

## Review Article<sup>1</sup>

# Early Modern Women, "Race," and (Post)colonial Writing

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Woman is the nigger of the world.

ROBIN MORGAN, *Sisterhood is Powerful*

. . . Her name, that was as fresh  
As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black  
As mine own face.

SHAKESPEARE, *Othello, the Moor of Venice*

All the Women are White,  
All the Blacks are Men,  
But Some of Us are Brave . . .

G. T. HULL, P. B. SCOTT, and B. SMITH<sup>2</sup>

A "BLACK WOMAN" SITS at the center of the cover that graces the recent collection of critical essays, *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker.<sup>3</sup> She could be a princess or a slave, perched on what looks like a merchant's bale, half shrouded in a robe that suggestively hides her groin and highlights her naked breasts, a string of huge pearls standing out against her bared skin. All eyes are on her, as a trio of men—a satyric man, also half bare; a turbanned man; and a robed man grasping her shoulder with his hand—encircle her with their pointed stares. Strikingly, these men, like the celestial archer overlooking the scene, are as "white" as the object of their attention is "black." A trio of cupid figures at the bottom of the scene—two white, one black—parallels this central tableau. Predictably, the white cupids face us, and are partially covered with robes; the black cupid turns away from us, fully effaced and fully naked. As in the central tableau, the gazes of the three cupids are cast asymmetrically and are coloured by "race."<sup>4</sup>



Taken from the frontispiece to *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels: Consisting of the most Esteemed Relations, which have been hitherto published in any Language: Comprehending every Thing remarkable in its Kind, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America . . . Selected from the Most Authentic Travellers, Foreign as well as English. Vol. 2. London: Thomas Astley, 1745. 4 vols. 1745-47.*

A second concentric circle borders this scene, on one side composed of natural objects—earthy cliffs topped with low palms—on the other, by cultural icons that connote Africa, and specifically Egypt—a lion, a Sphinx, pyramids. This iconography fixes the black woman in the “dark continent” of the early modern European imaginary, particularly since this image introduces the second volume, focusing on Africa, of *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1745-47), a collection intended to consolidate and correct Hakluyt’s, Purchas’s, and Harris’s earlier travelogues. She epitomizes both the exotic Orient, coded as ancient rather than Muslim Egypt,<sup>5</sup> and superabundant Africa, lush with natural resources coveted by European investors. Ultimately placed in the middle of this tableau as an ornament, she therefore functions as a *centrepiece* rather than a central agent, foregrounding femininity and blackness as fascinations for the white male gaze. Erased as an agent even as she is held up as a fetish—in the gendered Freudian sense, the materialist Marxist sense, and the racialized Fanonian sense<sup>6</sup>—the black woman represents a constitutive absence structuring early modern European discourses on women, “race,” and writing, the central problematic of Hendricks and Parker’s collection.

The early modern period defined by this collection runs from 1492 to 1800. From a traditional point of view, this period includes the Renaissance in Greek and Roman letters, the Reformation in Western Christianity, the rise of the New Science, and the Great Voyages of Discovery.<sup>7</sup> From an oppositional perspective, it marks the beginning of European imperialism, the commencement of the capitalist world system, the rise in racial slavery, and the decline in status for European women.<sup>8</sup> *Women, “Race,” and Writing in the Early Modern Period* grapples with this complex history by recasting it within a discourse on Self and Other embedded from the start in the exclusion of women and black people from the European/American body politic. It is a groundbreaking collection for early modern studies, which has hitherto treated questions of race through the literary historical lens

of “the black presence” in important, but preliminary, studies

such as Eldred Jones's *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* (1965) and *The Elizabethan Image of Africa* (1971), Elliot Tokson's *The Popular Image of the Black Man in English Drama, 1550-1688* (1982), David Dabydeen's *The Black Presence in English Literature* (1985), and Anthony Barthelemy's *Black Face, Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Renaissance Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (1987).<sup>9</sup> When gender has been considered in these studies at all, it has been only peripherally.<sup>10</sup>

*Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period* moves beyond the limits of a literary history that focuses on "the black presence" by insisting upon the connection between the early modern past and the postcolonial present. Contemporary issues such as English studies in India, Jeffery Dahmer's serial murders of young men of colour, New Historicism, Third World feminism, *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*, and twentieth-century African rewritings of *Othello*, all resonate in this collection—fundamentally, not incidentally—with early modern concerns about female agency, patriarchal generation, national citizenship, male friendship, monogamy, and mercantile investment. Necessarily, this early modern/postcolonial dialogue is premised on the historicity of "race" as an ideological construct with profound material consequences whose meaning and functions were contested from its inception in the early modern period and continue to be contested today.<sup>11</sup> The genealogy of the term is complex—encoding lineage (as in the now archaic "race & stocke") as much as genus (as in the still familiar, albeit discredited, "Negro" and "Caucasian" races)—and its referents in the early modern period varied—the "other race" from an early modern English perspective variously included the Irish, Jews, Black Africans, and Native Americans.<sup>12</sup> In this review I shall concentrate on three themes which relate the collection's primary emphasis on women, "race," and writing in the early modern period to postcolonial concerns: the pairing of colonialism with patriarchy; the complicity of early feminism with colonialism; and the postcolonial critique of mainstream (white, middle-class) feminism.<sup>13</sup> These connections, which *Women, "Race," and Writing* invite, nevertheless demand two fundamental critiques,

