history to see that religious conviction has often provided a justification for colonialism as a cosmopolitan endeavor.

With respect to colonial cosmopolitanism in *TLHR*, Padma Rangarajan acknowledges Hamilton’s appreciation of Hindu culture but argues that the novel ultimately devolves from cosmopolitan ideals by upholding the necessity of the colonizer and the colonized.<sup>35</sup> I would agree with Rangarajan

that Hamilton idealizes colonialism and shows allegiance to Warren Hastings, especially in her introduction and footnotes, but in terms of narrative development Zāarmilla’s character transcends colonialism by leaving the colony and initiating a counterflow narrative. His cosmopolitan journey, in fact, launches a gradual critique of the colonizer, which suggests that, even while Hamilton voices her support of Hastings and the British East India Company, she is uneasy in her views of British colonialism.

### The Eiron at Home

While critics often focus on the colonial counterflow aspect of Zāarmilla as an Eastern traveller in western Europe, the narrative begins in Zāarmilla’s native land of Bengal. The story opens right after the decisive battle of the Rohilla war in which the British expel the occupying force of Afghani Muslims from the area.<sup>36</sup> In his first letter, Zāarmilla establishes himself as a pacifist but also sympathetic to the victorious British colonists and critical of the corrupt Afghani occupiers. Zāarmilla offers a feminized point of view in his general assessment of military “heroes” as men of “guilty passions” carrying out “atrocious deeds” for greed and sport whose sole aim is the enslavement of multitudes.<sup>37</sup> Although Hamilton’s identification with the position of the colonized in her imagined vision of India cannot fully comprehend local Indian circumstances, it gestures toward a cosmopolitan recognition that local culture should be respected and not assimilated into Britain’s.

Several recent critical readings of *TLHR* agree that a critical counternarrative exists beneath Hamilton’s overt apology for Hastings and the British East India Company. Lawrenson reads Hamilton’s political stance as similarly ambivalent to that voiced by her brother Charles in his translation of the *Hedaya, or Guide: A Commentary on the Musselman Laws* (1791), which supports the “intellectual credibility and moral legitimacy” of the imperialist activities of Hastings and the British East India Company but also shows empathy to the colonized region of Rohilkhand by “invoking the language of colonial trauma.”<sup>38</sup> Julie Straight suggests that Hamilton may be implying disapproval of colonial militarization through her revision of British colonial India into a feminine picturesque portrait of “a benevolent empire of justice and liberty.”<sup>39</sup> The voice of the eiron allows embedded criticism to exist simultaneously with overt support.

Despite subversive undercurrents, *TLHR* legitimizes British imperial power through Zāarmilla’s passionate praise of the impeccable Captain Percy, an injured British officer who explains Christian doctrine and the teachings of the “Shaster”—Zāarmilla’s term for the Bible.<sup>40</sup> From his conversations with Percy, Zāarmilla acquires an idealized view of British politics and laws, Christianity, and European culture, which he sees as existing in a sort of cosmopolitan harmony with his native culture of Hindoostan. Zāarmilla’s initial

acceptance of Percy's feminine picturesque account of British colonial India seems designed to legitimize British imperialism, and even the Rajah's later first-hand discoveries of British hypocrisy diffuse critiques away from questions about colonialism and toward the negative effects of secularity within Enlightenment progressivism.

Political commentary is laced in every episode of *TLHR*. Even before Zāarmilla leaves India, the narrative launches into a debate on the rights of women, which begins with the eiron's wonder and surprise at Percy's account of British women who, in accordance with Christianity, are granted the status of "rational beings!" and "free agents! ... exalted to perfect equality with man."<sup>41</sup> The narrative portrays Indian culture as restrictive and insinuates that the British treatment of women is more progressive; however, Zāarmilla's later observations highlight that British women do not possess perfect equality with the men in their society and that Percy's narrative is a purposeful irony on the part of the author. The subject of women is one of many of the cultural constructs that Captain Percy's glowing narrative covers. But as long as the eiron remains at home in India, he is unable to determine the veracity of Percy. Contemplating travel, the Rajah writes,

Why should I remain in doubt as to the truth given me by the young Christian? ... Why should I not satisfy my mind by a farther acquaintance with his countrymen, by which alone I can discover, whether his words have ... emanated from the heart of integrity? ... If the sun of science, which rose with radiant splendor on our eastern hemisphere, now beams its fervid rays upon the regions of the west, why should I be prevented from following its glorious course?<sup>42</sup>

His phrasing implies a hopeful bias in favor of confirming British glory, but it also illustrates the eiron's habit of raising rhetorical questions.<sup>43</sup>

In asking questions, the Rajah is not seeking permission to go to England nor requesting to hear reasons not to travel. Rather, the passage "stresses the superiority of direct experience to second-hand report," which Straight notes as a running theme of the novel.<sup>44</sup> In blatant contrast to the typical eighteenth-century female's lot of stationary domesticity, the gender-fluid cosmopolite can follow the "sun" and roam freely across the globe to validate Captain Percy's picture of life in Britain. As a foil to Percy's account, Hamilton introduces her first alazon, a worldly Brahmin who writes to Zāarmilla to challenge the Rajah's received impressions of British culture. The Brahmin represents the top tier of wisdom in Hindu society; however, the tone of his letters establish his unwavering provincial attitudes. Yet, he raises valid critiques about the hypocrisy of British colonial practices and the irreligion of the English upper class who, he claims, ignore their Shaster (Bible) and its teachings. The Brahmin argues that, like India, British society also has a caste system and that the British women are not exalted but rather receive

a useless education consisting of piano, painting, French lessons, and an overriding concern with fashion. Although clearly bigoted against the British, the Brahmin provokes thought about the current state of irreligion and female education in British society, and he foreshadows satiric episodes of the counterflow narrative.

### The Eiron Abroad

After the death of his wife, Zāarmilla undertakes his quest to England to see for himself English men and women living their lives in the "age of reason." As Rangarajan notes, the Rajah's perspective as a "foreign puzzled traveler" exemplifies the eighteenth-century rhetorical device through which satirists spotlighted the follies and "oddities" within their own cultures.<sup>45</sup> Hamilton's counterflow narrative offers a distinctly female point of view on things that were depicted as vices inherent in eighteenth-century British culture. Hamilton's everyday targets, as Grogan states, include novel reading, "women who prefer pets to children, card playing, gambling, newspapers, critics, gossip, libel, philosophical groups, religious sects, and the dangers of generally irresponsible or unsociable behavior."<sup>46</sup>

Some of the novel's most poignant critiques center on the treatment of the poor and the elderly, a universal challenge faced by all societies. In a London church, for example, the Rajah witnesses a feeble old widow who is forced to stand during the church service because those who owned pews would not allow her to sit in them. This is one instance in which the Rajah does more than observe; he explains, "I took the liberty of ... opening the door of the pew" and "invited the poor sick stranger to a seat."<sup>47</sup> The Rajah later reflects that, in England, "poverty is considered as one of the most heinous of crimes," and he finally admits that the Brahmin was not wrong to cite the corruption and lack of compassion in English society.<sup>48</sup> Undermining the glowing portrayal of English society that Zāarmilla had received from Captain Percy in India, the church scene clearly critiques inhumane practices within Christian ecclesiastical spaces and communities.

In keeping with the didactic and feminized undertone, in the latter half of the novel, Zāarmilla's encounters with an array of variously educated learned lady alazons serve to critique female education and character formation. One such character, Miss Ardent, a woman of late middle-age impresses Zāarmilla with her detailed knowledge of Indian culture, her conversations with gentlemen philosophers and literary critics, and her handshake with its "degree of frankness as masculine as her understanding," but, he notes, she engages too liberally in the drinking of wine.<sup>49</sup> Miss Ardent is an enlightened woman whom Zāarmilla befriends but also views with a light degree of censure. In the age of reason, as Zāarmilla explains, Miss Ardent believes "the perfection of female understanding will be universally acknowledged," and "she pants for that

blessed period.”<sup>50</sup> Miss Ardent’s “panting” enthusiasm is meant to mock the Wollstonecraftian streak of radical-feminism that was emerging in the 1790s. Hamilton also uses Miss Ardent as a satiric device to explore the debate between nature and nurture. The comic highpoint of this debate occurs when the foolish learned lady joins in an experiment with a group of radical empiricist philosophers who attempt to train sparrows into behaving like honey bees to prove the effects of *external circumstances*.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, the experiment fails and causes the deaths of several hundred baby sparrows. This ridiculous experiment suggests that overly dogmatic thinking will lead only to nonsense and that unbridled scientific thinking can be dangerous.

Further along, however, Miss Ardent’s ideas about the power of nurture are somewhat redeemed by the success of her pupil Miss Olivia, a forthright and outspoken girl, who shows bravery under great duress and saves a man’s life. Olivia does not accomplish this rescue alone; she works as a team with her gentle and more traditional sister, Caroline, who is the pupil and protégé of another older educated woman, the exemplary Christian female figure of Lady Grey. Zāarmilla’s letters describe Lady Grey as a woman of great learning; a “solid resource” to her husband, with whom she works as a “partner” in the management of their estate and the education of their children; and a figure of “fortitude” who continues her duties alone with power and efficiency when her husband’s health declines and he dies.<sup>52</sup> The capable and steady managerial style of Lady Grey serves as a counterpoint to the exuberance of the radical Miss Ardent, but both women represent the important roles that learned ladies play in female education. The irony of Lady Grey is that, in the age of reason, she chooses religion over philosophy, a position that much surprises the incredulous Rajah. Lawrenson suggest that Hamilton is positing a “liberal feminist theology,” based on a “latitudinarian” worldview “in which biblical revelation and enlightenment ideals are not only compatible but intimately related”.<sup>53</sup> As Perkins and Russell find, Hamilton’s “treatment of women’s education and role in society” is “more complex” than the views of any one character in the text.<sup>54</sup> Through the dialogic representation of multiple learned lady characters, as mediated through the gaze of the cosmopolitan eiron, Hamilton recommends a progressive view of female education but one grounded in Christian principles. While her argument for female education was potentially enlightening for women worldwide, Hamilton’s insistence that cosmopolitan benevolence can only be achieved through practices that conform to Protestant values effectively denies people who do not share these values the ability to perform cosmopolitan activities.

### Embodied Cosmopolitanism

As a gender-fluid Eastern cosmopolite who is sympathetic to Christianity, Zāarmilla embodies an intense interest in learning about Western culture,

and particularly British people of both sexes, which leads to his travels and his forging of diverse friendships and transnational allegiances. His concern for social reforms, especially for charity to the poor and for female education, exemplifies a hybrid—Hindu, Christian, and proto-feminist—philosophy of moral virtue, which he continually underscores with his belief in a Supreme Deity and a higher spiritual realm. He venerates local charitable acts and human compassion in the name of God, reflecting on these as the highest practices of embodied spiritual cosmopolitanism. Zāarmilla states, “though vice and folly have the appearance of being everywhere predominant, ... it is only the superficial observer, who will from thence infer the non-existence of Wisdom and Virtue.” The capitalized attributes of “Wisdom and Virtue” function here as pseudonyms for “God.” In Hamilton’s satire, religious faith is one necessary ingredient for the cosmopolitan individual; acceptance of cultural difference is another, but only to a point—atheism and Islam are presented as undesirable and anti-cosmopolitan beliefs. Nevertheless, Zāarmilla’s tolerance allows him to accept the flaws in secular society, as shown in his soft critiques of dilettantes such as Sir Caprice Ardent, Mr. Axiom, and Mr. Puzzledorf—of whose actions and philosophies he disapproves. Zāarmilla still recognizes their humanity and esteems them as friends.

In his open, gender-fluid demeanor and identity as a satiric eiron, Zāarmilla succeeds as a flexible vehicle of embodied cosmopolitanism. In fact, the feminized eiron as a cosmopolite offers a more stable device of embodied cosmopolitanism and, ironically, a more radicalized potentiality for intercultural encounters than that of the mixed marriage and heterogeneous offspring found in the works of some of Hamilton’s contemporaries. While the biological model of literary cosmopolitanism, as suggested by Mellor, demonstrates realistic cross-cultural physical bonding, it does not necessarily further cosmopolitan values or practices, especially if the subjects settle into a static regional location. Furthermore, such biologically-determined representations move narratives more toward outcomes of utopian cultural assimilation that potentially threaten the preservation of the local and indigenous rather than toward cosmopolitanism. A literal notion of cosmopolitan embodiment as the product of cross-cultural marriage and breeding is a limited biological representation. However, the metaphorical possibilities of biological imagery can create further avenues for literary cosmopolitanism.

In a letter to her friend, Mrs. Gregory, Hamilton describes *TLHR* as her “black baby” and “child of my brain.”<sup>55</sup> Hamilton extends the maternal metaphor to her feelings for her titular character when she ponders “whether my poor Rajah shall sleep in peace on his native mountains, or expose himself to the dangers of criticism, by a trip to England.” In this correspondence to her friend, the satirist likens her novel and her cosmopolitan eiron to her own children. From this emotional connection, we can construe Hamilton’s feminized cosmopolitan concern for the global and the local. As Rangarajan

notes, "Hamilton's 'black baby' is ... arguably, one of the earliest pieces of colonial literature to ponder the issues of reform, cultural exchange, and imperial duty."<sup>56</sup>

Issues of cultural hybridity are a major preoccupation in Hamilton's oriental satire. As with other Irish and Scottish writers in her era, such as Maria Edgeworth, Hamilton explores cosmopolitanism as a corrective to the Burkean narrative of "homogeneity and historical continuity," which precluded distinctive Irish and Scottish identities within the British commonwealth.<sup>57</sup> Zāarmilla's measured interactions with a multinational cast of characters from England, India, Scotland, and even France and Ireland suggest Hamilton's desire for a diverse intellectual climate, as well as the influences of Scottish Enlightenment teachings.<sup>58</sup> Through epistolary commentary, the Rajah and his peers circuitously underscore and question hegemonic British colonial benevolence, and illustrate that in the 1790s, the universal focus of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism met with a new Romantic attention to local, natural, and revolutionary particulars.<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, Zāarmilla as the feminized eiron privileges the optimal conditions for female moral improvement. Thus, *TLHR*, effectively integrates women's issues into the broader questions of global citizenship and destabilizes the gendered cosmopolitan individual. Hamilton achieves this integration through an epistolary narrative which braids the traditions of cosmopolitanism and satire together with a proto-feminist voice to make her own political assertions, which are at once bold and subtle. In his role as a foreign citizen of the world, the Rajah Zāarmilla is both an insider and an outsider, masculine and feminine. In consistent pursuit of virtue, his character is driven by "superior principles" while his constant surprise at "the gap between principles and actions," or the contradictions between his understanding of Christian ideals and the situations he encounters in India, England, and Scotland, form the satire and the humor.<sup>60</sup> The narrative depicts philosophical positions as real-life experience filtered through the perception of the feminized Rajah who ends his journey with the following advice to future travellers:

Thou wilt perceive that in Europe, as in Asia, an affected singularity often passes for superior wisdom; bold assertion for truth; and sickly fastidiousness for true delicacy of sentiment ... Thou wilt see that the passions of men are every where the same.

