

SARAH E. FARRO'S *TRUE LOVE* (1891): PLAGIARIST RECONFIGURATIONS OF ELLEN WOOD'S *THE SHADOW OF ASHLYDYAT* (1863)¹

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ABSTRACT

In 1891 Sarah E. Farro was hailed as “the first negro novelist” with the publication of her novel *True Love*, a story featuring white English characters set in England. Scholars have believed that Farro’s text was ignored because it features no black characters and does not deal with racial issues. In contrast to these opinions, I contend that *True Love* is an unacknowledged but meticulous reworking of *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* (1863), the celebrated Victorian sensation novel by Ellen Wood. Farro’s plagiarism together with her deployment of a raceless plot far from being an aberration is an act freighted with a titanic self-affirmation and literary ambition that may have ultimately condemned her to literary ostracism.

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RESUMEN

En 1891 Sarah E. Farro fue aclamada como "la primera novelista negra" con la publicación de su novela *True Love*, una historia con personajes ingleses blancos ambientada en Inglaterra. La crítica cree que el texto de Farro fue ignorado porque no presenta personajes negros y no trata de temas raciales. A diferencia de estas opiniones, sostengo que *True Love* es una reelaboración no reconocida pero meticulosa de *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* (1863), la famosa novela sensacionalista victoriana de Ellen Wood. El plagio que realiza Farro junto con la utilización de una trama que obvia cualquier motivo racial lejos de ser una aberración es un acto cargado de una poderosa autoafirmación y enorme ambición literarias que finalmente puede haberla condenado al ostracismo literario.

In May 2016 scholar Gretchen Gerzina announced that, while doing research on Black Victorians and looking through nineteenth-century British newspapers, she had discovered an 1893 announcement in *The Daily Telegraph*,² declaring that Sarah E. Farro was "the first negro novelist" with the publication of her 121-page novel *True Love* in 1891, a story featuring exclusively white English characters set in England. The importance of the discovery of Farro's novel is attested by the rapid inclusion of its first chapter in *The Portable Nineteenth-Century African American Women Writers*, edited by Hollis Robbins and Henry Louis Gates and published in 2017. Gerzina's discovery also found echo in Christine Gerhardt's introduction to her *Handbook of the American Novel of the Nineteenth Century* in 2018. Gerhardt summarizes the relevance of this new textual unearthing and asks what it means that *True Love* was not part of the canon of African American literature until 2016.

As these scholars admit, there is scant information about Sarah E. Farro after the publication of *True Love*. For Hollins and Gates, the fact that no other mention of the novel by twentieth-century scholars or anthologizers is available, even when earlier novels by African American women, such as *Our Nig*, were brought to light, is because "it contains no black characters and does not engage with issues of race" (357). The *Daily Telegraph* announcement

² "About People," *Daily Telegraph*, 27 January, 4.

was a late review of the book, trumpeted as an exceptional novelty at the moment of its publication in 1891 in United States, Canada, England and France.³ That announcement reproduced one of the few brief variations that had appeared in dozens of American newspapers throughout 1892, a fact that evinces the extraordinary attention the novel and its author garnered.⁴ The *Daily Telegraph* declared: “The

³ *The Ottawa Journal* (Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, April 28, 1892, 2), *Vancouver Daily World* (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, September 14, 1892, 6); *Daily News* (London, May 6, 1892, 5), *The North-Eastern Daily Gazette* (Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire, May 7, 1892, 4), *The Derby Mercury* (Derby, Derbyshire, May 11, 1892, 8). The *Gazette Anécdotique* (N° 9-15 May 1892, 275-276) wrote: “UN BAS BLEU NÈGRE. Une femme de couleur, dit le *Daily News*, vient de publier aux Etats- Unis un roman sentimental. C'est le premier livre qui ait jamais été écrit par une personne de sa race. Le roman est intitulé: *Amour vrai* et supporte avantageusement la comparaison avec la moyenne des publications de ce genre. L'auteur, Sarah E. Farro, est d'un noir d'ébène; elle est âgée de vingt- six ans et demeure à Chicago où elle a reçu son éducation au High School. Ses auteurs favoris sont Holmes, Dickens et Thackeray.” *Le Parisien: Journal de Deux Heures* (May 11, 1892), *La Cocarde: Journal Politique Quotidien* (May 14, 1892), and the monthly *L'Intermédiaire des chercheurs et curieux* (May 20, 1892) published the same text.