which I shall explicate in the course of this review: first, the eurocentric—indeed, anglocentric—focus of most of the essays in the collection (ten essays out of seventeen focus exclusively on English texts, two others balance this emphasis with attention to African and Spanish American texts, the remaining five essays focus on continental European and Native American traditions) and, just as crucially, the related emphasis on the cultural otherness rather than the cultural agency of non-European women.

Ania Loomba's "The Color of Patriarchy: Critical Difference, Cultural Difference, and Renaissance Drama" (17-34), launches this collection by forcing what appears from a hegemonic perspective (patriarchal and gynocritical) to be a paradoxical blend of patriarchy and colonialism.<sup>14</sup> The governing trope of Loomba's essay, "the color of patriarchy," points to the fractious problematic of difference in early modern/women's studies. In an incisive critique of hegemonic feminism, on which we shall dwell later, Loomba stresses that "the primacy of gender as an analytical category can only be asserted by devaluing other social differences and thereby the 'experiences' of 'other' women" (21). Race as a fundamental category of analysis must therefore be integrated with gender in a study of early modern writing, and of early modern women's writing in particular.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, as Loomba warns, we must not reduce race to "the black presence in the plays" (26)—that is, the study of dark-skinned characters—but must simultaneously analyze blackness as "a signifier for various forms of socially unacceptable behaviour" (27). Problematic as an allegorical appropriation of blackness, this gesture must be critiqued even as it is foregrounded. Loomba admirably models this approach by analyzing the imposition of blackness on the transgressive, invariably punished, white woman in English Renaissance drama (Vittoria in *The White Devil* functions as her case in point). Situating her analysis of "the punished rebellious woman" in English Renaissance drama within postcolonial and materialist feminist paradigms (26), Loomba nuances radical theorists of racial formation such as Cedric Robinson by proposing that "[p]atriarchy . . . [is] a *motor* of colonialism, rather than just an additional factor within it" (27).

Other essays in this collection pursue a similar tack, most notably Lynda E. Boose, "'The Getting of a Lawful Race': Racial Discourse in Early Modern England and the Unrepresentable Black Woman" (35-54), and Patricia Parker, "Fantasies of 'Race' and 'Gender': Africa, *Othello* and Bringing to Light" (84-100). If Loomba foregrounds the significance of blackened femininity in Renaissance drama, Boose highlights the erasure of black women in early modern English literary and cultural productions. Boose begins by critiquing the gender-blindness of Winthrop Jordan's very influential claim that "[t]he Negro's color set him radically *apart* from Englishmen," and as such formed the basis of newly racialized difference (Jordan 20; cited in Boose 41).<sup>16</sup> This etiology not only fetishizes skin colour as the primary determinant of racial formation but effaces the homosocial implications of the "first encounter" between Englishmen and "the Negro" (both gendered males passing for generic Man).<sup>17</sup> Instead, Boose stresses that women as objects of exchange between men circulate as patriarchal assets both at the intra- and intergroup level: in this sense, all women in patriarchal cultures are situated as outsiders.<sup>18</sup> All women, that is, except the procreating black woman. Her black offspring, when fathered by a white male, contradicted both white and male supremacism, a combined challenge intolerable to early modern English patriarchy, which, in contrast to the later Anglo-American variety, was able to accommodate the black offspring of a white woman, when fathered by a black man.<sup>19</sup> By representing the black woman-cum-mother as pivotal because invisible in early modern discourses on race, Boose thus "posits a new narrative for the formation of racism and endows that narrative with a 'primal moment' located in a white male culture's discovery that not only was black more powerful than white and capable of absorbing and coloring it, but that in this all-important arena of reproductive authority, black women controlled the power to resignify all offspring as the property of the mother" (46). From this perspective, all representations of blackness in early modern English culture seem highly gendered, if not directly (as in the black woman) then by default (in the black man) and by displacement (in the white woman).