Through his experiences of travel, the Rajah Zāarmilla leads the narrative away from its imperialistic beginning to a theologically-focused feminist cosmopolitan mindset. However, his conclusion that civilizations worldwide are similarly driven by the volatile and unruly "passions of men" suggests a bleak recognition of female powerlessness and a resignation that this will not change.

## Notes

1. Cyrus Patell, *Cosmopolitanism and the Literary Imagination* (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 8.
2. Mary Helen McMurran, "The New Cosmopolitan and the Eighteenth Century", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 47.1 (Fall 2013): 22.
3. Anne K. Mellor, "Embodied Cosmopolitanism and the British Romantic Woman Writer," *European Romantic Review*, 17.3 (2006): 290.
4. Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, 1721 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008); Oliver Goldsmith, *Citizen of the World* (London: J. Newbery 1762); Elizabeth Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, 1796 (Peterborough: Broadview, 1999). Hereafter, I refer to *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* as *TLHR*. For an in-depth account of the real-life phenomenon of colonial counterflow, see Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain 1600–1857* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).
5. Ros Ballaster, *Fables of the East: Selected Tales 1662–1785* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), p. 11.
6. Mellor, "Embodied Cosmopolitanism", 292.
7. Warren Hastings was fascinated by Indian culture and the work of British Orientalist scholars; however, he worked, at times ruthlessly, for British interests in India. He was charged with and acquitted of criminal misconduct for his conduct in the East India Company. For more details about Hamilton's views of Hasting's activities in India, see Pamela Perkins and Shannon Russell, introduction to *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, by Elizabeth Hamilton (Peterborough: Broadview, 1999), pp. 22–9.
8. Sonja Lawrenson, "Revolution, Rebellion, and a Rajah from Rohilkhand: Recontextualizing Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*", *Studies in Romanticism*, 51 (Summer 2012): 125–47.
9. Perkins and Russell, introduction to *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, 13.
10. For example, Adriana Craciun has analyzed Hamilton's *Memoirs of a Modern Philosopher* (1804) as opposed to the Jacobin progressive British women writers, such as Helen Maria Williams, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Hays. Adriana Craciun, *British Women Writers and the French Citizens of the World* (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
11. Claire Grogan, "Crossing Genre, Gender, and Race in Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*", *Studies in the Novel*, 34.4 (Spring 2002): 25.
12. Elizabeth Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, eds. Pamela Perkins and Shannon Russell (Peterborough: Broadview, 1999), p. 273.
13. Lawrenson, "Revolution, Rebellion, and a Rajah", 127–33.
14. Claire Grogan, *Politics and Genre in the Works of Elizabeth Hamilton* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 3–26.
15. Julie Straight, "Promoting Liberty through Universal Benevolence in Hamilton's *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*", *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 25.2 (Spring 2013): 590–1.
16. Jeanne M. Britton, "Fictional Footnotes, Romantic, Orientalism, and the Remediated Novel: Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*", *European Romantic Review*, 26.6 (2015): 776.
17. Grogan, *Politics and Genre*, pp. 45–7.

18. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957), p. 40, pp. 172–3.
19. C. Jan Swearingen, *Rhetoric and Irony: Western Literacy and Western Lies* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), pp. 73–4.
20. Swearingen, *Rhetoric and Irony*, 83–9. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term in English as arising in the “Mid 17th century: from Greek *maieutikos*, from *maieuesthai* ‘act as a midwife’, from *maia* ‘midwife.’” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/maieutic>).
21. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 40, 172.
22. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 40.
23. Britton, 777.
24. Ashley Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England 1658–1770* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2013), p. 31.
25. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 232.
26. Vince Marotta, *Theories of the Stranger: Debates on Cosmopolitanism, Identity, and Cross-Cultural Encounters* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 82.
27. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 230.
28. Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1994), pp. 1–5.
29. Gilbert Leung, “A Critical History of Cosmopolitanism”, *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, 5.3 (2009): 370.
30. The Cynic Diogenes is credited with the first usage of the term *kosmopolite*—his answer when asked for his region of residence. The early Cynic notion of cosmopolitanism rejects “the civic affiliation of the few by opening the privilege to all.” Stoic cosmopolitanism also prescribes a global sphere of service in pursuit of virtue, as noted by Pauline Kleingeld and Eric Brown, “Cosmopolitanism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2014 Edition) <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/cosmopolitanism/>>. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cosmopolitanism/>). The Cynic’s resistance to rules and orthodoxy suggests an ideologic affinity with the lawless genre of the Greek satyr, and to Menippean forms of satire.
31. Esther Wohlgenut, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism* (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 96–8.
32. Milan Vidakovic, “Irony Called into Questions: Don Quixote’s Alazon and Eiron”, *Papers on Language & Literature*, 53.2 (Spring 2017): 168.
33. Gerard Cohen-Vrignaud, *Radical Orientalism: Rights, Reform, and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015), pp. 73–7.
34. Peter Van Der Veer, “Colonial Cosmopolitanism”, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, eds. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), p. 166.
35. Padma Rangarajan, “Colonial Funkiness: Cosmopolitanism and Fake Travelogues in Nineteenth-Century Britain”, *Nineteenth Century Studies*, 23.1 (2009): 7.
36. For a thorough overview on Hamilton’s handling of the Rohilla war, see Perkins and Russell, introduction to *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*.
37. Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, p. 82.
38. Lawrenson, “Revolution, Rebellion, and a Rajah”, 130.
39. Straight, “Promoting Liberty”, 602.
40. Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, p. 83.
41. Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, pp. 87–8.

42. Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, pp. 98–9.
43. Vidakovic, “Irony Called into Questions”, 167–8.
44. Straight, “Promoting Liberty”, 600.
45. Rangarajan, “Colonial Funkiness”, 3.
46. Grogan, “Crossing Genre, Gender, and Race”, 25.
47. Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, p. 207.
48. Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, p. 240, 243.
49. Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, pp. 226–7; 256; 230–3.
50. Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, p. 261.
51. Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, p. 266.
52. Hamilton, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, pp. 279–80.
53. Lawrenson, “Revolution, Rebellion, and a Rajah”, 143.
54. Perkins and Russell, introduction to *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, pp. 14–5.
55. Elizabeth Benger, *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), 1.126–127.
56. Rangarajan, “Colonial Funkiness”, 7.
57. Wohlgenut, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 3–4.
58. Karen O’Brien, *Women, Enlightenment, and Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009) O’Brien notes particularly the influence of Dugald Scott.
59. For discussions on the many oppositions within late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century cosmopolitanism, see Craciun, *British Women Writers*, pp. 2–4; Van Der Veer, “Colonial Cosmopolitanism”, 165–79; McMurran, “The New Cosmopolitan”, 26. Van Der Veer argues that in the early nineteenth-century shift from Enlightenment to Romantic cosmopolitanism “besides the universality of Culture also the diversity of particular cultures is asserted,” 165. McMurran also notes the “cosmopolitan right to hospitality” found in Kantian cosmopolitanism opposes the racist and imperialist aspects of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, 26.
60. Perkins and Russell, introduction to *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, p. 22.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

*Elizabeth Tasker Davis* is Associate Professor of English and Coordinator of Graduate Studies at Stephen F. Austin State University where she teaches British literature, satire, and writing. Her scholarship on eighteenth-century British women writers, Restoration actresses, the history of eighteenth-century rhetoric, and feminist research practices has appeared in the *South Atlantic Review*, *Rhetoric Review*, *Peitho*, *Re/Framing Identifications*, and the *Sage Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*. Currently, Davis is finalizing a monograph on eighteenth-century British women’s Enlightenment rhetoric and co-editing an essay collection on eighteenth-century British women satirists.





## Dissenting Cosmopolitanism and Helen Maria Williams's Prison Verse

Natasha Duquette

Tyndale University College, Toronto, Canada

### ABSTRACT

Helen Maria Williams's ability to engage in various forms of cosmopolitan conversation – both embodied and imagined – arose from her connections to diverse religious communities. A socially conscious Presbyterian Dissenter, of Scottish and Welsh background, Williams expressed convictions regarding what we would now recognize as human rights. Through her early verse, she advocated for the autonomy of indigenous South Americans and for Africans held in slavery. Once she turned her attention to the French Revolution, she was attracted to its ideas regarding abolitionism, women's participation in the public sphere, and forms of festivity uniting Protestants and Catholics. When imprisoned along with other British citizens, essentially held hostage at a time of war, she maintained her faith in revolutionary principles through forms of cosmopolitan creativity. Such activity, which included listening to and transcribing a collaboratively composed French hymn, reflected her identity as a religious dissenter. Twenty-first century theories of cosmopolitanism which focus on sociability – such as Kwame Anthony Appiah's definition of cosmopolitan conversation as imaginative encounter and Elijah Anderson's attention to cosmopolitan canopies – can help frame Williams's collaboratively creative activities within her prison cell. Her hospitality, transcription, translation, and poetic composition arose from acts of sympathetic imagination rooted in her Dissenting cosmopolitanism.

**KEYWORDS** Religious dissent; French Revolution; cosmopolitan conversation; translation; prison verse

By October 1793, when she was held hostage in prison along with fellow expatriate British subjects in Paris, Helen Maria Williams had apparently moved from her position as an actively observing subject, a keen chronicler of revolutions in both the Americas and France, to a more restricted object of surveillance during the Reign of Terror. As a Presbyterian Dissenter of mixed Welsh and Scottish background, Williams had been raised by her widowed mother in the small Northern English town of Berwick-upon-Tweed. With roots on the margins of English society, Williams was sensitive to societal practices of exclusion and oppression. Dissenters in England were excluded from education at Oxford and Cambridge, for example, and could

not participate formally in politics as members of parliament, since they did not receive communion in the state Church of England. Williams, as a Dissenter with strong cosmopolitan interests in cross-cultural conversation, was drawn to the hopes that the French Revolution held out for greater inclusion, of women as well as people of various classes, of Dissenting Protestants as well as Catholics, in the processes of government. These hopes sustained her during her time of imprisonment, when she was edified by hearing a hymn collaboratively composed and sung by two Girondist political prisoners: Protestant Marc-David Alba Lasource and Catholic Charles Alexis Pierre de Genlis Sillery. Williams's transcription of this French hymn and translation of it into English was an act of creative Dissenting cosmopolitanism. Williams also began translating her friend Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel *Paul et Virginie* (1788) while in prison, and the sonnets she inserted into its narrative place a yearning for home in tension with imagery of international migration and cosmopolitan consciousness.

Earlier that year, in a letter from Paris dated 7 May 1793, Williams drew a connection between what she presents as the unjust treatment of Protestant Huguenots in seventeenth-century France and attacks on religious Dissenters in England during the early 1790s. From her perspective in France, Williams recalls the Birmingham riots of 1791, during which the home of Dissenting theologian and scientist Joseph Priestley was burnt down by a reactionary “Church-and-King” mob. She deploys the memory of these riots to illustrate how violence can emerge from those defending a state church, as well as from revolutionaries. Williams concludes a series of justifications for the French Revolution, in rebuttal to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), by writing:

The last example I have to offer is also interesting to Mr. Burke, as it respects the “Majesty of the Church.” – A century ago the spirit of persecution drove from France multitudes of its best and most industrious inhabitants, the Protestants; as the same spirit of fanaticism lately discovered in England by “the savages of Birmingham,” against the best informed and most valuable of its citizens, the Dissenters, is likely to promote from thence a similar emigration.<sup>1</sup>

Within her response to Burke, Williams quotes from a letter written by Catherine Hutton, a novelist and Dissenter living in Birmingham. Harassed by royalist English rioters, whom she termed “the savages of Birmingham”, Hutton hoped they would “be quiet”.<sup>2</sup> Implicitly challenging Edmund Burke's xenophobic comparison of French revolutionaries to “American savages”,<sup>3</sup> Williams quotes Hutton's phrase to remind her readers of the *English* capacity for fiercely erratic and inhumane behavior at home. Inverting Burke's projection of violent behavior outwards onto colonized Indigenous peoples via racist stereotypes in his *Reflections*, Williams recalls a story of brutality at the heart of English society. She worries a cruelly nationalist “spirit of fanaticism” will

lead to further destruction, forcing Dissenters currently living in England to relocate internationally.

Williams vividly illustrates how religious dissent from a state church – whether in divergence from the French Catholic Church in the seventeenth century or the Church of England in the early 1790s – can trigger attacks against religious others, thus forcing them to emigrate as a group. As a Dissenter, Williams was aware of how emigration could occur as a free choice made by those with the privilege and means to relocate internationally or as a flight from violence seen as a last resort by migrating religious minorities. Thus, her Dissenting cosmopolitanism naturally includes sympathy for vulnerable communities on the move, especially those attempting to escape religious persecution.