⁴ See the following 1892 newspapers: *Detroit Free Press* (Mich., January 2, 9); *The Memphis Appeal-Avalanche* (Tenn., April 2, 4); *The Roanoke News* (Weldon, N.C., April 7, 14); *The Wilmington Messenger* (N.C., April 10, 2); *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (Mo., April 17, 10); *The San Francisco Examiner* (Calif., April 24, 16); *The Sun* (NY., April 24, 22); *Detroit Free Press* (Mich., April 26, 4); *The Indianapolis Journal* (Ind., April 30, 4); *The Bee* (Earlington, Ky., May 12, 4); *The Ohio Democrat* (Logan, Ohio, May 14, 2); *The Maryville Times* (Tenn., May 18, 2); *Atchison Daily Patriot* (Kans., June 1, 1); *The Kansas City Gazette* (Kans., June 2, 2); *People's Voice* (Wellington, Kans., June 3, 1); *Salina Daily Republican* (Kans., June 4, 1; June 7, 2); *The Wichita Beacon* (Kans., June 10, 2); *Pittsburgh Dispatch* (Pa., June 12, 4); *The Lima Daily Times* (Ohio, June 18, 3); *Public Opinion* (Franklin County, Pa., June 18, 269); *Quad-City Times* (Davenport, Iowa, June 20, 3); *Harrisburg Daily Independent* (Pa., June 20, 6); *Napa Journal* (Calif., June 23, 4); *Lawrence Daily Gazette* (Kans., June 24, 2); *The Oshkosh Northwestern* (Wisc., June 24, 4); *Freeland Tribune* (Pa., June 27, 3); *Daily State Ledger* (Jackson, Miss., June 27, 3); *The Weekly Record* (Lawrence, Kans., July 1, 2); *The Crete Democrat* (Neb., July 6, 4); *Austin American-Statesman* (Texas, July 7, 4); *The Jennings Gazette* (Kans., July 8, 2); *The Salina Semi-Weekly Journal* (Kans., July 8, 2); *The Publishers' Weekly* (July 9, 36); *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Lo., July 10, 19); *Savannah Courier* (Tenn., July 14, 4); *Oberlin Herald* (Kans., July 14, 3); *The Montclair Times* (N.J., July 16, 1); *The Inter Ocean* (Chicago, Ill., July 16, 12); *The Knoxville Sentinel* (Tenn., July 16, 2); *The Montclair Times* (N.J., July 16, 1); *The Morning Democrat* (Davenport, Iowa, July 17, 3); *Quad-City Times* (Davenport, Iowa, July 17, 3); *Lincoln Journal Star* (Neb., July 18, 6); *The Sandusky Register* (Ohio, July 20, 3); *The St. Joseph Herald* (Mo., July 21, 5); *Akron Daily Democrat* (Ohio, July 21, 4); *Nevada State Journal* (Reno, Nev., July 21, 2); *Monongahela Valley Republican* (Pa., July 21, 4); *Canal City Dispatch* (Arkansas City, Kans., July 22, 3); *The Burlington Free*

first Negro novelist has appeared, Miss Sarah E. Farro of Chicago, a woman of good education, aged 26. The melancholy story *True Love* is not a book of special promise, but the first edition is nearly exhausted, and the author is writing another story.” Previous announcements basically rewrite the same information. In the United States, the first appraisal to be found was published by the *Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, Mich.) on Saturday 2 January 1892. In all these announcements Sarah E. Farro is celebrated as “the first negro woman novelist”, “the first colored woman novelists” or “the first colored woman who ever produced and published a novel”, who “is writing another story.” She is also described as a woman “of good education” or who “has had a high-school education.” Her age, 26 years, is repeatedly mentioned as evidence of her precociousness and talent, and the city of Chicago is congratulated for having the honor of being her dwelling-place. *True Love* is described as “the first novel ever produced by an Afro-American lady”, “a successful novel”, “a melancholy novel.”