Parker similarly highlights the occulted patriarchalism of early modern colonialism by focusing on English literature's canonical black (male): Othello, the noble Moor. Tracing the genealogy of the loaded phrase "close dilations" (3.3.123) through anatomies, geographies, and teratologies, she illuminates a "series of powerful chiasmic splittings" (95) by which the eroticized white woman becomes blackened and the "civilized" (à la Fanon) black man becomes "effeminated" (to borrow Jean Howard's felicitous neologism).<sup>20</sup> This split becomes doubly complicated as the play transposes Othello and Desdemona's tragedy onto an earlier imperial narrative—"the encounter of Europe and Africa, female and male, itself a *locus classicus* for the dilation of all such visually evocative narratives" (96)—that of Aeneas and Dido. Othello, prefiguring the postcolonial era's mimic man, is ironically "put in the place of the traveller Aeneas—Trojan and ultimately Roman standard-bearer of a triumphant Western and European history—a figure who abandons a woman and 'Barbarie' at once" (96).<sup>21</sup> Desdemona, whose "greedy ear" (1.3.149) has eagerly consumed Othello's "tale" (1.3.171), is correspondingly put in the place of "a dominating (and abandoned) female 'Moor,' a woman of 'Barbarie' whose chastity in this tradition was suspect and open to question" (97). On the one hand, then, "Othello comes . . . to 'occupy' the place of a Venetian husband, in a play that insistently calls attention to the occupying or changing of 'place'" (99). Desdemona, for her part, acts as "the first of the White Liberals" (to look forward to Jyotsna Singh's treatment of Murray Carlin's *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* [37; cited in Singh 294]). This distribution of the black presence between the black man and the white woman, effectively marginalizing the black woman, further confirms the imbrication of patriarchy with early modern colonialism.

Three essays in this collection—Jean Howard's "An English Lass Amid the Moors: Gender, Race, Sexuality, and National Identity in Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West*" (101-17); Laura Brown's "Amazons and Africans: Gender, Race and Empire in Daniel Defoe" (118-37); and Felicity Nussbaum's "The Other Woman: Polygamy, *Pamela*, and the Prerogative of Empire" (138-59)—explicitly link the exchange of women model

Boose and Parker evoke to the capitalist logic of commodity exchange, concomitantly emphasizing the fundamental complicity of early modern feminism with capitalism and colonialism.<sup>22</sup> As Howard stresses, the central irony of the early modern English nation state (which later became Great Britain, and finally the British Empire) was its dependence on the figure of the exceptional woman to bind a citizenry composed exclusively of men. Heywood's *Fair Maid of the West* dramatizes this irony through its female protagonist, Bess Bridges, who, to forgive a pun the play certainly invites, bridges "men of different classes into a homosocial community of brothers, into a nation" (102). Cast as a prototypical profeminist—cross-dressing as a man, accumulating capital as a merchant, and travelling to exotic lands (activities pointing to the problematic constitution of early modern feminism)—Bess ventures in a ship dubbed the *Negro* to the northern shores of Africa where she captivates the king of Morocco and his retinue with her "faire" face (Heywood 323). Her placement not only as a gendered fetish cohering an English nation of men otherwise divided by their class differences (her alluring chastity guaranteeing the integrity of the nation even as it unsettles it), but as a racialized fetish simultaneously inviting and excluding the black man from the body of English nationhood, symbolized by her "white lips" (328), effectively defines English nationhood as an exclusively *white* brotherhood.<sup>23</sup> In the end, race distributes hierarchically as Englishmen associate themselves with their Spanish rivals as essentially the same and distance themselves from their Moorish partners as fundamentally different.

Like Bess Bridges, whom Howard identifies as a catalyst for gendered, racialized English nationhood, the Amazonian woman Brown locates in "early eighteenth-century literary culture" acts as a mediating figure cohering disparate English interests, though at a stage subsequent to English nation building, that of English imperialism (118).<sup>24</sup> As Brown notes, women's relationship to empire remained simultaneously marginal at the political level and central at the symbolic level, "and the manlike, murderous woman plays a crucial role in this discourse" (121). The logic of the Amazon, in other words, is the logic of



the commodity fetish, which “conceals the real structure of human relationships underlying those values dictated by exchange, the imperialist structure of male expansion and accumulation” (126). Defoe’s Roxana, who “talk’d a kind of *Amazonian* Language” and appears as “a Stage *Amazon*” (Defoe 171, 289), epitomizes this logic, deflecting the material investments of English colonialism into her exotic dress. Roxana also parades as a protofeminist: she rejects English patriarchal ideologies of marital love, which mask the real relations of patriarchal subordination; she takes up the mantle of English mercantile capitalism; and she voices a manifesto for female liberty and autonomy. The proto-feminist, in sum, becomes a proto-capitalist, however precarious her gains may be under a system of *feme covert*.<sup>25</sup> As “female other” or “the other within” (132; 135), she coincides with “the native other” or “the other without” (132; 135). As an English capitalist, however, she ranks above the natives she exploits through class, national, and racial hierarchies established to rationalize English gains in Africa, America, and elsewhere. Beginning with the complex genealogy of the English Amazon, Brown finally posits “the important and politically useful”—and profoundly unsettling—“question of the extent to which the argument for female liberty can be disentangled from capitalist ideology” (136). The answer, she shows us, must lead somewhere other than an “Amazonian feminism” lodged in the duplicitous status of the middle-class woman (128).<sup>26</sup>