Her early poem *Peru* (1784), for example, depicts the mass migration of indigenous Peruvians into Chile after violent attempts to force their conversion. In *Peru*, Williams's Dissenting background informs her portrayal and critique of violently imposed colonialist religious systems. She symbolizes rigorously enforced state-backed religious oppression through the fictional Catholic priest Valverde, whose "lips unhallowed breathe their impious strain, / And pure religion's sacred voice profane" (Canto 3. lines 23–24).<sup>4</sup> From her perspective as a religious Dissenter, Williams critiques Valverde's attempts at forced conversion of indigenous Peruvians. She then inserts the Dominican Bishop Bartolomé de las Casas into her poetic narrative in order to counter Valverde. In her blend of history and fiction she literalizes the ameliorative effect of las Casas's *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* (1542), which was written in an attempt to halt the genocidal violence directed towards indigenous populations in South America. Las Casas himself did not ever travel to Peru; but Williams imagines him physically present in the Andes as a way of rendering concrete his text's effectiveness at sparking ameliorative social change. Williams's poetic picturing of a Spanish Catholic bishop rescuing indigenous men and women from oppressive circumstances evinces her growing cosmopolitanism. Juan Sánchez argues that las Casas functions in the role of an "honourary Protestant"<sup>5</sup> within Williams's *Peru*. However, Williams's audience would have recognized las Casas as Catholic due to popular printings of his text in English translation. Williams's sympathetic depiction of las Casas as an enactor of social justice in fact presents an important exception to what critics present as her general tendency to critique Catholicism.<sup>6</sup> Williams's appreciation of Catholic engagement in collaborative social action, across religious differences, would also motivate her later transcription and translation of the French hymn sung together in the Luxembourg prison by the Catholic Sillery and Huguenot Lasource.

In *Peru*, Williams incorporates an aspect of politicized song when she introduces the indigenous songwriter and leader Zamor into her plot. Zamor displays "richest gifts of mind" (3. 776), as he composes and sings

his verse amidst mountainous Andean spaces. Williams represents Zamor as the most effective leader in Peru; he gathers his people in communal singing and leads them across a national boundary *en masse* into Chile. He is a Peruvian version of the Welsh bard as resister of colonial injustice, as exemplified by the titular figure of Thomas Gray's *The Bard: A Pindaric Ode* (1757), a poem quoted by Williams in her *Julia, a novel interspersed with poetical pieces* (1790). As a writer with Welsh familial ties, Williams was aware of the folklore regarding Welsh bards as resisters of social injustice. In notes within a commonplace book, Thomas Gray recorded how when the English King Edward I conquered Wales he immediately "hanged up all their Bards, because they encouraged the Nation to rebellion".<sup>7</sup> The Welsh and Scottish poet Helen Maria Williams relishes the idea of the Celtic songwriter as inciter of revolution against English domination, and so she imagines an indigenous anti-colonial bard in *Peru* via her character Zamor. Though on one level evincing an innovative cross-cultural hybridity, Williams's construction of Zamor does risk the pitfalls of cultural appropriation. Zamor reflects what Robbie Richardson has recently identified as "a desire to appropriate the Indian into British subjectivity in the form of the hybrid Indian-Briton".<sup>8</sup> Such a desire for appropriation does risk effacing the autonomy of real indigenous men and women and their concrete histories.

Williams envisioned Zamor, however, partly in hopes of bolstering the momentum of the actual indigenous revolution catalyzed in 1780 by a political leader with his own hybrid identity: the mestizo Túpac Amaru II. Political historian Sergio Serulnikov suggests,

... to restore the meaning of the Tupamarista experience, we must do nothing less than recover the political dimension of the event, thinking of the place of the Andean peoples and their leaders not as somewhat passive agents of larger economic trends and systems of thought, but as what they really were: political actors.<sup>9</sup>

This is essentially what Williams was attempting to do through her 1784 poem with its cast of differentiated and strong Andean characters: Zamor, Aciloe, Manco-Capac, Cora, and Ataliba. Jessica Damián comments, "Williams contends that Andean sovereignty under Túpac Amaru would lead to liberation of the mines on the New Continent."<sup>10</sup> In writing *Peru*, Williams was not simply projecting Celtic aspirations onto imagined literary figures; by raising social consciousness regarding the suffering of Andean peoples, she was attempting to ameliorate the daily lived experiences of indigenous communities in South America.

In the late 1780s, as Williams's writing matured in the years leading up to the French Revolution, she further developed literary imagery of oppression and captivity that would later resurface in her prison writing. By 1788, her understanding of British complicity in colonial violence deepened with her

greater awareness of England's involvement in the slave trade. She came to realize what she had earlier naïvely celebrated as the "sublime"<sup>11</sup> sails of the British global economy could be attached to masts of slave ships. Melissa Bailes observes how in her elegy for James Cook, titled "The Morai" (1788), "Williams distinguishes Cook's Pacific encounters from both the brutality of Spanish conquest in the New World and, more audaciously, Britain's contemporary enslavement of Africans."<sup>12</sup> Written in the same year as her elegy for Cook, her *Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave Trade* (1788) juxtaposes imagery of "freedom" (line 94), found through escape or death, with tableaux of Africans "bound in hopeless chains!" (line 6). Her poem is a cry for "mercy" (47) towards the men, women, and children being trafficked across the Atlantic.

In 1790, after she had herself journeyed from England to France by choice, along with her mother and sister, Helen Maria Williams was drawn to aspects of the French Revolution that she saw as holding out hope for previously marginalized or oppressed communities around the globe. In her *Letters Written in France to a Friend in England* (1790), she depicted French revolutionary principles creating "a line of connection across the divided world."<sup>13</sup> As an anti-slavery activist, she admired Honoré Mirabeau's proposal for the abolition of the slave trade in 1790. Specifically, Williams appreciated his expression of sympathies for "the African race."<sup>14</sup> Her compassion for Africans held in slavery and her call for their freedom arose naturally from her Dissenting ties; religious Dissenters in England, such as the Quakers, had been at the forefront of abolitionist efforts since at least the mid-eighteenth century. Aware she may be perceived as disloyal to England due to her attraction to revolutionary Paris, in her *Letters* she queries:

... is it not something to be thankful for, that we exist at this enlightened period ...; when particular tenets of religious belief are no longer imputed as crimes; when the human mind has made as many important discoveries in morality as in science ...; when in short, (and *you* are not one of those who will suspect that I am not all the while a good Englishwoman) when one can witness an event so sublime as the French Revolution?<sup>15</sup>

Despite the risk of being no longer perceived as a "good Englishwoman", Williams voiced her attraction to multiple aspects of the revolution's early stages, including both a growth in religious tolerance and the prominence of Catholic female intellectuals in French society. Though Williams remained attached to "the particular tenets" of Presbyterian Dissent, she admired the prolific Catholic essayist, novelist, and multi-lingual translator Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis Sillery for her ability to speak about politics "in the spirit of philosophy."<sup>16</sup>

Due to her background as a Presbyterian Dissenter, Williams was keenly aware of past oppression enacted upon religious minorities by the Catholic majority in France, yet she still hoped French revolutionary principles

would unite people of varying religious convictions. Williams delighted in the sight of Catholics and Protestants gathering together for revolutionary festivities.<sup>17</sup> Hers was not a narrow form of Protestant dissent. She clearly admired the diversity of cultures, religions, ages, and genders present in the cosmopolitan gatherings of revolutionary Paris. Several critics have commented on Williams's labeling of herself as "a citizen of the world" in the first volume of her *Letters from France*. Deborah Kennedy, for example, presents this phrase as evidence of Williams's "internationalist position."<sup>18</sup> For Lisa Kasmer it illustrates her attempt to link all humanity through sympathetic bonds transcending national histories.<sup>19</sup> However, the connections between Williams's familial background as a religious Dissenter and her empathy for marginalized and vulnerable migrant communities around the globe have not been fully considered. What Adriana Craciun rightly identifies as "Williams's revolutionary cosmopolitanism"<sup>20</sup> and David Sigler labels with admiration as her "consistent cosmopolitanism"<sup>21</sup> has cultural roots in patterns of Dissenting cosmopolitanism.

During her return to London in 1791, after her initial trip to Paris, Williams hosted gatherings with fellow religious Dissenters of Scottish background, such as poet Joanna Baillie and her brother physician Matthew Baillie, as well as novelist Henry Mackenzie, at her Hampstead home on the outskirts of London. The Presbyterian minister who first encouraged Williams to publish her poetry, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Kippis, also attended these meetings. Kippis's sermons, published in 1791, intertwine Dissenting spirituality with practical topics, such as how to act justly with compassion. His title *Sermons on Practical Subjects* (1791) reflects this aim of lived application in the real, and increasingly politicized, communities of the early 1790s. Steven Blakemore notes that the French Revolution "revivified the ideological battles of the seventeenth century, allowing British dissidents to promote the old radical agenda (extended suffrage, parliamentary reform, and religious freedom) in the seemingly new language of natural rights."<sup>22</sup> Kippis does indeed use the language of rights in his sermons, and specifically when he addresses the topic of freedom. In a sermon on "The Advantage of Religious Knowledge", Kippis emphasizes the importance of rational enquiry in maintaining citizens' "sacred rights of conscience" and "the freedom of their minds."<sup>23</sup> In another sermon titled "The Blessedness Attending the Memory of the Just", Kippis extols "freedom of the soul."<sup>24</sup> In her letters of the 1790s, Williams was also expressing a keen commitment to liberty of conscience, inquiry, and religion, and a desire for compassionate justice, convictions which arose from her Dissenting background and, specifically, the mentorship of Kippis.<sup>25</sup> There are no extant detailed records of the conversations which took place in Williams's Hampstead home in 1791, but no doubt they would have touched on what she had seen in France and her desire to return.

Once settled permanently on the continent, Williams began hosting salons in her Parisian apartment. Her hospitality extended to guests who had been actively engaged in defending vulnerable communities around the world, such as the Venezuelan revolutionary general Francisco de Miranda. He had fought for independence from colonial rule in South America before arriving in Paris and visiting Williams. The culturally diverse and vibrant salons hosted by Williams anticipate the concept of cosmopolitan canopies articulated by twenty-first century sociologist Elijah Anderson. Anderson explains how within the cosmopolitan canopies of urban locations, "parties recover and regroup, come together, continue to model civility in public, and are constantly exposed to one another's humanity".<sup>26</sup> The challenges and delights of interactions across cultural and religious differences are key aspects of such sociable sites for Anderson. He continues: "The simple provocations, revelations, and pleasures diverse people find in one another's company induce them to return to the cosmopolitan canopy again and again."<sup>27</sup> Though Anderson has twenty-first century metropolises in mind, his words generate a very apt picture of Williams's salons in Paris, through which she recreated the Dissenting hospitality and sociability she had experienced in London.

In particular, the reality of Williams enjoying Francisco Miranda's conversation is clear when she recalls the early 1790s in her autobiographical writing. Her memoirs, translated by her nephew Charles Coquerel, contain the following reflection: "*J'avais connu Miranda dès mon arrive en France. Son caractère enthousiaste et ses aventures romanesques m'inspirèrent quelque intérêt. Je goûtais beaucoup de l'éloquence de sa conversation.*"<sup>28</sup> Within *Souvenirs de la Révolution Française* (1827), Williams declares a sociable and intellectual delight at encountering the eloquent conversation of Miranda and hearing about his action in the Americas. Her delight resonates with Elijah Anderson's idea of the "pleasures" to be found within the diverse urban company of cosmopolitan canopies. Williams's pleasurable imbibing of Miranda's stimulating conversation is depicted through the French word "*goûtais*", whose conjugation in the *imparfait* signifies a continuous tasting over a period of time, implying ongoing conversation through a series of social interactions. In *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2010), Kwame Anthony Appiah explains how we may deploy the idea of "conversation" critically "not only for literal talk but also as a metaphor for engagement with the ideas and experiences of others".<sup>29</sup> He continues, "I stress the role of the imagination here because the encounters, properly conducted, are valuable in themselves."<sup>30</sup> For Appiah, such imaginative encounters, whether through listening to another in a face-to-face conversation or via reading a novel, are truly cosmopolitan when they lead to a respectful acknowledgment of differences "whether national, religious, or something else".<sup>31</sup> This is what Dissenters such as Williams's Scottish mother had desired in Britain, to have their religious differences from a state church acknowledged, respected, and allowed.