After this acclaimed reception in American, Canadian, English and French newspapers during 1892 and even 1893, there was a conspicuous absence of her name in late nineteenth-century anthologies of black women’s writings such as Alphus Monroe Majors’s *Notable Negro Women*, published in 1893 by Donahue &

Press (Vt., July 22, 7); *Gogebic Iron Spirit* (Bessemer, Mich., July 23, 7); *The Times Herald* (Port Huron, Mich., July 26, 7); *Asbury Park Morning Press* (N.J., July 26, 3); *The Courier* (Waterloo, Iowa, July 27, 4); *The Daily Review* (Decatur, Ill., July 24, 4); *The Leavenworth Standard* (Kans., July 28, 1); *The Peabody Gazette-Herald* (Kans., July 28, 2); *St. Joseph Weekly Herald* (Mo., July 28, 7); *The Durham Recorder* (N.C., August 3, 4); *The Santa Fe Daily New Mexican* (New Mexico, August 3, 4); *Young Men’s Era* (Chicago, Ill., August 3, 985); *The Kearney Daily Hub* (Neb., August 11, 2); *The Topeka Daily Capital* (Kans., August 13, 7); *Cleveland Gazette* (Ohio, August 13, 1); *The True Northerner* (Paw Paw, Van Buren County, Mich., August 17, 7); *Democrat and Register* (Darlington, Wisc., August 19, 7); *The Bremen Enquirer* (Ind., August 19, 7); *The Bureau County Tribune* (Princeton, Ill., 19 August, 3); *Canal City Dispatch* (Arkansas City, Kans., August 19, 7); *The Epworth Herald* (Chicago, Ill., August 27, 207); *The Osage City Free Press* (Kans., September 1, 3); *Pittsburgh Dispatch* (Pa., September 6, 4); *Weekly Tidings* (Salina, Kans., September 7, 4); *Public Ledger* (Memphis, Tenn., September 14, 2); *The News* (Paterson, N.J., October 6, 7); *Visalia Times-Delta* (Calif., November 9, 1); *Our Brother in Red* (Muskogee, Okla., December 1, 6).

Henneberry, the same publishing house that had brought out Farro's novel just two years earlier. Neither is she mentioned in Elizabeth Lindsay Davis's *The Story of the Illinois Federation of Colored Women's Clubs* (1922), nor in later twentieth-century scholarly studies on African American women associations such as Wanda A. Hendricks's *Gender, Race, and Politics in the Midwest: Black Club Women in Illinois* (1998), nor as a participant in any of the Chicago women's clubs studied by Anne Meis Knupfer in her groundbreaking *Toward a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood* (1996).

Writing about Sarah E. Farro turns out to be an act that can be related to what Carla Peterson (106) understands as "subject to speculation" (106). Peterson believes that the recovery of the past can enhance an appreciation of African American cultural traditions that have been left out by the traditional methods deployed in their understanding. Given the lack of documentation on Farro, I contend that speculation also seems to be "the only alternative to silence, secrecy, and invisibility" (Peterson 114).

The extensive reception of Farro's *True Love* as the first novel by an African American woman writer in the 1892 national and international press and her disappearance from public life soon after have led literary critics to interpret both the writer and her work under the same coordinates that explain the controversial response to other nineteenth-century black writers and their works. Consequently, it might be reasonable to conclude that the total absence of racial content in the novel condemned both the text and its author to oblivion within the history of African American literature.

True Love is an example of what Robert Fikes, Jr. calls white life novels, or those texts "pejoratively and inaccurately referred to as 'raceless novels' or 'assimilationist novels'" (1995:105). Farro's incursion in the "raceless" novelist genre is not exceptional in African American literary history, even if, from the very beginning, literary scholars have labelled the genre as anomalous. Elements that Fikes underlines as characterizing the experimentation with the genre must have also been prevalent in Farro's case. Firstly, she must have

felt “the pressure to conform to majority group tastes and expectations,” that is, fin-de-siècle popular sensational romances; and secondly, her own personal aspiration “to experience complete freedom of expression, to feel successful, and to be financially rewarded” (Fikes 1995: 105). These tendencies may have run against the traditional expectations of African American literature as a space to reaffirm black identity and redress social injustice, and may have caused the oblivion of Farro’s novel.