Felicity Nussbaum continues this exploration of early feminist investments in capitalism and colonialism with her treatment of eighteenth-century Englishmen’s—and women’s—“appetite for consuming Africa” (138), a consumption which involved not only material and human resources from but stories about Africa. As Nussbaum notes, the English publishing trade and the transatlantic slave trade, both of which exploded in the eighteenth century, were inextricably linked, and both inextricably involved women as readers and eventually as writers. Englishwomen, though initially barred from the business of travel writing, were nonetheless implicated in representations of Africa and its women from the beginning. In male travel accounts, the imperialist discourse on race and the exchange of women model com-

bined to divorce “[t]he domestic monogamous Englishwoman, an emblem of maternal womanhood” from “the wanton polygamous Other” (141). Ironically, when Englishwomen began to write *en masse* in the middle of the eighteenth century they did not reject this dichotomy but reinforced it: they, like their male predecessors, “consume[d] the Other woman through their gaze and their texts” (154). Feminism thus served empire by pitting the English woman against the African woman through a patriarchal dichotomy racialized as (white) monogamy versus (black) polygamy. These travel accounts, by a cadre of England’s “first feminists,” thus suggest that at the roots of mainstream feminism lies a fundamental contradiction: “At the same time that European feminism emerges in the Enlightenment, differences among women make feminism’s progress Western and exclusionary” (157). Disturbingly, these early feminists assume the arch-patriarch Mr. B’s supervisory position as they put black women in “their place”: the combined place of gender subordination, against which Englishwomen struggled, and racial oppression, in which Englishwomen participated.<sup>27</sup>

The ambivalent role played by the early modern woman writer Nussbaum introduces in her essay is elaborated in a series of essays that focus on differences between women in the early modern period, and between feminisms today. These differences are located in the historical variability of “race”—which coloured Africans, Native Americans, and Jews, among others, during the early modern period—and in the intricate articulation of racial ascriptions with class and gender positions—which marked the English woman writer as both white and “blackened.” Contesting exclusively gender-based women’s studies, Dympna Callaghan, “Re-reading Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*” (163-77), and Kim F. Hall, “‘I Rather Would Wish to be a Black-Moor’: Beauty, Race, and Rank in Lady Mary Wroth’s *Urania*” (178-94), both emphasize that at the base of early modern English femininity lies the black/white binary. Each focuses on texts heralded as “firsts” for early modern women’s studies: Callaghan examines “the first original play in English by a woman, Elizabeth Cary’s closet drama, *The Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*” (163-64);

Hall looks at “the first known original prose fiction by an English-woman,” *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* by Lady Mary Wroth (Roberts xvi).<sup>28</sup> Such texts, positioned as foundational, are particularly susceptible to gynocritical canonization, which both overemphasizes gender, and so serves “to replicate rather than challenge the traditional terms of association between a woman’s gender and her writing,” and underemphasizes other attributes demarcating women, including race, and so “tends to situate [the woman writer] curiously outside the material conditions in which she wrote and in relation to which she herself was placed as other” (Callaghan 167). As we have already observed, proto-feminist figures introduced in early modern men’s writing and endorsed in subsequent feminist rewritings, such as Bess Bridges and Roxana, were fully implicated in capitalist and colonialist ventures. Early modern women writers, such as Cary and Wroth, likewise asserted their liberty as “freeborn Englishwomen” by straddling systems of patriarchal subordination and racial privilege.<sup>29</sup> This contradiction takes shape in early modern women’s writing through the rivalry of the “fair” woman, who became conspicuously white by the end of the sixteenth century, and the dark woman, consistently coded as inferior.<sup>30</sup> In *Miriam*, it is the Jewish queen who is alternately racialized as “black” and deracialized as “white” according to her conformity to patriarchal values of chastity, silence, and obedience. In *Urania*, the female protagonist voices her utopian desire “to be beyond such binary systems” by evoking the black woman as an object of desire (Hall 191), albeit through the topos of impossibility (as in “to wash an Ethiop white”).<sup>31</sup> In both texts, blackness becomes a sign of feminine (perhaps even feminist) resistance and transgressive women become racialized. Thus, even as early modern Englishwomen’s resistance is celebrated for its anti-patriarchal impulse, it must be interrogated for its imperialist investments and racist implications. This critique, however, cannot stall on a polemic. Rather, we must use our integrated analysis of women, “race,” and writing to build the anti-racist foundations of early modern women’s studies. Hall’s recommendation serves as the best manifesto for this revisionist project: “In studying women’s experiences of difference—even hegemonic ones—we can avoid the

trap (epitomized in binary thinking) of attempting to resist patriarchy without the necessary resistance to racism, imperialism, and other forms of domination" (194).