Williams continued her practices of Dissenting cosmopolitan conversation while she was imprisoned during the Reign of Terror in 1793. Britain was at war with France from February 1793 onwards, and after the seizure of Toulon by British forces, the Committee of Public Safety ordered the imprisonment of all English subjects living in France.<sup>32</sup> On 12 October 1793, caught between two warring nations, Williams was arrested, along with her sister and mother, and subsequently sent to the Luxembourg prison. According to her letters, Williams shifted from excitedly surveying revolutionary festivity as a "sublime spectacle"<sup>33</sup> to ironically feeling like a "sad spectacle" as she climbed the Luxembourg's steps.<sup>34</sup> Mary Favret argues that Williams was engaged in performative theatricality, "making a spectacle of herself"<sup>35</sup> during the revolution. This is true of Williams's 1790 letters, but Williams's later phrase "sad spectacle" imbues her experience of involuntary imprisonment with self-deprecating irony. From within the prison, Williams continued to function simultaneously as a curious and open observer of revolutionary sociability and as a hospitable Dissenting *salonnière*. In a letter written from Switzerland in September, 1794, she remembers the remarkable socio-economic, political, and ethnic diversity within the Luxembourg prison, recollecting, "Our prison was filled with a multitude of persons of different conditions, characters, opinions, and countries and seemed an epitome of the whole world."<sup>36</sup> How could Williams have become aware of the varying opinions of her prison mates if she was not engaging in "properly conducted" cosmopolitan conversations with them, in Appiah's terms? She recalls the prisoners eating, discussing ideas, and walking together. They shared "the comforts of the repast" and "conversed" as they would have in her Parisian salon. They also strolled together and appreciated aesthetic aspects of their prison, such as the "view of the gardens", gazing "from the windows on the walks below, where, perhaps, they recognized a relation or friend, who being denied the privilege of visiting the prison, had come to soothe them by a look or tear of sympathy".<sup>37</sup> Surveilled by their captors, the prisoners found relief in surveying the landscape outside. The prisoners' aesthetic experiences are tinged with sorrow and anxiety, however, as many were awaiting execution. Williams records the resilience of French sensibility and kindness but also reminds readers of her grief during what she labels "the days of my captivity".<sup>38</sup>

Williams's background as a religious Dissenter informed her willingness to secretly meet with two political prisoners – Marc-David Alba Lasource and Charles Alexis Pierre de Genlis Sillery – in order to encourage them as they faced probable execution and to hear them sing a hymn addressed to God. Presented with the reality of their own mortality, the men came together across religious differences to compose what was essentially their own elegy. Williams's translation of its lyrics into English forms a further bridge over cultural and linguistic differences. Imprisoned simply as a British



subject, Williams felt compassion for these two men who were explicitly accused as traitors, labeled Girondist enemies of the Jacobin French government. Lasource was a former Huguenot minister, trained in theology at the seminary of Lausanne, Switzerland. He had risen to the role of President of the French National Convention (April-May 1793) before the Girondists fell from favor. The Marquis de Sillery was a French Catholic military leader and politician who spoke on topics such as the rights of men and constitutionalism before the National Assembly and National Convention. He was married to Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis Sillery, a woman who, as we have seen, Williams admired as a public intellectual. Despite their captors' efforts to keep the political prisoners Sillery and Lasource hidden away and socially isolated, in a sort of solitary confinement, Williams found ways to converse with them. Her cosmopolitan capacity for attentive listening and sympathetic imagination was heightened by her confinement, which focused her attention and increased her powers of observation. Deborah Kennedy notes Williams's discovery of a "sociable community" in the Luxembourg prison,<sup>39</sup> and Favret remarks on the "story-telling, poem-writing, and singing" within the prison.<sup>40</sup> However, neither Kennedy nor Favret closely analyze Williams's transcribing and translating of the hymn that was collaboratively composed and sung by Lasource and Sillery.

Marc-David Alba Lasource and Charles Alexis Pierre de Genlis Sillery were kept in general isolation but allowed visitation by a nurse and a female friend who would secretly leave the door of their cell open, allowing for "moments of confidential conversation" with Williams in her cell.<sup>41</sup> Williams respectfully listened to the two men, allowing them space to articulate their fears and political perspectives, thus creating a space of cosmopolitan conversation akin to that defined by Kwame Appiah. In her later letters, Williams paints Sillery as a man of "fine taste" and "considerable talents for literature"<sup>42</sup> before representing the two men as collaborative composers of their hymn. She writes, "Sillery, who had a feeling heart, found devotion the most soothing refuge of affliction. He and La Source composed together a little hymn adapted to a sweet solemn air, which they called their evening service" (64). Williams recalls, "Every night before we parted they sung this simple dirge in a low tone to prevent their being heard in other apartments, which made it seem more plaintive."<sup>43</sup> They had to sing very quietly because they had been forbidden to interact with the other prisoners due to the political nature of their imprisonment. Their hymn is both a prayer and a funeral song, or what Williams terms a "dirge", written in anticipation of their own execution.<sup>44</sup>

The original French version of the hymn opens in short couplets of two to two and a half feet. It is a perfunctory petition addressed to God, akin to the stark *cris de coeur* found in the biblical psalms.

*Calmez nos alarmes,  
Pretez nous les armes,  
Source de vrais biens,  
Brisez nos liens!* (Lasource & Sillery, lines 1-4)

The two men deploy militant language, asking God to replace their alarm with courage and weapons. But ultimately they express hope that God, as the source of true goodness, will break their chains. As a Dissenting Presbyterian, Williams was most likely attracted to the Psalmic quality of their hymn. Williams engaged with the psalms early on, in her two-volume 1786 *Poems*, which includes a verse paraphrase of Psalm 74: 16-17.<sup>45</sup> Scottish Presbyterianism, in particular, the heritage of her mother, included the regular practice of singing from a Psalter, a collection of metrically set Psalms in the English language.

Williams's translation politicizes the men's French hymn using iambic tetrameter couplets, the metrical form also deployed in her *Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave Trade*. Williams echoes not only the form of her earlier poem, but also its words and imagery, as she translates:

Calm all the tumults that invade  
Our souls, and lend thy pow'ful aid,  
Oh! source of mercy! sooth our pains,  
And break, Oh! Break our cruel chains! (1-4)

In her *Poem on the Bill*, Williams uses the word "mercy" five times (it appears in her epigraph from Shakespeare, "The quality of mercy is not strained", and at lines 49, 102, 255, and 302). Her entire abolitionist poem is a petition to parliament to abolish slavery as a political act of mercy. Within it, Williams describes the bitterness of a "galling chain" (22) and later personifies slavery as a cruel woman who "... links the impious chain, / And calculates the price of pain" (153-54). Similar imagery appears in Williams's translation of Lasource and Sillery's hymn, which contains a call for "mercy!" (line 3) and a lament over the injustice of "cruel chains!" (line 4). One key difference lies in the appeal to the British parliament for help in *Poem on the Bill*, whereas in the Luxembourg hymn, both in the original and in Williams's translation, the speaker addresses God directly as the one who can break chains.

A tone of urgency continues in the second half of the first stanza in the original French hymn.

*Entende les accents  
De tes enfans  
Dans les tourmens;  
Ils souffrent, et leurs larmes  
C'est leur seul encens!* (5-9)

Lasource and Sillery ask God to listen to them as His children. They present themselves as uttering their accents or tones from a place of torment, suffering, and scarcity, with their tears being the only incense they can



offer. The mention of incense implies worship and praise of God, even in the midst of suffering, which increases the psalmic quality of the French hymn. The biblical psalms, like this hymn, juxtapose adoration and petition with lament. In Williams's translation, the speakers' communal identity as children of God is split into two singular categories: the captive and the mourner.

To thee the captive pours his cry,  
To thee the mourner loves to fly;  
The incense of our tears receive;  
'Tis all the incense we can give. (5-8)

The word "captive" gives a more political inflection to Williams's translation than the image of suffering children found in the original. Again, there are strong parallels to be found with Williams's anti-slavery *Poem on the Bill*, where she asks, "Who from his far-divided shore, / The half-expiring Captive bore?" (209-210). Later, she describes how, after the Atlantic Passage, "Chain'd on the beach the Captive stands" (250). Williams remained an ardent abolitionist her entire life, so when she translated Lasource and Sillery's words "*tes enfans*" into "the captive", she most likely had captives around the world in mind.

In the second stanza of the French Luxembourg hymn, the men continue to address God:

Prenez notre défense,  
Grand Dieu de l'innocence!  
Près de toi toujours  
Elle trouve son secours;  
Tu connais nos coeurs,  
Et les auteurs  
De nos malheurs;  
D'un fort qui t'offense  
Détrui la rigueur.  
(Lasource & Sillery, lines 10-16).

Here the hymn shifts to a more intimate tone, acknowledging divine omniscience regarding each man's heart and the hearts of his enemies. Williams translates:

Eternal pow'r, our cause defend,  
Oh God! of innocence the friend!  
Near thee forever she resides,  
In thee forever she confides.  
Thou know'st the secrets of the breast,  
Thou knows't th'oppressor and th'oppress:  
Do thou our wrongs with pity see,  
Avert a doom offending thee! (9-16)

Reflecting her secret and confidential conversations with Lasource and Sillery, Williams weaves in references to "secrets" confided to God in prayer. Also, by

once again using much more explicitly socio-political language, Williams highlights the hypocrisy of those claiming to forward the cause of *liberté* while oppressing others. By changing "*auteurs*", or "authors", to "oppressors" she points a challenging finger at those responsible for Lasource and Sillery's imprisonment and eventual execution. The tone of her translation is satiric, in the tradition of Juvenalian satire, expressive of righteous indignation.

The French hymn moves from a petition for the breaking of chains to an acceptance of divine sovereignty.

Quand la tyrannie  
Frappe notre vie,  
Fiers de notre fort,  
Méprisant la mort,  
Nous te bénissons. (Lasource & Sillery, lines 19-23)

Lasource and Sillery present their execution as inevitable in these lines; a literal translation would be: "When tyranny / Strikes our lives, / Proud of our strength, / Scorning death, / We will bless God." The lines are almost Stoic in their resignation. Williams adds ambiguity by changing "when" to "should"; she writes, "But should the murd'rer's arm prevail, / Should tyranny our lives assail . . ." (17-18), leaving room for the possibility of freedom. The conclusion of her translated hymn matches the French almost exactly, however. Lasource and Sillery had expressed belief that the future of France would vindicate them, exclaiming, "*la patrie / Vengera nos noms!*" (26-27); Williams simply translates this as: "Our country will avenge our names!" (24). Sadly, Lasource and Sillery were executed by guillotine on 31 October 1793.

The combination of mournful lament with yearning for freedom and justice surfaces again within the sonnets Williams composed for inclusion in her translation of her friend Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel *Paul et Virginie* (1788) as *Paul and Virginia* (1795). There is a subtle yet powerful Psalmic allusion in one of these sonnets. Williams would later remember how in prison, "often did I wish 'for the wings of a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest!'" quoting from Psalm 55:7.<sup>46</sup> While held within the claustrophobic confines of a prison, Williams took comfort in picturing the freedom of a bird's flight, and she wove this avian imagery into one of her sonnets.

"Sonnet to the White Bird of the Tropic", one of the nine sonnets Williams inserted into *Paul and Virginia*, contains expansive images of flight over a vast and brightly lit ocean. Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* is set on the island of Mauritius, off the Southeast coast of Africa, and Williams maintains this setting. Her depiction of the dynamic, even exhilarating, flight of a migratory bird over Southern waters exists in tension with the physical reality from within which she imagined such flight, the inside of a confining prison. Critics generally agree that Williams's *Paul and Virginia* was completed during her time of imprisonment.<sup>47</sup> The French author of *Paul et Virginie* was one of the last people

Williams saw before she was arrested. She was "drinking tea" and conversing with Saint-Pierre on the evening of 11 October 1793, when she received news that the English in France would soon be taken prisoner.<sup>48</sup> In her preface to *Paul and Virginia*, Williams hopes the "poetical productions ... interspersed in this work"<sup>49</sup> will meet with the "indulgence"<sup>50</sup> of the public, since they were "written under such peculiar circumstances; not composed in the calm of literary leisure, or in pursuit of literary fame; but amidst the turbulence of the most cruel sensations, in order to escape awhile from overwhelming misery".<sup>51</sup> Williams's deployment of the word "escape" here may allude to her desire to physically escape from prison, as well as referring to imaginative escape via the construction of poetic imagery. When she reprinted the sonnets in her 1823 collection *Poems on Various Subjects*, Williams added a footnote stating the "sonnets were inserted ... in a translation I made ... while I was in prison during the reign of terror, and which served to cheat the days of captivity of their weary length".<sup>52</sup> Williams presents her acts of translation and poetic composition as a sort of light shining in the darkness of her imprisonment.

It is not surprising, then, that one of the sonnets included in her translation, "Sonnet: To the White Bird of the Tropic", opens with imagery of joyful movement through intense sunlight. Williams addresses the entire poem to the bird.

Bird of the Tropic! thou, who lov'st to stray  
Or mark'st the bounds which torrid beams confine  
By thy averted course, that shuns the ray  
Oblique, enamour'd of sublimer day –  
Oft on yon cliff thy folded plumes recline  
And drop those snowy feathers Indians twine,  
To crown the warrior's brow with honours gay –  
O'er trackless ocean what impels thy wing?  
Does no soft instinct in thy soul prevail?  
No sweet affection to thy bosom cling,  
And bid thee oft thy absent nest bewail?  
Yet thou again to that dear spot can spring –  
But I my long-lost home no more shall hail.

This sonnet alludes to Psalm 55's image of freedom in a bird's flight. Williams's speaker directly addresses the white bird, admiring its bold travel into vast spaces, its prospect view from atop a cliff, and the gifting of its feathers to indigenous warriors. The White-Tailed Tropicbird, subspecies of which are found not only in Mauritius, but also in Mexico, and as far North as Bermuda, is likely the bird upon which Williams has based her sonnet. By choosing a species so widely dispersed across Southern nations, and connecting its feathers to Indigenous cultural practices in the Americas, Williams invites readers to imagine its Trans-Atlantic migration.

Williams quickly follows up with a series of queries posed to the bird, which double as questions to her own self. The single and adventurous

Williams, who left her nation of birth to travel into previously unknown cultural spheres, wonders, via her speaker, what impels such movement into "trackless" spaces. The migratory and cosmopolitan Williams questions the bird's apparent lack of domestic virtue, wondering that no feminine "soft instinct" or "sweet affection" ties its heart to its nest. Perhaps thinking of her childhood in Berwick-upon-Tweed, Williams wonders that the bird is not homesick after travelling such distances. The sonnet ends on a note of lament, with the speaker's exilic state reflecting Williams's own inability to leave France and return home to Britain. Louise Joy suggests Williams transformed Saint-Pierre's novel "into a troubled confession of her own suffering".<sup>53</sup> The final line of "Sonnet to the White Bird" is indeed an example of such transformation. The admission of melancholy homesickness expressed in this line exists alongside experiences of momentary imaginative freedom while crossing bodies of salt water and picturing Indigenous warriors in the Americas.