Her text is set in England, does not include a single black character, nor does it offer any trace of a critical view of whiteness or of any exploration of the meaning of racial identity. Hollis and Gates contend that “[t]here is no record of a second work and Farro’s novel faded from view even as earlier novels published by black women, such as *Our Nig*, were rediscovered.” *True Love* “was most likely neglected by scholars and anthologizers in the twentieth century because it contains no black characters and does not engage with issues of race” (357). Nonetheless, the reasons for the novel’s and its author’s disappearance without a trace from literary history must be found elsewhere. Judith Still and Michael Worton review the history of the concept of intertextuality and explain that the theory “insists that a text [...] cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole”, because “the writer is a reader of texts (in the broadest sense) before s/he is a creator of texts, and therefore the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind” (1). On her part, Mary Randall Marilyn Randall contends that “tolerance for imitation and accusations of plagiarism depend on contemporary definitions of originality, authenticity, property and their social and economic consequences” (528). Like other contemporary African American texts, *True Love* is immersed in what Elsa Tamarkin calls late-nineteenth-century black literary Anglophilia and Daniel Hack studies as African American transformations of Victorian literature, a frenzied tendency that explains Farro’s daring plagiaristic reconfigurations of one of the most successful Victorian sensation novels, *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* by Ellen Wood. As Still and Morton assert, “[t]o quote is

not merely to write glosses on previous writers; it is to interrogate the chronicity of literature and philosophy, to challenge history as determining tradition and to question conventional notions of originality and difference” (12). Farro, however, does not comply with these requests and her excessive intertextuality can only be approached as selective copying. By tracing the strategies Farro uses to mask her systematic textual borrowings, I contend that her plagiarism together with her deployment of a raceless plot were acts freighted with self-affirmation and literary ambition that ultimately condemned her to ostracism in the African American literary history.

TRUE LOVE (1891) AND LITERARY ANGLOPHILIA

Sarah E. Farro is repeatedly presented in the newspapers announcements of her novel as an educated woman living in Chicago. As Gretchen Gerzina explains in her article on the writer in *African American National Biography*, the scarce evidence available leads one to think that she belonged to a middle class family since her family's house stood near what is today Logan Square, an affluent location on the northwest side of the City of Chicago. Prior to the appearance of her name as “the first negro woman novelist”, Farro was mentioned in the newspapers for bringing a lawsuit against the Frank Parmalee Omnibus Company in 1884.⁵ They gave information on the favorable result that Sarah E. Farro, “a colored woman”, obtained from the lawsuit she brought against the omnibus company when the buggy she was driving was overturned by one of the company's omnibuses and how she obtained \$6.650 for damages. The fact that Farro was driving her own buggy and was able to go to court to sue the company for damages indicates her comfortable standard of life, explains Gerzina. It is most probable, then, that she belonged to the

⁵ Newspapers such as *The Inter Ocean* (Chicago, November 15, 1884, 15) titled this piece of news “Expensive Collision”, and the announcement was echoed in the *Muscatine Weekly Journal* (Muscatine, Iowa, November 21, 1884, 6), *The Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, Mississippi, November 26, 1884, 3), and the *Mattoon Gazette* (Mattoon, Illinois, November 21, 1884, 3), among others. See Newspapers.com - Historical Newspapers from 1700s-2000s: <https://www.newspapers.com/>

African American Chicago elite, also called the Old Settlers, an appellation that, according to sociologists St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton (66-67), referred to “anyone who lived in Chicago prior to the First World War.” The term goes back to the name African Americans inhabitants of the city used to distinguish themselves from the growing number of Southern black migrants to Chicago at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. As members of the Old Settlers, the Farros must have been part of the black bourgeoisie and Sarah seems to have adopted the values of middle-class genteel culture as the best way to counter racist stereotypes and improve her own literary standing.

The decade of the 1890s was a turning point period for African American women both in literature and in politics. This context of increasing acceptance of their works—what Frances W. Harper called “the threshold of woman’s era”—definitely contributed to Farro’s attempt at writing and the acceptance by a mainstream publisher of her novel. The fact that she was not an isolated case is reflected in some of the press announcements seen before where her name is linked to those of Ida B. Wells and Mrs. Mossell.⁶ As Hazel Carby explains, “for the first time, black women were nationally organized to confront the various modes of their oppression” (264).⁷ Yet, after the international acclaim achieved by *True Love* as the first

⁶ In 1890 Octavia R. Albert published a collection of seven slave narratives titled *The House of Bondage*, and Amelia E. Johnson wrote *Clarence and Corinne or God’s Way*, the first book written by an African American woman published by American Baptist Publication as a Sunday school text. In 1892 Anna Julia Cooper published *Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South*, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper *Iola Leroy: or Shadows Uplifted*, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett published her “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases”.