"Race" nevertheless extends beyond reductive notions of "blackness," as Margaret W. Ferguson, "Juggling the Categories of Race, Class, and Gender: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*" (209-24), and Margo Hendricks, "Civility, Barbarism, and Aphra Behn's *The Widow Ranter*" (225-39), remind us. Hendricks incisively argues for "the importance of the figure of the American Indian (and not just the African) woman as a register for the discourse of race in the period and for miscegenation as the undoing of the fiction of assimilation that lies at the heart of 'civility'" (12). The native woman, like the Jewish woman, variously appears as "white" or "black" (the racial binary that shifted among various physical signifiers in the early modern period) depending on her place in a patriarchal system of exchange based on English values. In Behn's *The Widow Ranter*, for instance, the "American Indian Queen" is represented as alternately assimilable and alien depending on the weight accorded to the discourse of civility in the English colonial project (227). "Race" is thus revealed as profoundly relational: the native woman is "whitened" as an English wife, securing her husband's ownership of the New World (since as a *feme covert* she would cede all her property to him), and "blackened" as the boundary marker between the "civilized" English and the "savage" natives. Ferguson similarly stresses the shifting registers of race in the early modern period, arguing that "[t]he white female narrator's own ambivalent relation to male English authority is figured here [in Behn's *Oroonoko*] by the device of splitting 'other' women into two roles: one rebellious and one erotically complicitous" (222). By dividing the black woman from the native woman in this way, the Englishwoman positions herself as mediator of Englishmen's colonialism: she softens the cruelty of slavery and exploitation, but does not oppose it. A case in point, Behn "*did* participate, as a producer of verbal commodities who explicitly if intermittently defined herself as oppressed by and financially dependent on wealthy men, but also as a member of an English 'family' of slave-owners (as it were) and as such, one who directly and

'naturally' profited from others' labor" (213). Hendricks seconds the problematic status of the English woman writer, who is both "a colonial subject and a writer complicitous in the production of English hegemonic discourses" (226). Notably, in *Oroonoko*, which has become a canonical example of early modern women's writing, Imoinda (the black woman whose name encodes the acronym for "Indian") does not *have* the last word, but *is* the last word—a word spoken by an Englishwoman in the Americas.

As mentioned above, a central theme in this collection is the critique of "hegemonic feminist criticism" (3), which privileges gender as the key category for feminist analysis and as the sole site of struggle for women as a group, thereby subsuming salient racial, class, sexual, and other differences among women, and so alienating women for whom gender intersects with other sites of oppression and for whom resistance requires multiple sites of engagement.<sup>32</sup> Loomba begins this collection by pointing to the colonialist tendencies within bourgeois humanist feminism, whereby middle-class/straight/white/Western women posit their experiences as the "universal feminine." She critiques "American liberal feminism" for its use of "critical self-reflexivity" as a method of containing differences and dissent, a self-serving self-reflexivity that becomes "a position of self-privileging" (19). Most important, this mainstream feminist method depends on the analogy between women and blacks, which became a slogan for the second wave feminist movement that began in the 1960s and continues today, to which black feminists have responded, "but some of us are brave" (Hull, Scott, and Smith). As we have seen, the analogy conflating the oppression of (white) women with that of blacks (men) emerged in the early modern period, as England established itself as a nation state on the basis of its capitalist investments in the transatlantic slave trade and in New World colonialism. As Howard ably demonstrates, this nation state excluded both blacks and women from its citizenry, resulting in the double marginalization of the black woman. When Englishwomen emerged as writers at the turn of the seventeenth century they deployed this analogy to mark their own transgression against patriarchal norms of silence (grouped with chastity

and obedience): as defamed women writers they were “blackened.” Stephanie Jed, “The Tenth Muse: Gender, Rationality, and the Marketing of Knowledge” (195-208), responds to the argument that English feminism’s (and its heir, Anglo-American feminism’s) analogic procedure was flawed from the start by proposing a fluid “Women’s Archive” that departs significantly from a fixed Woman’s Canon (204). Such a project enables an integrated analysis of race, gender, class, sexuality, and other sites of difference, which would make visible the connections between women without glossing over critical divisions that get lost in a hegemonic model of “sisterhood” based solely on gender. Rather, such a model would “activat[e] relations between those colonial women writers who never did, because they never could, relate to one another in institutional ways” (206)—women such as Anne Bradstreet and Sor Juana. It could—and, indeed, must—also activate relations between Native American, African, and European women that remain effaced in gender-based models. The “‘other’ of the ‘other’” must also speak.<sup>33</sup>