Williams would return to contemplating South American Indigenous cultural resistance to oppression after she was released from prison and left France for an approximately six-month stay in Switzerland. Towards the end of November 1793, the efforts of Athanase Coquerel, Williams's sister's fiancé, secured the release of the Williams women from the English convent where they were held after having been transferred there from the Luxembourg prison.<sup>54</sup> While she travelled through the Swiss Alps, Williams's cosmopolitan imagination was led back to the Andes, and she pictured "the immense tract of that rich and violated continent, where the Peruvian, stealing from the glance of his tyrant, hies to the native circle, joins in the melancholy dance, and laments, with tears, the departed splendor of his country".<sup>55</sup> This turn to Peruvian cultural activity recalls her figure of the bard Zamor. The representation of lamentation and tears may have been influenced by her experience of hearing the revolutionary Girondists Lasource and Sillery sing their political hymn. In a long footnote, Williams writes:

When in my poem on Peru, one of my earliest productions, I fondly poured forth the wish that the natives of that once happy country might regain their freedom, it seemed rather the illusive dream of fancy than founded on any solid basis of hope. That revolution had not taken place, which appears destined to break the fetters of mankind in whatever region they are found, and which transforms what was once the vision of poetic enthusiasm into the sober certainty of expectation.<sup>56</sup>

By 1794 Williams's belief in *liberté* had been shaken but not extinguished, and in a radically trans-Atlantic move, she connected her continued commitment to revolutionary principles to her persisting hope for the future freedom of Indigenous Peruvians.

Williams had kept such commitments and hopes alive during her time of imprisonment in the Luxembourg by expressing her Dissenting

cosmopolitanism in both generous hospitality and imaginative composition. She listened to her fellow prisoners, across linguistic and religious differences, transcribed Sillery and Lasource's French hymn, and began her translation of Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*. In the midst of her experience of captivity, she continued to exercise the freedom of thought, conscience, and expression modeled to her by the Dissenting minister Andrew Kippis. Paradoxically, the very strategies her captors had intended to isolate, silence, and restrict her and others, such as Lasource and Sillery, actually prompted her further expressions of cosmopolitan social consciousness and her nurturing of cosmopolitan canopies, both actual and imaginary. She created vibrant and generative spaces of cross-cultural exchange both physically in prison and conceptually in her writing by supporting a freedom of movement between the cells and freedom of speech in Lasource and Sillery's hymn. This same freedom of movement and expression is conveyed through her own original prison verse, especially her "Sonnet to the White Bird of the Tropic". Williams does not end on a triumphant note, however. Her sonnet is embedded within a prose narrative reflecting on the continued existence of slavery in the French colonies; it contains reference to exile and ends with a yearning for home in tension with Williams's own fascinatingly cosmopolitan time of captivity.

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42. Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch*, p. 63.
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44. The hymn and its translation are printed on pages 64–66 of *Letters Containing a Sketch*.
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## Notes on contributor

**Natasha Duquette** is Professor of English at Tyndale University College in Toronto. Her interest in intersections of religion, literature, gender, and print culture inform her monograph *Veiled Intent: Dissenting Women's Aesthetic Approach to Biblical Interpretation* (Pickwick 2016). She is co-editor of *Jane Austen and the Arts: Elegance, Propriety, and Harmony* (Lehigh University Press, 2013) and editor of *Sublimar Aspects: Interfaces between Literature, Aesthetics, and Theology* (Cambridge Scholars, 2007). Currently she is serving as editor-in-chief for *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Romantic-Era Women's Writing*.



# DOMESTIC COSMOPOLITANISM IN GERMAINE DE STAËL'S COPPET AND IN *CORINNE, OR ITALY*

Carmen Casaliggi

Department of Humanities, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff, UK

## ABSTRACT

This essay argues for the intellectual ethos of cosmopolitanism shared in the salon culture of Germaine de Staël's Enlightenment centre at Coppet and reflects on the overlooked significance of a cosmopolitanism rooted in the host country (i.e. Switzerland) and played out domestically through dialogues and writing. Furthermore, this essay suggests that the cosmopolitan dimension surrounding Coppet acted as an inspiration for Staël's second novel *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), a European best-seller which not only sheds light on the society of Napoleonic Europe, but also exposes links between British nationalism and provincialism with Italian cosmopolitanism; Corinne's multilingual conversations with her cosmopolitan improvisations; and the interplay between the domestic and the cosmopolitan heroine ultimately embodied by the character of the child Juliet.

**KEYWORDS** Germaine de Staël; Coppet; conversation; salon culture; *Corinne, or Italy*; domestic cosmopolitanism; cosmopolitan heroine

This marvellous and unique conversational skill [...] seemed to have been given to Madame de Staël only to [...] replace, in the most uniform retreat, the lively and varied movement of the most animated and brightest society.

Benjamin Constant, *Mélanges de Littérature et de Politique* (1829)<sup>1</sup>

Reflecting on the nature of the best form of government and the possibilities for reform in *The Social Contract* (1762), Jean-Jacques Rousseau claims that in civil society man's "faculties are so exercised and developed, his mind so enlarged, his sentiments so ennobled, and his whole spirit so elevated" that "he should constantly bless the happy hour that lifted him for ever from the state of nature".<sup>2</sup> It is, of course, to one of the first stages of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism that Rousseau's views on civil society seem to belong and his work is suggestive of the ways in which cosmopolitan models were fundamental to eighteenth-century understandings of democracy. Joseph Texte's 1895 study *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature: A Study of the Literary Relations between France and England during the Eighteenth Century* (translated into English in 1899) celebrates Rousseau as the

initiator of a cosmopolitan tendency which enables a “network of invisible bonds which will unite nation to nation”, “across the frontiers – if any remain”.<sup>3</sup> For other Enlightenment thinkers, such as Immanuel Kant, humans’ development is measured by their ability to create and maintain a cosmopolitan worldwide community as discussed in his essays “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim” and “Towards Perpetual Peace”, published in 1784 and 1795 respectively. Furthermore, other historians and social theorists from Hugh Blair to the Marquis de Condorcet argued that language, writing and conversation were the means by which knowledge and ethics were transmitted in increasingly cosmopolitan societies.

Although cosmopolitanism is habitually opposed to nationalism, this essay does not intend to denationalise cosmopolitanism or to suggest that cosmopolitanism and nationalism are completely interdependent concepts or clear-cut opposites. Rather, it suggests that they are two concepts which imply one another and that the cosmopolitanism framework operating within shared languages, cultures, and conversations intensifies the sense of the nation. In this I follow Kwame Anthony Appiah’s views about cosmopolitanism as conversations among different peoples in his book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006), in which he argues that cosmopolitanism “begins with the simple idea that in the human community, as in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence” which he identifies as “conversation in its older meaning, of living together, association”.<sup>4</sup> For Appiah, this kind of dialogue would help build a cosmopolitan practice, because people would learn to think beyond narrow national and cultural differences. Furthermore, Appiah’s theorising of cosmopolitan conversations is a significant step towards understanding shared universal values. In other words, the ethical and political agency of cosmopolitanism sharpens our sensitivity to people and things different and foreign as in the experience of the exile; yet this cosmopolitan endeavour strengthens national feelings of identity and not the opposite, and allows individuals to return home with renewed eyes and sight. Therefore, the figure of the cosmopolitan (man or woman) as a figure of rootless mobility as expressed in Diderot’s and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* as a “man of no fixed abode, or a man who is nowhere a stranger” loses validity here.<sup>5</sup> While a real ‘citizen of the world’ hopes for a world that values multiple perspectives (i.e. where domestic spaces and conversation can complement the movement of men and women travelling and cross bordering), his sense of a more global knowledge would never mature without a solid national foundation.

Although we might trace back to Julia Kristeva initial discourses on cosmopolitanism in *Nations without Nationalism* (1993), attention to cosmopolitan endeavours in women’s writing of the eighteenth century, and in Staël’s more specifically, has significantly resurfaced in more recent years.<sup>6</sup> Anne Mellor’s definition of “embodied cosmopolitanism” suggests that English identity

emerged through a constant, if varied interaction with the national-cultural other very often through marriage, religion and war, as in Staël’s *Corinne*. More specifically, *Corinne* shows how ‘the body’ figures in the construction of the foreign and the domestic in relation to her own parents’ background and her own bicultural heritage.<sup>7</sup> Esther Wohlgemut focuses on Staël’s *Corinne* to argue that a cosmopolitan formulation of national discourses challenges Burkean fantasies of national union as shown by the character of the trustworthy Lucile, who by marrying the hero Oswald, becomes the emblem of domestic steadiness.<sup>8</sup> And Jennifer Law-Sullivan has demonstrated that ethnographic discourses are fundamental to an appreciation of the cosmopolitan communities rotating around a novel-travelogue such as *Corinne*.<sup>9</sup>

By building upon and challenging these critical readings, this essay argues for the intellectual ethos of cosmopolitanism shared in the salon culture of Staël’s Coppet and in the practice of conversation. In particular, this study focuses on a more ‘restrictive’ yet ‘reflexive’ cosmopolitanism originated in the tension between the elitist dimension of Staël’s guest practice and processes of democratisation through conversation (‘restrictive’), with the self of Staël’s own troubled identity while in exile in Switzerland (‘reflexive’). Lastly, it highlights the ways in which the radical questions specifically raised by Staël’s salon in Coppet – from her émigré experience to the nature of debates located in the domesticity of her international salon where national and cultural differences had become ordinary – found new answers and forms of signification in her second novel *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), a European best-seller which sheds renewed light on “the transnational aesthetics of expatriate artists”.<sup>10</sup> Cosmopolitanism in the work of a writer like Staël emerges as a category of cultural identity, and even though in this sense it is linked to an educated, middle class audience, it is principally the result of an exposure to difference and one that in turn shapes her literary practice.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Staël’s version of the cosmopolitan, is also where linguistic and national diversity, openness to Enlightenment Europe, worldly wisdom, and an unerring sense of freedom, are appreciated and criticised in domestic spaces and through shared conversations.

## 1. Domestic Cosmopolitanism at Coppet

In a letter addressed to her husband as early as 1 June 1791, after her father Necker had retired from public life to Coppet, Staël worryingly, if not even despairingly, remarked upon the “silence and infernal peace” of her family chateau, a place she disliked and tried to avoid for most of her life.<sup>12</sup> Yet, between 1802 and 1816, Coppet became her on and off residence when Napoleon banished her from Paris. Despite Staël’s discernible initial aversion to life at Coppet, through the years of her exile she would transform it into a European centre honoured with visits from European Romanticism’s leading



intellectuals such as, amongst others, Benjamin Constant, Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde de Sismondi, Charles-Victor de Bonstetten, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Ludovico di Breme, and Lord Byron.<sup>13</sup> As I have noted elsewhere, Staël made of her salon a centre for liberal opposition where to discuss not only literature and the arts but also the politics of the age thus attracting the attention of Napoleon's secret police who scrutinised anyone who paid her a visit.<sup>14</sup>

Her years of exile and émigré identity preoccupations are fundamental to an understanding of Staël's life while in Coppet, where she developed a clear intent to de-popularise Napoleon, his expansionist nationalism, and the spread of both French culture and French classicism in Europe. It was Coppet which intensified her nationalism and her hatred towards the Corsican general, while also opening her up to those cosmopolitan discussions which are reflected in the struggle towards national identity of her fictional characters. Yet, despite the diverse and cosmopolitan understanding of Rousseauvian themes of democracy and liberty evinced by the distinctive Europeaness of the artists and intellectuals surrounding Staël's circle, the domestically located and gendered cosmopolitanism of her home and exile was cultivated and reflected in the discussions and social events which she attended and organised. As she poignantly remarked in a letter written to Karoline von Berg on 5 May 1814, "Exile made me lose the ties that bound me to Paris, and I became European".<sup>15</sup> Whatever caused Staël's 'natural' or 'forced' attention to Europe, her radicalism was also of interest to the liberal-minded writers of Europe and her struggle towards Napoleon meant that she rapidly became an eighteenth-century celebrity. Yet, her émigré experience also helped shape the cosmopolitanism of Staël, which begins to acquire a geo-cultural component thus hinting at the cosmopolitan attributes of a place. Coppet becomes a sort of reverse cosmopolitan metaphor, through which it is not the citizen going to the world, but the world going to Coppet. Coppet is in Switzerland, the heart of Europe (significantly surrounded by the countries which have shaped Staël's literary interests), and therefore despite its acknowledged periphery, it is very central, geographically, to Europe and congenial to the development and exchange of ideas surrounding the making of the European states.<sup>16</sup>

The difficult relationship of Staël with Napoleon is at the heart of the constitution of the Coppet group and of the group's focus on the development of intellectual and political freedom as discussed by scholars such as Roland Mortier and Susan Tenenbaum. Tenenbaum, in particular, examines how "Visions of despotism – visions of Freedom" shape the Coppet group's responses not only to Napoleonic hegemony but also to a post-Revolutionary European order.<sup>17</sup> If these social and political discussions around the European struggle for independence against Napoleon take place in the domestic yet cosmopolitan salon of Staël, they also showcase an intent to transform

locality: Coppet becomes a place where a mixture of cultures and geographies meet and mix and where locality grows and improves through diversity. As a multicultural space, Coppet also incorporates a multicultural agenda. Staël turned Coppet into a place purposefully apt to make both locals and émigrés better citizens of the world whose purpose is not to eliminate nations, but to seek a global identity based on the existing concept of the nation-state. Coppet, therefore, preserves and extends the dialogical character of the private sphere into an all-encompassing cosmopolitan community; being cosmopolite also acquires an intellectual dimension, it becomes a mental state. The significance of Coppet as a gathering of cosmopolitan talents has also been noted in modern scholarship. Clarissa Campbell Orr in "Romanticism in Switzerland" reads Coppet as both a place of exile and residency for her hostess, and refers to Staël as "one of the most cosmopolitan women in a cosmopolitan age".<sup>18</sup> More recently, Maria Fairweather has remarked that "pluralism and openness" characterised Staël's circle at Coppet, and that "different national backgrounds" contributed vividly to the development of different views and ideas and were allowing for mutual appreciation of differences.<sup>19</sup> And Sharon Worley has taken it further by focusing on the association between Louise Stolberg's Florentine salon with Staël's Coppet Circle, specifically highlighting the role of Staël's politics of an open, public, cosmopolitan patronage while in Switzerland.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, as a centre of great intellectual interest, Coppet plays an important role in the development of cosmopolitan ideas which have their foundation in eighteenth-century cosmopolitan concepts of sympathy, sociability, and sensibility.<sup>21</sup> Coppet resembles Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation in *Imagined Communities* (1983), which however also shows cosmopolitan tendencies: it is a political community which "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, [...] is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship".<sup>22</sup> Choosing not to ignore "the actual inequality and exploitation" in the patriarchal and jingoist communities she was familiar with while in France, Staël dedicates herself to challenging these prejudices and building a new community in Coppet that would honour the sanctified spirit beneath her female identity and exiled condition. This view is also not dissimilar to Galin Tihanov's more recent designation of cosmopolitanism. Coppet is, like cosmopolitanism itself, a place which "incorporates difference" and remains "engaged in an interactive appreciation and assertion of otherness".<sup>23</sup> Space and place determine the value and significance of the conversations and vice-versa. In this sense, forms of cosmopolitan networks around Coppet were shaped by the way in which space is perceived and interpreted: just as Coppet shapes how people live and think – a sort of neo-Montesquieuism – so do their attitudes shape and reshape cosmopolitan Coppet. Simone Balayé has also made connections between Staël's practice and that of Montesquieu, which begins with

Montesquieu's famous assertions on the influence of climate on society.<sup>24</sup> More specifically, Staël believed that the boundaries of nations are defined not by politics but by geography, climate, and above all, linguistic unity.