⁷ In 1893 African American Women—Hallie Q. Brown, Anna Julia Cooper, Fannie Jackson Coppin, Sarah J. Early, Fannie Barrier Williams, Ida B. Wells, among others—participated in the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago and in the World’s Congress of Representative Women. During this decade black women’s clubs extended nationally and organized the first Congress of Colored Women of the United States, and in 1896 the National Association of Colored Women was formed. For an study on the problems faced by African American women to be represented in the Columbian Exposition see Ann Massa, “Black Women in the ‘White City’” (1974). Other studies on the difficulties of black participation are Elliott M. Rudwick and August Meier’s “Black Man in the ‘White City’: Negroes and the Columbian Exposition, 1893” (1965).

novel by an African American woman author, the book lost its relevance and went through a process of de-racialization as is shown shown by its new recategorization as an example of woman's narrative. As a "woman's text" it became one of the 58 books by Illinois women writers exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.⁸ In her 2006 article "African American Women's Writings in the Woman's Building Library," Amina Gautier does not include Farro among the women she studies—Eleanor Eldridge, Victoria Earle, Anna Julia Foote, Frances Harper, Henrietta Cordelia Ray, and T. T. Purvis—and whose work was represented in the Woman's Building Library exhibit at the Columbian Exposition. Gautier (56) explains the enormous difficulties African American women faced to take part in the planning and administration of the fair.

Thus, the practically overnight and noiseless disappearance of Farro as a black novelist and her text as the first black novel in American history went without further notice or comment. In *List of books sent by home and foreign committees to the Library of the Woman's Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893*, compiled for the United States World's Columbian Commission Board of Lady Managers under the direction of Edith E. Clarke, women writers are listed only by their state origin and by their surnames, without further reference to their first names or their racial categorization. Frances Watkins Harper's works, for example, are listed under the state of Pennsylvania as "HARPER: *Iola Leroy, Moses, Sketches of Southern Life*" (49). This absence of racial affiliation is the reason that most probably explains scholar Bernice E. Gallagher's silence on this question and her inclusion of Farro in her 1994 study *Illinois Women Novelists in the Nineteenth Century: An Analysis and Annotated Bibliography* without any reference to the novelist as a black woman writer. Gallagher analyses the 58 novels—published from 1854 to 1893, by thirty-six Illinois women—that were selected for exhibition at the Library of the Woman's Building during

⁸ In the *Official Catalogue of the Illinois Woman's Exposition Board* (Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, Official Publisher to the Columbian Exposition, 1893), Farro's novel appears listed on page 7 as "Farro, Sarah E. Chicago, *True Love*".

the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The nearly 4.000 books selected for display at the Fair were thought to have “achieved distinction for originality, great moral or religious strength, fine writing, and scholarly research” (Gallagher 1994: 2). Gallagher’s analysis of these novels attests to her expectations that they did not “wander far from the formulaic and derivative” (Gallagher 1994: 3). The vast majority of these Illinois women writers were middle-class and educated, and their plots reveal their trust in the romance form with realistic elements (Gallagher 1994: 8). As a consequence of writing at the end of the nineteenth-century, a period of crisis, these authors also widened their perspectives on marriage and religion and embraced themes that reflected these social turmoils.

The discovery of forgotten nineteenth-century black texts has generated new reconfigurations of the African American literary canon. In order not to essentialize the multifarious diversity of African American traditions, it is necessary to widen aesthetic and racial considerations, and take into account the more pressing demands of social, class and religious contexts. Sarah E. Farro’s *True Love* is an example of how this author resisted “phenotypically fixed racial identification” of what seemed to be the expected fictional world for a black woman writer (Foreman and Cherene Sherrard-Johnson 164). *True Love*’s textual passing is indicative of how her author resisted racial identification and, as a black novelist, was satisfied to write raceless fiction.