As Natalie Zemon Davis, Irene Silverblatt, and Verena Stolcke demonstrate, native women *were* speaking in the early modern period—articulating significant forms of resistance to European colonialism and shaping their native cultures. It is for us as researchers into early modern women’s writing in the broadest sense to establish methods to read native women’s resistance. Natalie Davis, “Iroquois Women, European Women” (243-58), proposes a revolutionary method for reading early modern women’s cultural productions that aligns the histories of native women and European women without displacing native history as a primitive stage in human development (again, humanism’s generic Man implies gendered—and racialized—men). Davis insists on “the absolute simultaneity of the Amerindian and European worlds, rather than viewing the former as an earlier version of the latter” (243); she suggests that “the Amerindian case may also be a source of alternative examples and metaphors to illumine the European case” (243-44). As Davis thoroughly documents through the words of native women such as Khionrea the Huron, Cécile Gannendaris, Marie Aouentohons, and Katherine Tekakwitha, “Iroquois and Huron women faced

what European historians could call a 'Renaissance' challenge in regard to voice and some of them made use of religious tools and the 'Catholic Reformation' to meet it" (257). She challenges us to theorize the forms of "self-consciousness" fashioned by this Renaissance—of the "enemy wife" in the Iroquois Confederacy, for example—as models for "European situations where the experience of 'foreignness' and 'strangeness' could prompt consciousness of self as well as of group"—Jewish autobiography of the seventeenth century being a case in point (251). Juxtaposing cultural productions by seventeenth-century native and colonial women, Davis illuminates a dialectics of cultural formation which enables us to respond to Joan Kelly's question "Did Women Have a Renaissance?"—a question foundational for early modern women's studies—with a sense of the intersecting cultural, political, and economic developments that shaped Native American and European cultures of the period.

Irene Silverblatt, "Andean Witches and Virgins: Seventeenth-century Nativism and Subversive Gender Ideologies" (259-71), effects a similar decentering of eurocentric models, traditional and feminist, by focusing on Andean women's manipulation of Incan and Spanish patriarchal symbolic systems "to carve out a space of challenge to Spanish attempts to destroy their very senses of self and ways of being" (259). On the one hand, Andean resistance was embodied in women "witches" who combined indigenous and Spanish discourses to create supernatural mestizo agents (devils to the Spanish; revolutionaries to the natives) such as Apo Parato, "Juana Icha's 'devil,'" who braved a "blazing beard," Spanish style, and exuded the energies of an Inca Amaru (265; 267). On the other, outlaw Andean virgins contributed to the native resistance by shunning the contaminating influences of colonialism, from insemination by Spanish men to indoctrination by Catholic priests. "Native purity" as a mode of resistance to the Spanish invasion contrasts significantly with the Spanish colonizers' doctrine of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood), which Verena Stolcke addresses in her essay, "Invaded Women: Gender, Race, and Class in the Formation of Colonial Society" (272-86). Like Davis, Stolcke emphasizes the dialectics of cultural formation in the colonial context, and in particular

the dialectics whereby the *limpieza de sangre* doctrine, first devised to discriminate against those “stained by Jewish or Moorish woman” (Lope de Vega; qtd. in Stolcke 272) in newly consolidated Christian Spain (having absorbed Islamic Granada in 1492), was imported into the New World to undergird racialized modes of discrimination that targeted African and native people. Significantly, as church and state clashed over the meaning of *limpieza de sangre*, a space of resistance opened up as “[p]eople with limited possessions” who “had little to lose by marrying against their families’ will” refused to respect racial hierarchies and married whomever they wished (284).

Resistance is the theme of the final essay in this collection, Jyotsna Singh’s “Othello’s Identity, Postcolonial Theory, and Contemporary African Rewritings of *Othello*” (287-99), which shifts from the postcolonial implications of early modern English constructions of race and gender to postcolonial reconstructions of what Ugandan playwright Murray Carlin dubs “the first play ever written about color” (4; cf. Singh 294).<sup>34</sup> Explicating such Third World texts as Carlin’s *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* (1969) and Tayib Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), Singh critiques white middle-class feminists who “in trying to chart the complexities of the relation between race and gender oppressions, implicitly *collapse* the categories of difference by assuming a common history of marginalization” (291). Third World readers, she maintains, “do not reveal a similar investment in discursively eliding the different forms of victimization—of white women and blacks, for instance—because they have been participants in a long history of violent racial divisions that produced complex, and often confusing, sexual politics” (291). The postcolonial project of recasting *Othello* as a Third World text, exemplified by such male writers as Carlin and Salih, effectively disarticulates the analogy between the black man and the white woman that remains central to mainstream feminism’s project. Salih’s rewriting of the *Othello* in *Season of Migration to the North*, for instance, reveals European women as both instigators and victims of the colonialist topos of illicit black/white desire. As the protagonist of this novel, who casts himself for such women as “like Othello—Arab-African,” confesses, “[t]he infec-



tion had stricken these women a thousand years ago, but I had stirred up the latent depths of the disease until it had got out of control and had killed" (Salih 38, 34). In Third World texts such as Salih's, then, Othello is not "the universal 'victim,'" nor is Desdemona innocent (Singh 292).