As language is a social phenomenon, conversations carry the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world; they are in themselves an example of the cosmopolitan. As we have seen, Appiah sees the practice of conversation as inherently cosmopolitan not only because it integrates the similar and different aspects of diverse cultures but also because it reinforces the idea of community and solidarity despite such dissimilarities.<sup>25</sup> Susanne Schmid has recently investigated the tension inherent in the practice of conversation when she considers the "elusiveness" of spoken words alongside their more powerful attributes of "exchange of ideas and information, education, acquisition of refinement and display of politeness" in the singular space of a salon.<sup>26</sup> The idea that conversations at Coppet take on elements attributed to salon culture is particularly significant in relation to the fact that when conversations at Coppet claim to be about the other (i.e. Napoleon's hegemony in Europe), they are in truth a way of constructing the radical and liberal identity of the circle itself. Furthermore, they can be considered as a form of authorship albeit derivative and not always self-originating. Coppet remains as an ineluctable private institution but, because of its cosmopolitan views and international guests it becomes public in its ideas.

Such an exchange of information is not only central to the life of the residence of Coppet and to its European guests, but conversation is also essential to shaping both writing and reading practices in an expanding print culture. In other words, Coppet can be intended as an example of what Jon Mee, quoting Hume, has called "Conversable Worlds", where interactive communities enrich the fruitful relationship between continental European thought and intellectual and political life in the period. Benjamin Constant's sense of conversation as skill ("this marvellous and unique conversational skill"), cited in the epigraph to this essay, points to the period's unifying understanding of this social practice, where interaction resides in the way in which "the most animated and brightest society" can express itself.<sup>27</sup> One of the most pervasive and durable effects of conversations around Coppet is that they work through principles of associationism as in relation to both Hartley's and Hume's theories: conversations turn into literary genres, and literary narratives promote Coppet as much as the people and their discussions do. More specifically, this association between conversation and literature, can be ascribed to the fact that Staël as a woman was not allowed to take part in the politics of the time, and she therefore does so through her writings which acquire a political function.

Consequently, Coppet becomes the cradle of inspiration for Staël's major work. Evidence of Staël's first literary cosmopolitan endeavours appear in

her non-fictional works such as *On Literature Considered in its Relation to Social Institutions* (1800), *De L'Allemagne* (1813), *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution* (1817), as well as in her political and personal journal, *Ten Years of Exile* (1820). All of these works provide penetrating insights into the society of Napoleonic Europe and they are products of the intellectual sociability of what Stendhal has called "Les États généraux de l'opinion européenne".<sup>28</sup> Yet it is with a novel such as *Corinne* that Staël enjoined the virtues of dialogue and domestic cosmopolitanism. *Corinne*, like the art genre of the conversation piece which often portrays intriguing contradictions – high life groups of friends or families, but caught informally in domestic settings – was written with the intent to exalt the arts and literature of the South and unite both northern and southern characteristics.<sup>29</sup>

## 2. Cosmopolitan *Corinne*, or Italy

Published in 1807 when the Italian states were in Napoleon's power, but set before Napoleon's conquest of Italy in 1797 and with references to the war between France and England of 1793, *Corinne* displays a distinctively European focus thus conforming to what M. Ione Crummy has recently called the "European genre" of Staël's work.<sup>30</sup> The novel recounts the adventures of Oswald, Lord Nelvil, who in the winter of 1794 leaves his native Scotland for Italy, and of the renowned *improvvisatrice* Corinne, whom he sees for the first time in Rome and with whom he falls in love. Read as a travelogue to both Britain and Italy during the Grand Tour of Europe, *Corinne* explores the power of location and the influence of place on the characters' identity. Place in the novel appears to provide an explanation for the origins of a character's personality; the latter appears to share deterministic beliefs.

As a woman of dual origin, born in Italy by an English father and an Italian mother, and living in Rome, Corinne is both English and Italian, but it is in Italy – where she was brought up and where her tastes were formed – that she feels more at home. Despite her multifaceted identity, there is evidence to suggest that Italy is Corinne's homeland and that England does not entirely belong to her. The references to linguistic diversity and national identity characterise one of Oswald's first encounters with Corinne, when the multiple narrative voices link to its multilingual and polyphonic tone: "English, [...] must surely be your native language", he exclaims, invoking the simple pleasures of domestic comfort. Yet, abruptly, if not even annoyingly, Corinne counters: "I am Italian".<sup>31</sup> Although the emotional interplay between Englishness and Italianness in the novel seems to stress Oswald's sense of cultural displacement as he perceives Corinne as the "most charming of foreign women", he is also re-heartened because "her English accent brought back all the memories of his native land" (34). There is little doubt that *Corinne* is a novel about

both Italian and British nationalism. Corinne appears preoccupied from the very start with Oswald's attachment to his native land: "I think I see in you [Oswald] the national pride which is so often characteristic of your compatriots" (38), and she then goes on to question the political efficacy of cultural nationalism and foreign occupation: "we [Italians] have been denied the lot of being a nation" (38). Yet *Corinne* also worries about a possible political union between the different countries in Europe, thus entailing discourses on the emergence of a European nationhood.<sup>32</sup> This openness to Europe and its cosmopolitan opportunities also evinces a sense of reluctance and fear of them, for what could become of Europe under Napoleon's hegemony. Therefore, it can be argued that Corinne's dual identity and multilingualism are only two of the many different factors which contribute to the development of the cosmopolitan heroine. So confidently she challenges Oswald: "but when, like me, you have spoken two or three different languages for several years, you are moved to use one or the other according to the feelings you want to express" (38). Given that the eighteenth century saw the onset of a new age of linguistic cosmopolitanism in Europe, *Corinne* is predominantly about Italy and its *conversazioni*, to then spanning across Britain, France, and Switzerland, onto a pan-European literary identity made up of linguistic and cultural diversity.<sup>33</sup>

When in Italy, Corinne maintains a cosmopolitan attitude and open mindedness, not only due to the fact that she can communicate effectively in different languages, but also because Italy for Corinne represents a place where cosmopolitan endeavours exist and grow through intensified contact and interrelation with the national other, as is the case with Oswald. Corinne's charming house-salon in Trastevere, for example, enables satisfying intellectual and cross-cultural exchanges on a regular basis and has the specific role to foster intellectual communication by "bring[ing] her friends into a small circle to facilitate conversation" (37). As in Coppet, conversation for Corinne and her coterie enhances the practice of domestic cosmopolitanism within salon culture where the public and private spheres appear to overlap and where verbal exchanges are valued as "a mixture of every kind of mental activity, enthusiasm for the arts and knowledge of the world, subtle ideas and deep feeling" (39). The novel practices and advocates a domestically oriented cosmopolitanism that stresses the value of conversation grounded in a distinct sense of locality and national identity which puts Italy back in place in the narrative, as a country open to cosmopolitan endeavours.

While analysing the importance of listening in Staël's writing, Lauren Fortner Ravalico has recently noted that *Corinne* is a "noisy novel" because it "stages many different speech acts, particularly that of conversation" and "explores the possibilities of dialogue, friendship, and love across cultures".<sup>34</sup> Ravalico's understanding of the act of conversation brings forth the issues

concerning the success of transnational communication and cross-cultural interactions in the novel. More immediately though, the significance of conversation practice in *Corinne* rests on the correlation between conversation and improvisation: "for me improvisation is like a lively conversation" (45–46), Corinne, using two words which rhyme with each other, reinforces in Oswald's eye the connection between the two practices. This association, which also seems to add yet another cosmopolitan layer to the novel, has been investigated in recent years by Angela Esterhammer.<sup>35</sup> Extemporising poetry and extemporising conversations are for Esterhammer presented in the novel "as a foreign, if not a bizarre genre", imported from Italy to Northern Europe.<sup>36</sup> If improvisation in its embodiment of inspiration and genius performs foreignness, and conversation is associated to improvisation, conversation also showcases cosmopolitan endeavours which delight in the diversity of human cultures. While also reflecting on the interplay between improvisation and conversation, Paul Hamilton is accurate in suggesting that in the novel "improvisation [...] makes us see the Italy with which Corinne has brought us into dialogue".<sup>37</sup> If improvisation implies, in particular, the Italians' ability at such a practice, it also becomes for them a point of national pride. Moreover, if improvisations become like panoramic paintings, forms of lower-class art intended for the masses, blurring the line where art stopped and where reality begun, they also reveal with some charm the spontaneity, freedom, and passion of the Italians.<sup>38</sup>

Jennifer Law-Sullivan draws attention to the fact that "Staël furthers her goal of forming a cosmopolitan community of readers by creating a community of viewers in the text itself". The crowd who gathers to see Corinne's coronation or to listen to her performances in Italy, Law-Sullivan argues, "signifies the importance of community in Staël's cosmopolitan vision".<sup>39</sup> In this way, conversations and improvisations, viewers and readers contribute to improve the domestic environment of both Corinne's and Staël's own salons, as both were addressing, through different media, a range of pressing questions regarding liberty, justice, national identity, and cultural difference in a very delicate moment in history. But if Staël portrays Italy as a welcoming, multicultural, cosmopolitan, and liberal country, this is certainly not the case for England. Like France for Staël, England for Corinne, stands for imperial rule in a world of rival powers where prejudice prevails. As the story unfolds, it is revealed that after the death of her Italian aunt, Corinne, aged fifteen, was brought back to a small town in Northumberland by her father. From the very start, Mr Edgermond warns his daughter:

My dear child, it is not like Italy here. In our country [England] women have no occupation but domestic duties. [...] it is not at all possible to get married if people thought you had tastes foreign to our ways. Here the style of life must be subject to the old customs of a remote area. (243)

As this passage acknowledges, Corinne's first encounter with her English roots is everything but joyful. She soon learns about the difficulties of living in such a narrow environment and her contact with the Northumberland community has ensured her that the duties of domestic order were unappealing to an independent minded woman. As Angelica Goodden has noted, the real concern of the book is provincialism.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, more than an attack on Englishness itself, Staël, Goodden argues, "paints a devastatingly satirical portrait of English provincial mores" (159), which is especially evident in the empty discussions taking place around the second Lady Edgermond and her circle. Unlike Staël's circle in Coppet and Corinne's salon in Rome, the deadly cold and thoughtless network of Corinne's stepmother was solely preoccupied to converse about the art and craft of tea and the different stages of an excruciating tea-preparing ceremony. Corinne is progressively frustrated by this circle: "I had been in Italian convents" – she vividly remembers while recounting her story to Oswald – "they seemed to me full of life in comparison with this circle, and I did not know what was to become of me" (248). The provinciality of such a "cramped society" suffocates Corinne where her talents are unacknowledged and where she is perceived as "an irritation to nearly everyone". Corinne believes that life in London or Edinburgh, for example, would have been enough to respond to her cosmopolitan drive, and "meet those superior men who can appreciate [...] the inexhaustible pleasures of wit and conversation [...] of a foreign girl, even though she would not conform wholly to the country's strict customs" (248–9). If Corinne feels like an exile in the host country, this sense of estrangement to England has prompted her to think even more about her own sense of belonging to Italy. Paradoxically, like for Staël, this condition of exile gives Corinne's life direction.

If life in England might prospect to be one of familial repression where "women grew old always doing the same thing, always staying in the same place" (249), this life is more appropriate for Corinne's half-sister Lucile Edgermont, a submissive, shy, yet beautiful and young woman, who appears "so well in tune with the pure, calm hopes of domestic life" (319). Wohlgemut has persuasively argued that there is a connection in the novel between "domestic femininity and national stability", best embodied by the character of Lucile.<sup>41</sup> Corinne, on the other hand, is perceived as a threat to the stability of a safe, orthodox, and provincial environment which does not admit cosmopolitan happenings. But Lucile is also the mother of Juliet, who has Italian traits and looks like Corinne. From Corinne, Juliet also inherits her passion for music and the arts and when in Florence, Juliet is excited to go and see "that lady" every day because "she promised me to teach me everything she knows. She says she wants me to be like Corinne" (396). If Juliet follows Corinne's steps, Lucile's role in Juliet's upbringing also indicates a desire for change and emancipation and a step forward from the small circle to which

she belongs. Therefore, it can be argued that Lucile enhances, through Juliet, cosmopolitan endeavours and ultimately, like Corinne, Lucile contributes to the formation of the new heroine.