As a text by a member of the black bourgeoisie in Chicago, Farro’s *True Love* was accepted for publication in one of the nation’s leading publishing houses. One of the indications that points at Farro’s elite position is precisely the national standing of the publishing house that undertook the publication of her novel. Donohue & Henneberry was a company founded by two bookbinders, William P. Henneberry and Michael A. Donohue in 1871.⁹ Farro’s

⁹ It was originally located at 407-425 Dearborn St. in Chicago’s South Loop. In 1891 the firm Donohue, Henneberry & Co. turned out an extraordinary number of bound volumes annually addressed at “mass consumption” (Clarkin 119). It was one of the most prominent in the country and it was widely known for inexpensive editions of popular works of fiction, and sets and series of books.

True Love was one of the titles of the company's catalogue, published for "mass entertainment" and expected to be enjoyed by "hosts of readers [who] were assured good reading at reasonable prices during the 1890s" (Clarkin 121). The impact and projection of Donohue & Henneberry publications throughout the Anglo-speaking world explain the firm's marketing strategies and the recurring appearance of announcements in newspapers declaring that *True Love* was "the first book by a colored woman novelist."

At the time of the novel's publication Farro's transtextual practices went unnoticed as the inclusion of the book in the World Columbian Exposition attests. However, the sudden and sheer unexpected disappearance of both *True Love* and Farro's name from the annals of both African American and white literary women's compilations at the time cast a shadow of doubt over her practice and may point towards the revelation of her unacknowledged borrowings and its discreet silencing. Farro's genteel literary politics is a phenomenon linked to what Elsa Tamarkin calls Anglophilia, a trend that pays "respects to the symbolic value of England" (xxiii). As such, *True Love* challenges the beginnings of African American women writing during the 1890s and shows how Farro flagrantly committed elaborate acts of appropriation to construct herself as an original participant in the American literary arena. As Daniel Hack highlights for other writers' plagiarist routines, "these transnational, cross-racial transpositions and repurposings, far from being "marginal phenomenon or fringe practice," were often the handiwork of major figures in the African American literary and intellectual tradition, including Frederick Douglass, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Charles Chesnutt, Pauline Hopkins, and W.E.B. Du Bois" (1). On his part, Geoffrey Sanborn has shown how William Wells Brown's plagiarism in works such as *Clotel; or, the President's Daughter* (1853) was a way to attract readers to the abolitionist cause (2016: 71), and how Hopkins's borrowings in *Of One Blood; or The Hidden Self* (1902-3) point "to the pleasurable possibility of a profoundly mixed-voiced world" (2020: e7). For Sanborn, what he

characterizes as *attractional plagiarism* (2020: e7), defines Brown's and Hopkins's techniques of composition.

In fact, from the variety of appropriations that African American authors and editors did to Victorian works of literature in the second half of the nineteenth century that Hack analyzes in his book, none bears comparison to Sarah Farro's intriguing arrogation of Ellen Wood's sensational novel *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*. She plagiarized the English novel thanks to an intricate work of selection and readaptation and, as the plot shows, with no intention of converting the original source into a racial narrative or an allegory of African Americanness. Her textual practice and deployment of this Victorian best-seller stand out as one of what Hack imagines to be, "the most sustained and provocative instance" of the African American responses to Victorian literature that has "gone entirely unrecognized" (1). As his study discloses, "nineteenth-century British literature was woven deeply into the fabric of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African American literature and print culture. In contrast to what authors such as Pauline E. Hopkins were doing through acts of "African Americanization" (Hack 2), the originality and exceptionality of Farro's *True Love* evince no interest in the historical or political concerns of African Americans. Her use of Ellen Wood's novel is purely aesthetic and does not attempt to allude to racial matters. Farro's recovery of Victorian literature stands as a personal commitment to writing and as an act of ambitious authorship. As Sicherman (215) as well as Gere and Robbins (652) suggest, technological innovations, the passage of the international copyright law in 1891 and the increasing professionalization of the literary market place explain the veneration towards the printed word. Farro's engagement with Wood's text and Victorian sensation fiction attempted to reap personal credit. As such, her novel widens up the manifold possibilities of African American responses analyzed by Hack and offers new explorations of transatlantic cross-currents and cultural significance. Neither indebtedness, nor imitation, nor subversive appropriation defines Farro's novel, but premediated plagiarism and piracy. As Hack suggests for other African American

authors, Farro's engagement with Wood's *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* can be read as a "politically symbolic act of cultural positioning" (8), as well as a desperate attempt to achieve literary recognition in the thriving scenario of fin-de-siècle African American literature.