Singh concludes her reading of Third World (men's) rewritings of the Othello myth by demanding accountability from both "Othello's descendants" and "Desdemona's descendants" (299)—black men and white women. A conclusion to this review that measures *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period* against its own postcolonial aims—a collection laudable for its attention to "race" as a fundamental factor in subject, national, and colonial formation during the early modern period but lacking in its ingrained tendency to overlook the cultural agency of the most fully racialized and gendered subject in the period, the "black woman"—requires a shift beyond the dyad which continues to define treatments of gender and race in early modern studies, that of Desdemona and Othello. To interject the words of Arab-African novelist, activist, physician, and woman Nawal El Saadawi, both the black (man) and the (white) woman share, even if marginally, in a social and symbolic system that leaves "no place in paradise for a black woman" (156).<sup>35</sup> The black woman, as we have already noted, occupied the paradoxical place of constitutive absence in early modern European cultures (English, Continental, and American). Yet, she need not remain absent in studies of the early modern period, for she was there all along albeit pushed behind the scenes and into the margins. The task of anti-racist researchers into early modern women's writing in the broadest sense is to bring her to the forefront, not simply as an "inoculating critique" (Modleski 6; qtd. in Callaghan 163), but as a historical agent whose contributions to the production of early modern culture in all its complexity have yet to be explicated. She must come to be seen as an actor on the early modern stage—as in the sixteenth-century Scottish masque that featured Elen More, an African woman, as "the Black Queen of Beauty" (Edwards 16)<sup>36</sup>—and her signature must be recognized in early modern writing—as in the vernacular refrains of the Andalusian *muwashshah*, com-

posed by Moorish women well into the early modern period.<sup>37</sup> Only then can she (and other[ed] women marked by “race”) be put back into the picture as a central concern of studies of the early modern period—rather than as a centerpiece.<sup>38</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker, eds. *Women, “Race,” and Writing in the Early Modern Period*. London: Routledge, 1994. Pp. vi, 383. \$15.95.
- 2 This epigraph is taken from the title of Hull, Scott, and Smith’s edition of *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women Studies*. The other epigraphs may be located as follows: Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful* 634; and *Othello* 3.3.386-88.
- 3 See Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes” for a critique of Western feminism’s monolithic rendering of the “third world woman,” a gesture evoked here to be subsequently deconstructed and historically situated.
- 4 I am conscious that race in this image could be distributed across the discredited (but still persistent) pseudo-scientific nineteenth-century categories Semitic, Caucasian, and Negro. Nonetheless, from an early modern perspective the dichotomized pair “black” and “white” appears as the sharpest contrast in the picture, with the black woman functioning as the pivotal signifier of race. For a similar analysis of early modern imagery from a postcolonial perspective, see de Certeau’s, Hulme’s, and Montrose’s readings of Jan van der Straet’s *America retixit [America Rediscovered]*. On the “male gaze,” see Mulvey. On the scare-quotes framing “race,” see Gates, “Race,” *Writing, and Difference*.
- 5 See Bernal 121-88.
- 6 See also Peitz.
- 7 See, for instance, Sellery.
- 8 Representative studies include Greenblatt; Wallerstein; Drake; and Kelly.
- 9 See Hall, “Reading What Isn’t There,” for an appraisal of Early Modern “Black” Studies.
- 10 Loomba’s and Hall’s recent monographs treat this connection at length.
- 11 Jonathan Goldberg’s and Dominick LaCapra’s collections provide incisive examples of current anti-racist interrogations of the term “race.”
- 12 See the OED’s definition of “race” for supporting prooftexts.
- 13 See bell hooks, who delineates hegemonic white bourgeois feminism and offers counter-hegemonic alternatives from a black materialist feminist perspective. Also note that few works within the fields of postcolonial and early modern studies respectively, let alone at the intersection of these fields, treat the question of sexuality with respect to gender, race, class, and colonialism. Jonathan Goldberg admirably addresses this complex web of social relations in *Sodomities*, esp. 179-249.
- 14 For a celebrated (and excoriated) definition of gynocriticism, see Showalter. See Ezell for a critique of gynocriticism within the context of early modern women’s studies.