Staël's critique of English provincialism goes even further in showcasing an unflattering vision of British xenophobia. Oswald's father preoccupations for his son allude to his dislike of Corinne's foreignness: "he [Oswald] would try to introduce foreign ways into his house" and by doing so "he would lose the national spirit [...] which unite us and our nation; we are a group, a community, which is free but indissoluble" (318). Corinne's position appears therefore irreparable: not only could she weaken national feelings and national pride, but she will instead strengthen foreign competition. The same goes for Oswald: if he had to move to a foreign country with a foreign woman, his expatriation would, in his father's mind at least, deny him the honour of fighting for his own. While commenting on the relationship between Corinne and Oswald and Oswald's difficulties to cope with the cultural and historical glories of Italy, Hamilton perceptively notices that the lack of resolution in this novel is due to Oswald as he seems unable "[t]o love her [Corinne] ... in her larger shape as well, *Corinne ou l'Italie*". As he fails to do so, his only option is to revert to a sterile life in England, entering into an unrewarding marriage with Lucile, because Corinne is not prepared to accept a state of domestic servitude to the other.<sup>42</sup> Instead, Corinne is a cosmopolitan heroine who "evinces continual aspiration, one comparable to Italy's renewal in Europe".<sup>43</sup> Another possible interpretation, however, is that Staël, at a time when the Italian states were under Napoleon's rule, wanted to provoke Bonaparte by suggesting that Italy, rather than Italy's alter ego Corinne, could represent a military and political threat for both England and France. Based on his studies on Staël and Napoleonic Europe, John Isbell is right when he indicates that *Corinne* "looks at Napoleon's conquered Europe and calls for its revolt".<sup>44</sup> While European nations are united through their revolt towards Napoleon and in search for freedom, Italy demands a special attention as it is presented as a democratic country open to promoting the civic values that favour social cohesion and harmony.

Therefore, although Wohlgemut has suggested that Corinne is someone who "confounds rather than confirms clear national demarcations", Corinne is instead totally convinced about her national identity and prefers Italian verve to the conversational reticence of those English women gathering around the salon of her stepmother.<sup>45</sup> It is Corinne's final performance which best indicates her tribute to her own Italian roots. Scripted in advance rather than improvised, "Corinne's Last Song" is not only a thoughtful acknowledgement to "the country where I [Corinne] saw the light of day", but also a meditated expression towards female emancipation: "You have allowed me glory, oh, liberal nation, you who do not banish women from



your temple" (401).<sup>46</sup> As Goodden has argued, Corinne's artistic experience is representative of "a political state that may come to prevail in her country, for it is free, spontaneous, and governed by native rhythms".<sup>47</sup> As freedom and spontaneity are cosmopolitan attributes, multicultural and multilingual Corinne becomes a symbol of the autonomy and fulfilment that she could not find in England. The cosmopolitan dimension of Italy and its community not only means inclusiveness of the 'other' as is the case for both Oswald and Corinne, but also moves further afield as well.

Corinne in Staël's novel is presented as Domenichino's Sibyl on the day she receives the laurels on the Capitol (23). Reflecting on this episode, Catriona Seth has highlighted how Corinne figures "as an almost allegorical character, an incarnation of the cradle of European culture".<sup>48</sup> There is little doubt that Staël here appropriates the foreign figure of the Sybil – "her tall, slightly plump figure, in the style of a Greek statue" (23) – to laud the virtues of the European community. Yet, against the backdrop of the Consulate and the Empire, Staël complicates things by appealing to the pagan prophetic tradition of the Sybil by making Corinne wear an Indian turban, which is not only a symbol of female genius but also of openness to cosmopolitan cultures. It is certainly no coincidence that the tendency towards cosmopolitan thinking emerged during a time of crucial imperial and cross-cultural relations,<sup>49</sup> also evidenced by Oswald's attending the war in the Indies for four years (298). At a moment in which national and European identity were under threat, Staël was building with *Corinne* cultural bridges between different sensibilities in Europe and beyond.

The novel terminates with Oswald following Corinne's funeral procession from Florence to Rome. Although the death of the cosmopolitan heroine might seem to suggest that cosmopolitan ideals are not achieved in this book, evidence in the narrative attests the contrary. Corinne chooses her love for Italy, perhaps even more than her love for Oswald, as Italy embodies freedom and multiculturalism over her English heritage. Corinne chooses borders. Her love for Oswald is problematic because it does not admit borders. The novel can be heard across different countries of Europe in a single language, the language of self-esteem and individual emancipation, that nevertheless takes full account and admits of national differences. Stepping outside the domestic sphere might initially be difficult. Yet, a new cosmopolitan endeavour is recognisable in Juliet, Corinne's niece. Through her there is a hint in the novel that cross-cultural connections could endure as "Corinne, in her feeble, wasted state, gave herself very great trouble to teach the child all her talents, as a legacy she wanted to leave while still alive" (396). Herself a product of European culture like Corinne in Italy and Staël in Coppet, Juliet is no mere prophecy as in the Sybil; she is the expression of Staël's analysis of the political situation in Europe while the author's own artistic utopia becomes a weapon of criticism against Napoleon's reality.

Coppet and *Corinne* are the product of two different yet complementary views on cosmopolitanism. The environment of Coppet recounts the literary process, as one experienced through the value of the conversations. The nature of domestic cosmopolitanism in Coppet resides in accepting differences through crediting the value of other ways of life. On the other hand, cosmopolitanism in the novel is shown as an artistic experience. It is this experience, this identity that one finds in the practice of improvisation and in the art of conversation that surmises to the development of the cosmopolitan heroine. Perhaps, as Tihanov notes, in this "process of discursive boundary-crossing, a coming together of the north and the south by means of constructing a network of cultural bilateralisms allowing the mutual appreciation of difference", Staël's new heroine is right at home.<sup>50</sup>

## Notes

1. Benjamin Constant, *Mélanges de Littérature et de Politique*, vol. 1 (Louvain: Chez F. Michel, Imprimeur-Libraire de L'Université, 1830), p. 114; my translation.
2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract, Discourse on the virtue Most Necessary for a Hero, Political Fragments, and Geneva Manuscript*. Ed. and trans. Judith Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly. Vol. 4 of *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 1994), p. 131.
3. Cited in Galin Tihanov, "Cosmopolitanism in the Discursive Landscape of Modernity: Two Enlightenment Articulations", *Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism*, ed. David Adams and Galin Tihanov (Oxford: Legenda, 2011), p. 144.
4. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (London and New York: Penguin, 2007), p. xvii.
5. Denis Diderot and Jean Le Ronde D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, des Arts, and des Métiers* (Paris: Briasson, David, Le Breton & Durand, 1751–1765), 4. p. 297.
6. Julia Kristeva, *Nations without Nationalism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1993) in which she argues that ethnic, religious, social, and political "otherness" needs to be understood and accepted in order to guarantee social harmony and commonality.
7. Anne K. Mellor, "Embodied Cosmopolitanism and the British Romantic Woman Writer", *European Romantic Review* 17.3 (2006): 289–300 (292).
8. Esther Wohlgenut, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). See, in particular, Chapter 3, pp. 54–70.
9. Jennifer Law-Sullivan, "Ethnography and Autoethnography: Cosmopolitanism in *Corinne ou l'Italie*", *Staël's Philosophy of the Passions: Sensibility, Society, and the Sister Arts*, ed. Tili Boon Cuillé and Karyna Szmurlo (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2013), pp. 117–30.
10. Michael Wiley, *Romantic Migrations. Local, National, and Transnational Dispositions* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. xi.
11. On elitism, see also, Roland Mortier, "Les Etats Généraux de l'opinion européenne", *Le Groupe de Coppet et l'Europe 1789–1830. Actes du Cinquième Colloque de Coppet*, 8–10 Juillet 1993, ed. Kurt Kloocke and Simone Balayé (Lausanne: Institut Benjamin Constant, 1994), p. 18.



12. Beatrice W. Jasinski, *Correspondance Générale*, 6 vols. (1960–68; Geneva: Slak-tire, 2009), 1: 501. On Staël's initial aversion for Coppet see also Biancamaria Fontana, *Germaine de Staël: A Political Portrait* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 2016), p. 12.
13. On this point, see Etienne Hofmann and François Rosset, *Le Groupe de Coppet: Une Constellation d'Intellectuels Européens* (Lausanne: Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, 2005).
14. Carmen Casaliggi, "From Coppet to Milan: Radical Circles at La Scala", *The Wordsworth Circle: A Journal of Romantic Studies* 48.1 (2017): 59–66 (62). On this point, see also, David Ellis, *Byron in Geneva* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2011), pp. 72–3; and Angela Esterhammer, Diane Piccitto, Patrick Vincent, "Introduction", *Romanticism, Rousseau, Switzerland: New Prospects*, ed. Angela Esterhammer, Diane Piccitto, Patrick Vincent (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 1–20.
15. Germaine de Staël, *Dix Années d'Exil*, ed. Simone Balayé and Mariella Vianello Bonifacio (Paris: Fayard, 1996), p. 7.
16. On this point, see also, Hoffmann and Rosset, pp. 12–14.
17. Mortier 18. See also, Susan Tenenbaum, "The Coppet Circle and Europe: Visions of Despotism – Visions of Freedom", Kurt Kloocke and Balayé, 361.
18. Clarissa Campbell Orr, "Romanticism in Switzerland", *Romanticism in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), pp. 134–71, p. 148.
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20. Sharon Worley, *Louise Stolberg's Florentine Salon and Germaine de Staël's Coppet Circle: The Politics of Patronage, Neoclassicism, and the Code of Freedom in Napoleonic Italy* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2014).
21. On this point see, Charles W. J. Withers, "The Enlightenment and Geographies of Cosmopolitanism", *Scottish Geographical Journal* 129.1 (2013): 36–53 (37; 41).
22. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983 [1991]), p. 7.
23. Tihanov, 135.
24. Simone Balayé, "Madame de Staël et l'Europe napoléonienne", Kurt Kloocke and Balayé, p. 31.
25. Appiah, xiii.
26. Susanne Schmid, *British Literary Salons of the late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1–21 (2; 5; 13). On the development of salon culture in Europe, see Nicole Pohl, "Cosmopolitan Bluestockings", *Bluestockings Now! The Evolution of a Social Role*, ed. Deborah Heller (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 71–89. See also Hilary Brown and Gillian Dow (eds.), *Readers, Writers, Salonnières: Female Networks in Europe: 1700–1900* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011). On Staël, see esp. pp. 179–216.
27. On this point, see also, Simone Balayé, who has rightly observed that: "Il n'ya pas un seul groupe organisé, cohérent, qui soit plus européen, plus international que cette réunion d'amis, pas un seul à travers tout le XIX siècle qui se soit autant intéressé à l'Europe". Simone Balayé, "Allocution d'ouverture", Kurt Kloocke and Balayé, p. 13.
28. Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817*, in *Voyages en Italie*, ed. V. del Litto, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 155.

29. On this, see Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life* (The University of Michigan: Royal Collection Publications, 2009).
30. M. Ione Crummy, "The Peripheral Heroine Takes Center Stage: From Owen-son's National Tale to Staël's European Genre", ed. Boon Cuillé and Szmurlo, pp. 95–116 (104; 95).
31. Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1998 [2008]), p. 38. Henceforth page numbers appear in parenthesis in the text.
32. On this point, see Lynn R. Wilkinson, "The Fluttered like Moths: Exile and Cosmopolitanism in the work of Germaine de Staël and Georg Brandes", *Other Capitals of the Nineteenth Century: An Alternative Mapping of Literary and Cultural Space*, ed. Richard Hibbitt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 51–68.
33. On Switzerland in *Corinne*, note the beginning of book XVIII, Ch. 1 which intimates a relationship with the Europeaness of Staël's Coppet: "After spending some time in Switzerland and becoming bored by natural scenery in the Alps, just as he had wearied of the arts in Rome, Count D'Erfeuil suddenly felt the desire to go to England, where, he had been assured, profundity of thought was to be found" (346).
34. Lauren Fortner Ravalico, "Liquid Union: Listening through Tears and the Creation of Community in *Corinne*", ed. Boon Cuillé and Szmurlo, p. 132.
35. Angela Esterhammer, *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008). See, in particular, pp. 83–91.
36. Esterhammer, p. 78.
37. Paul Hamilton, *Realpoetik: European Romanticism and Literary Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 70.
38. On this point, see also Maria Schoina, *Romantic "Anglo-Italians": Configurations of Identity in Byron, the Shelleys, and the Pisan Circle* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 51–55. On the "glorious improvisations" of Staël's *Corinne* see also Harriet Kramer Linkin, "The Citational Network of Tighe, Porter, Barbault, Lefanu, Morgan, and Hemans", *Women's Literary Networks and Romanticism: "A Tribe of Authoresses"*, ed. Andrew O. Winckles and Angela Rehbein (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2017), pp. 196–225 (203).
39. Law-Sullivan, p. 125.
40. Angelica Goodden, *Germaine de Staël: The Dangerous Exile* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), p. 158.
41. Wohlemut, p. 123.
42. On this point, see also John Isbell, "Introduction", Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1998 [2008]), p. xii.
43. Hamilton, p. 61.
44. Isbell, p. ix.
45. Wohlgenut, p. 122.
46. For a different, and more pessimistic interpretation, see Daniel Karlin, *The Figure of the Singer* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), pp. 53–58.
47. Goodden, 158.
48. Catriona Seth and Rotraud von Kulesa (eds.), *The Idea of Europe: Enlightenment Perspectives*, trans. Catriona Seth et al. (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017), p. 96.
49. On this point, see Evan Gottlieb, *Romantic Globalism* (Columbus, OH: Ohio UP, 2014), pp. 2–3.
50. Tihanov, p. 144.