TRUE LOVE AND THE SHADOW OF ASHLYDYAT

James Joyce's reference to Mrs Henry Wood's *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* (1863) as one of the novels that Molly Bloom reads confirms the novel's reputation even in the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Ellen Wood was a prolific writer and one of the most acclaimed representatives of the genre of sensation fiction. In her appreciative article on Wood, published in 1897 as part of a compendium celebrating Victorian women novelists, Adeline Sergeant declares that "[s]he has had, perhaps, more popularity than any novelist of the Victorian age; and her popularity is justified by the wholesomeness and purity of her moral tone, the ingenuity and sustained interest of her plots, and the quiet truthfulness, in many cases, of her delineation of character" (191). Sergeant explains that the writer's transatlantic notoriety and the great circulation of her works are due to the fact that they "appeal in a highly creditable way to the heart and mind of the British public" (205). Although sensational in plot, her stories "are purely domestic" and "chiefly concerned with the great middle-class of England, and she describes lower middle-class life with a zest and a conviction and a sincerity which we do not find in many modern writers, who are apt to sneer

¹⁰ In *Ulysses* Molly Bloom uses sensation novels to expose her understanding of her sexual role and mentions several famous titles given to her by her friend Hester: *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins, *Henry Dunbar* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon and two novels by Mrs Henry Wood, *East Lynne* and *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*: "I didn't get a wink of sleep it wouldnt have been nice on account of her but I could have stopped it in time she gave me the Moonstone to read that was the first I read of Wilkie Collins East Lynne I read and the shadow of Ashlydyat Mrs Henry Wood Henry Dunbar by that other woman" (Joyce 896). As Theresa L. Nugent explains, these books "seem to have had the strongest effects on her" and they "seem likely to have shaped Molly's perceptions about male and female relationships and behavior (12-13).

at the *bourgeois* habits and modes of thought found in so many English households” (206).¹¹

Sarah Farro, however, carries out a thorough selection of Wood’s materials and recycles her sensation novel into a religious sentimental text in *True Love*. The African American author expunges the original morbid elements that contributed to “electrifying the nerves of the reader”, as stated by Henry Mansel in his notorious attack against the genre in *Quarterly Review* in 1863 (488-489). Farro keeps the story as “a tale of our own times”, but distances her text from potential criticism turning “proximity”, “one great element of sensation” into an exotic fictionalized English remoteness that prompts readers to identify with the people they are “in a habit of meeting” (Mansel 489) in nineteenth-century American anglicized literary culture.

Philip Waller (660) notes that by 1900 Wood’s novels were celebrated and devoured by all social classes, and that *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* “had reached its 150th thousand” (660). If the novel was so well-known and still being read by both English and American readers, there is ground for speculation on the reasons that made it possible for Farro’s *True Love* to appear as an undetected plagiarized text. One of the reasons that might have blurred the unrecognized borrowing was that the African American writer did not take into consideration Wood’s final expurgated editions in the 1880s, but the original three-volume text of the first edition in late 1863, or even the first manuscript published as a serialized novel in monthly installments that appeared in W. Harrison Ainsworth’s *New Monthly Magazine* between October 1861 and November 1863, following directly from the success of *East Lynne*. Even so, in 1891, when *True Love* was published, readers

¹¹ In her introduction to Wood’s *East Lynne*, Elisabeth Jay explains how the novel incorporated many of the elements associated to the lowbrow qualities of the form that perniciously stimulated the readers’ feelings: “first, by using to the full the opportunity for suspense and melodrama afforded by serial instalments; and second, by stimulating an ‘unhealthy’ interest in the diseases and crimes—such as adultery, abduction, insanity or falsely alleged insanity, arson, bigamy, and the *crime passionnel*—which the newspapers claimed threatened society daily” (ix).

familiar with the book form of the novel might have found echoes of Wood's text in Farro's. Yet, as Robert Macfarlane explains the reappraisal of literary originality and plagiarism which took place in Great Britain between 1859 and 1900 together with contemporary "recombinative theories of literary creation [...] tended to be tolerant of repetitious modes of writing, and to downplay the claims of literary property" (5).