- 15 Cf. Scott's foundational study, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis."
- 16 Jordan proposes that "[t]he impact of the Negro's color was the more powerful upon Englishmen, moreover, because England's principal contact with Africans came in West Africa and the Congo where men were not merely dark but almost literally black: one of the fairest-skinned nations suddenly came face to face with one of the darkest peoples on earth" (6). This "shock," Jordan suggests, precipitated White Racism. However, see Drake, 62-65, where he critiques "Modern Manichaeans" such as Jordan for their historically insupportable leap in logic from the observation that a black/white dichotomy exists in a given culture's symbolic system to the conclusion that this symbolism necessarily translates into a general division between "black" and "white" people, with racial discrimination against black people. As Drake establishes, White Racism as the institutionalized power relations that privilege white people and discriminate against black people (and other "non-white" people) is grounded in the material circumstances that demarcate the inception of the early modern period: the invention of racial slavery to undergird the exploitation of the New World.
- 17 As Juliana Schiesari demonstrates in her essay, "The Face of Domestication: Physiognomy, Gender Politics, and Humanism's Others" (55-70), humanism's Man demanded the exclusion of woman as the "other race" and the exclusion of other races as womanish.
- 18 See Lévi-Strauss for the "exchange of women" model of cultural formation. Sedgwick, Rubin, and Irigaray ("Women on the Market") offer trenchant feminist critiques of Lévi-Strauss'.
- 19 Boose cites Walvin, who records that in early seventeenth-century Britain blacks (presumably men) "assimilated almost to the point of equality with white Englishmen, particularly in religious and sexual matters" (Walvin, *Black and White* 10; qtd. in Boose 306 n. 7). See Walvin, *The Black Presence*, for related commentaries from early modern Englishmen. Of course, Anglo-American colonists developed a distinctive solution to this problem—*partus sequitur ventrum* (the child [of the white slave master and the enslaved black woman] follows the condition of the mother)—a solution which duplicitously contradicted patriarchal norms to support racist hierarchies.
- 20 Howard's essay, discussed below, is in the text under review. The word is found on page 116.
- 21 For theorizations of postcolonial mimicry, see Bhabha. Also see *ARIEL*'s recent special issue on "Postcolonialism and its Discontents," especially Bahri.
- 22 Carla Freccero also addresses the exchange of women in her essay, "Cannibalism, Homophobia, Women: Montaigne's 'Des cannibales' and 'De l'amitié'" (73-83).
- 23 The full passage runs, "Must your black face be smooching my Mistresses white lips with a moorian. I would you had kist her a—" (Heywood 328).
- 24 I do not intend to disarticulate the complex connections between English nationalism and imperialism by seeming to separate these terms diachronically. These economic and cultural formations nevertheless present their distinctive features and hegemonic moments, and it is to these salencies I draw attention.
- 25 For the English common law principle of *feme covert*, see Holdsworth.
- 26 Hilda Smith and Moira Ferguson highlight these "first feminists."
- 27 That is, Mr B. of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded*.
- 28 Published in 1613 and 1621, respectively.
- 29 Cf. Astell's response to Milton's defense of the liberty of freeborn Englishmen: "Not Milton himself wou'd cry up Liberty to poor *Female Slaves*, or plead for the

- Lawfulness of a Private Tyranny" (29). (See Milton, *Prose Works* I: 585, *et passim*.) Notably, Astell refers to English wives under a system of *feme covert*, not to Africans enslaved by the English in ever increasing numbers at the turn of the eighteenth century.
- 30 The OED records this whitening under the heading "fair."
- 31 For an explication of this cliché, see Newman, "And wash the Ethiop white."
- 32 Key collections of Third World/Women of Colour criticism include Anzaldúa; Gates (*Reading Black, Reading Feminist*); Kadi; Mohanty (*Third World Women*); Moraga and Anzaldúa; and Spivak.
- 33 Here I am borrowing from, and broadening, Irigaray's central thesis in *Speculum of the Other Woman*. The "'other' of the 'other'" is a term coined by Wallace (227).
- 34 See Nazareth.
- 35 Cf. the popular early modern adage, "England in generall is said to be the Hell of Horses, the Purgatory of Servants and the Paradise of Weomen" (Fynes Moryson, *Itinerary* [1617]), which has reappeared as an ironic catchphrase in early modern women's studies (see Travitsky). On El Saadawi, see Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body, Woman's Word* (111-43) and *Men, Women, and God(s)*. Though the final line of El Saadawi's "She Has No Place in Paradise" are enunciated in an Islamic context, the affinities between Islamic and Christian patriarchies are extensive enough to warrant applying this critique to Western (European, Christian) constructions of race and gender. For Islamic constructions of "race," see Drake (77-184) and Lewis.
- 36 I analyze this masque in my article, "Black Skin, The Queen's Masques: 'Eracing' Authority in Early Modern Women's Writing."
- 37 See Nykl; Menocal; and Chejne.
- 38 Thanks to Pamela Hammons for her engaged reading of an earlier draft of this article, and to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Killam Foundation for their generous financial support.

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