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## Notes on Contributor

*Carmen Casaliggi* is Senior Lecturer in Nineteenth-Century Literature at Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK. Her research interests include Romantic literature and art, the relationship between British and European Romanticism, Romantic literary circles, and the work of John Ruskin. She has co-edited *Ruskin in Perspective: Contemporary Essays* (Cambridge Scholars, 2007) and *Legacies of Romanticism: Literature, Culture, Aesthetics* (Routledge, 2012) in addition to having co-authored *Romanticism: A Literary and Cultural History* (Routledge, 2016). She is currently working on a new book-length study entitled *Romantic Networks in Europe, 1770–1832: Transnational Encounters* and on a project on British Romantic writing and contemporary Europe.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Emily Brontë: A Life in 20 Poems**, by Nick Holland, Stroud, The History Press, 2018, 256 pp., £12.99 (hardback), ISBN 9 78075 0978 989

Nick Holland's biography, *Emily Brontë: A Life in 20 Poems*, is one of several new publications released to coincide with the Brontë bicentenaries which began in 2016 and will continue until 2020. 2018 is Emily's bicentenary year, and Holland's book, a work of popular history, considers a selection of Brontë's poetry in an effort to illuminate facets of her lived experience, literary production, and interiority. Holland explains the rationale that structures this text in his preface:

It is in Emily's poems [...] that we can often discover an insight into her thoughts and feelings, those emotions that she always strived to keep hidden away. [...] From her days as a teacher, through her journey to Brussels, her passion for the moors, and the death of her brother Branwell, Emily's verse provides the perfect accompaniment and illumination (8).

While Holland's enthusiasm for Brontë's work and thorough knowledge of Brontë biography is evident, his approach to her life – mining her poetry and sometimes her prose to find clues to her beliefs and experiences – is likely to strike readers as rather limited, retrograde, and naïve.

Holland's book is organized into twenty roughly chronological chapters that begin with an account of the Brontës' antecedents in Ireland and end with a discussion of Emily's death, the development of her literary legacy, and her sister Charlotte's editorial interventions. His writing is often vivid and engaging, although the text could have been improved by more careful attention on the part of his editors, who allowed many typos to slip through. Despite Holland's ability to weave an entertaining narrative of Brontë's life, there are a few serious problems with this biography that preclude its usefulness for students and scholars of the Brontë family.

In terms of originality, it must be said that Holland's book contributes nothing new to our understanding of Brontë's life and literature, instead relying heavily on other published accounts of her life. This biography is competently researched, with footnotes and a selected bibliography, although there are several occasions when the author reproduces some of the more entrenched Brontë myths and misunderstandings. For instance, he incorrectly assumes that Branwell was a confirmed alcoholic and opium addict and that he exhibited wildly erratic behavior as early as the 1830s. This is a misunderstanding for which there is no evidence; as several literary critics and biographers have noted, this idea ultimately derives from Elizabeth Gaskell's massaging of the Brontë chronology in order to garner sympathy for the Brontë sisters.<sup>1</sup> The problem here is a certain credulousness on the part of the biographer, a willingness to take the testimonies of people like Ellen Nussey, John Greenwood, and even Elizabeth

Gaskell at face value, without considering their motives for insinuating themselves into the Brontë story or the ways in which they, consciously or unconsciously, may have shaped events to suit particular narratives. For the most part, however, Holland demonstrates a familiarity with the key events of the family's lives.

One particular strength of this book (especially given that it is a popular history, aimed at an audience who may not have the privileges of institutional affiliation) is Holland's decision to incorporate extracts from many primary documents that are difficult to access. These include manuscripts of Emily Brontë's poetry and prose, Emily and Anne's diary papers, Brontë family correspondence, and first-hand accounts of people who were familiar with the family. Holland also makes a number of interesting observations about the Brontës' lives that are drawn from his knowledge of local history. While all of this demonstrates considerable industry and attention to detail, it is disappointing to see that the author failed to consult the large and growing body of Brontë scholarship published within the last fifteen years or so, which offers new perspectives on the well-trodden ground of Brontë biography. Both Pam Lock's work on the Brontës and alcoholism and Emma Butcher's work on the Brontës' juvenilia would have considerably enriched Holland's understanding of Emily's early writing, the nature of the children's literary collaboration, and the relationship between Emily and her brother. Another more serious problem is that Holland is seemingly unfamiliar with nineteenth-century culture, and this makes it difficult for him to properly contextualize Brontë's experience. He uses incorrect terminology, referring to Branwell as a "governor" rather than a tutor, as if "governor" is the masculine form of "governess", for instance. More problematically, he makes claims about women's education that are misleading.

The most serious issue, however, is Holland's biographical approach, which is to attempt to glean "facts" about Brontë's life by reading her literature. Emily Brontë is a famously mysterious subject. She left behind few letters or other records of her experience, and it is tempting to try to fill these lacunae in the historical record by reading her literature as if they were autobiographical documents. But doing so is bad scholarly and biographical practice, and what proceeds from filling in these gaps in that way is often nothing more than speculative fiction that confirms the existing beliefs of the biographer. Frequently, Holland melodramatically descends into the realm of fiction, as when he speculates about Brontë's feelings, such as when he writes, "When she retired to her room, [...] and watched the candle flickering before her eyes, the torment and self-doubt returned: was her life burning away like the wax before her?" (145), or fatalistically implies that the family was doomed to ill health and early death, or bizarrely claims that Emily really experienced visions. While it is perfectly valid to acknowledge that an author's lived experience impacts their work, there are more sophisticated ways to interpret the connection between life and literature, such as we have recently seen with Deborah Lutz's *The Brontë Cabinet: Three Lives in Nine Objects* (2015) or Christine Alexander and Sara L. Pearson's *Celebrating Charlotte Brontë: Transforming Life into Literature in Jane Eyre* (2017).

## Notes

1. Juliet Barker persuasively argues that Branwell's so-called dissipation while working as a portrait painter in Bradford was no more than moderate drinking, typical of men of his age and at that time. She observes that any debts he incurred were minor and quickly paid off, and supplies testimony from his friends and the family with whom he lodged to corroborate her claims. Juliet Barker, *The Brontës* (London: Phoenix, 1995, repr. 1999).

Amber Pouliot

*Independent scholar*

✉ [amber.t.pouliot@gmail.com](mailto:amber.t.pouliot@gmail.com)

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**Women and Literary Narratives in Colonial India: Her Myriad Gaze on the 'Other'**, by Sukla Chatterjee, London, Routledge, 2018, 137 pp., £115 (hardback), ISBN 978 11385 97464

Although Bengal has had a long and rich tradition of literary culture, female education only formally began in 1820 through the efforts of Christian missionaries. Prior to that women suffered much social prejudice in regards to reading and writing. In a poignant short story written in 1891 the Bengali Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore touchingly described how the husband of a young girl humiliated his wife for her secret literary preoccupation.

When the East India Company brought the printing press to Calcutta in 1777, Bengal fell for the charm of printed matter. Local craftsmen created typefaces of Bengali scripts and the art of engraving soon followed, making the printing of multiple copies of all kinds of books and magazines possible.

Both the missionary connection and the advent of the printing press have relevance to Sukla Chatterjee's recent book, which sheds light on the way literate middle class Bengali women viewed English females, as well as how they themselves were viewed by the missionary women who felt moved by what they perceived to be their plight.

The texts selected in Chatterjee's book explore a number of narratives using European cultures as points of reference. A travelogue to England written in Bengali published in 1885 is considered alongside two novels by a young Bengali woman from a Europhile Christian convert family, though one novel remains unfinished because of the author's untimely death at twenty-one in 1877. Also discussed is a missionary woman's fictional account of a Bengali widow's predictably sad life, published from New York in 1869.

Chatterjee's decision to use these diverse voices is pioneering since each of them try to comprehend the "other" from their own existential reality, knowledge and

aspirations. Chatterjee's study begins with the first ever account of contemporary England written by a Bengali woman in Bengali language, produced after the author's eight-year stay in England with her husband. *Krishnabhabini Das* records places, people, climate, and institutions, partly as a guide to prospective tourists, but also in part as a memoir. The author comments on the prevalent social practices and characteristics of English women, and argues that gender parity is a key to successful English society. Though like all progressive women of her time she has a nationalistic outlook, the author's subtext is often comparative and feminist.

Chatterjee's next choice is the works of the fiction writer Toru Dutt. Exposed to European literary romance and gothic novels this young writer was fluent in English and French. She casts a fanciful gaze in her texts on a couple of passionate foreign lovers in a world of intricate imaginary places and deep emotions. Her acute sense of horror and lunacy is reminiscent of Mary Shelley or Emily Brontë. In this well researched chapter Chatterjee raises important questions about the influence of European writing in shaping Bengali literature, and about growing modernity in Bengal.

Finally, Chatterjee chooses an English-born American missionary's account of the life of a young Hindu widow. Anonymously published in Britain and then in New York, Harriette G Britten (1823–1897) constructs *Kardoo the Hindu Girl's* fake autobiography. Chatterjee subjects the text to detailed scholarly scrutiny, but also considers the implausibility of the work. She writes, "It is a heathen dystopia where every form of suffering conceivable is packed into one exemplary Hindu family" (72), including the barbaric practice of widow burning. And yet, Chatterjee demonstrates, such works served the purpose of the missionary agenda in much the same way as "fake news" does today.

Though limited to the period between the mid-nineteenth century to just before the first World War, this book is an important contribution to the history of cultural studies and feminism in the colonial era. It reveals some unusually plural perspectives between the colonizers and colonized, who shared a gaze. The book will be a valuable resource for scholars of South Asian Studies.

Krishna Dutta  
Independent Scholar

✉ krishnadutta@yahoo.co.uk

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**British Children's Poetry in the Romantic Era: Verse, Riddle, and Rhyme**, by Donelle Ruwe, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 253pp., £58, ISBN 9 78113 7319 791

Children's literature is an injured body, just as Jane Austen argued novelists once were, and for similar reasons: primarily written by women; written for a

marginalized audience; and considered as a lesser genre compared to other more "masculine" forms of literature. As part of this body, children's poetry occupies an even more precarious position. Donelle Ruwe's *British Children's Poetry in the Romantic Era* opens with a quotation from the ubiquitous children's literature critic, Peter Hunt, criticizing the common logic that "children's poetry cannot exist" because it cannot live up to the demands that poetry be "static, thoughtful, sophisticated, skilled, philosophical – and concerned with sex and death and interiority" (p. 1). Ruwe then tells her own anecdote about a male Romanticist at a conference in the 1990s both openly mocking and implicitly enjoying the simple pleasures of Romantic-period children's poetry. Ruwe's thoughtful, sophisticated, and skilled monograph on Romantic-period children's poetry acts as a powerful corrective to the common logic ventriloquized by Hunt and the disdain of twentieth-century Romantic scholars alike. She argues that eighteenth-century children's poetry addresses children as rational agents, capable of change, both in terms of self-development and social, cultural, and political reform. For her, didactic poetry for children is far from dryly educational, but is instead transformative in its broadest sense.

The individual chapters in Ruwe's monograph deal with the growing canon of children's poetry from Ann Taylor, Jane Taylor, and Adelaide O'Keefe's *Original Poems for Infants Minds* (1801) to William Roscoe's *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast* (1805). Because children's poetry is understudied and these texts are unfamiliar to even a specialist Romanticist audience, the extent to which these texts can be considered "canonical" is up for debate. Ruwe makes this a point of contention in the later chapter comparing Roscoe's poem with other "papillonades", discussing the way in which Roscoe's sentimental version, aligned with a Romantic cult of childhood, has been accepted into a canon of children's poetry, whereas other examples of the genre, rational, didactic, and aligned with eighteenth-century constructions of the child, have been all but erased from history. Ruwe's arguments about canonicity, genre, and gender are provocative and engaging. However, her earlier chapter on the Taylors and O'Keefe's jointly authored text is structured around various "myths" about the collection's genesis, publication history, and afterlives that are not that well known and could have been less combatively expressed to better purpose.


The chapter on Sara Coleridge's children's poetry is outstanding, offering original and illuminating insights about the contexts, materials, and psychological motivations of Coleridge's work. Ruwe's archival research really brings Coleridge's innovations in writing for children to life, analysing study guides and riddles she wrote for her own children, and moving on to develop an engaging argument about the expression of trauma across several manuscript poems. Ruwe's analysis of Coleridge's traumatized poetics unites exemplary close reading with theoretical insightfulness, leaving me wanting a more in-depth account of Sara Coleridge's work.

Ruwe's monograph generally functions as a rousing defence of children's poetry as a genre, and works itself as an excellent example of children's literature criticism: carefully analytical, theoretically informed, thoughtful and provocative. However, at times, it accomplishes its defence of the eighteenth-century tradition



of rational verse for children at the expense of later Romantic models of children's poetry, hinging on a sentimentalized vision of childhood, which Ruwe argues continues to hinder twentieth- and twenty-first century children's poetry. Sentimental and contemporary verse for children is just as injured as didactic poetry. At several points, Ruwe uses Sianne Ngai's *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* to categorize Romantic and Post-Romantic children's poetry as zany, cute, and/or interesting, positioning these later texts as a falling away from the rational sublime of eighteenth-century verse. In my view, Ngai's argument about these lesser aesthetic categories is more useful for the cause of children's poetry than Ruwe seems to realize. For Ngai, "cute" evokes feelings of protectiveness for objects considered small, harmless, cuddly. These feelings of protectiveness are underscored by a paradoxical desire to do violence to the "cute" object. Ruwe does not go into the details of Ngai's precise categorizations, rather using "cute" as dismissive of the sentimentalized vision of childhood she finds in later children's poetry. I suggest that Ngai's theorization of cute could play an essential role in invigorating the world of children's literature criticism: children's literature and children's literature criticism alike hinge on this paradoxical relationship between adults and children, with the desire to protect – to both nurture and censor – finding an uncanny reflection in an equal and opposite motivation to destroy, to negate and erase. Rather than dismissing cuteness as Ruwe does, I recommend we look again at the cuteness of children's literature, a project which *British Children's Poetry in the Romantic Era* gestures towards but, in the end, refuses.

Andrew McInnes  
Edge Hill University

 andrew.mcinnnes@edgehill.ac.uk

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Guest Editor: Enit Karafili Steiner

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