The Shadow of Ashlydyat is a gothic novel that narrates the fall of the Godolphins, a rich family connected to banking businesses, who ultimately lose their estate Ashlydyat. The main protagonists are the Godolphin brothers, Thomas and George. Thomas is in love with Ethel Grame who dies in the early chapters of the novel because of her devotion and generosity towards her disagreeable sister during a bout of typhoid fever. Ethel's death symbolizes, as Anne-Marie Beller explains, the ideals of the good Christian death (4). On his part, George Godolphin hesitates between the love of gentle Maria Hastings, the clergyman's daughter, and Charlotte Pain, a woman who shows a dangerous independence from social conventions. Maria's marriage to George precipitates her to a life of suffering for her husband's vices and his extramarital relationship with Charlotte. George's debts and his fraudulent actions will bring about the Godolphins's economic ruin, meanwhile a portent known as the 'shadow of Ashlydyat' appears every night to announce the end of the family. As expected in nineteenth-century fiction, the death of the angelical Maria reforms her husband, who starts a new life in India.

As Bernice E. Gallagher writes, *True Love*, as one of the fifty-eight novels by Illinois women selected for exhibition in the Woman's Building Library of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, excelled, among other qualities, in "great moral or religious strength" (1994: 2). In fact, Farro transformed Wood's sensation novel into an exotic romance on English gentry classes, deeply rooted in religious values. Farro's Preface is her only personal and original contribution to the text, even if she follows the formulaic topics included in the traditional *captatio benevolentiae*. After confessing her literary dilettantism, in this one-page text Farro declares her

intention of exposing her thoughts on the significance of “true love”: “Her design in the preparation of this story is to give to the public a sketch of her ideas on the effect of ‘true love’.” The author proceeds to outline her method: “I have tried to make the plot exciting without being sensational or common, although within the bounds of proper romance, and create a set of characters most of whom are like real people with whose thoughts and passions we are able to sympathize and whose language and conduct may be appreciable or reprehensible according to circumstances.” Farro assures readers of her preoccupation and efforts to offer a dignified text, stripped of all gothic elements: “Great pains have been taken to make this work superior in its arrangement and finish and in the general tastefulness of its mechanical execution” (n. pag). Farro seems to be voicing contemporary ideas on the representation of literary creation that, as Macfarlene explains, were “challenged by models which envisaged creativity as a function of the selection and recombination of pre-existing words and concepts” (8). Thus, Farro presents herself as an assimilator and transformer” (8).

Her “great pains”, however, fall short of being a legitimate textual reconfiguration and can only be understood as a long and meticulous process of cut-and-paste that she executed on Wood’s *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*. *True Love* includes ten chapters: I. Mrs Brewster’s Daughters; II. The Residence of Charles Taylor; III. Charles Taylor receives a message; IV. An Unexpected Death; V. Charles Taylor’s regrets; VI. Dr. Brown explains to Charles; VII. John Smith’s Dinner Party; VIII. George Taylor gives a party; IX. Charles receives another stroke; X. A Peaceful hour. Firstly, Farro changes the names of Wood’s main characters to hide their original identity as protagonists of *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*. The Godolphins are now the Taylors —Thomas is Charles, and his brother George is now Martha—, the Brewsters —Lady Sarah is now Mrs Brewster, angelical Ethel is Janey, and Sarah Anne is Mary Ann—; Mr Snow is now Dr. Brown; Margery, the maid, is now the manservant George, among others.

The first chapters present Mrs Brewster, a former carpenter's daughter who is now a merchant tailor's widow. After inheriting a substantial legacy from a rich relative, she lives with her two daughters, Mary Ann and Janey, in the country village of Bellville. Janey, the angelical daughter, is engaged to Charles Taylor, the orphaned son of a "wealthy capitalist", a description surprisingly original to Farro as Wood never uses the word in *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*. Charles has three unmarried sisters –Mary, Martha, and Matilda. As it happens in Wood's novel, the town where they live is suffering from a bout of malaria. Mary Ann, the selfish sister, becomes ill and her sister Janey, who does not feel well herself, devotedly looks after her. Charles travels to the city of Waterville to visit Mrs Bangs, his business partner, who is recovering from a heart attack. Ten days later, Charles receives a telegram from Mrs Brewster that announces the death of one of her daughters. He rushes home and his friend Dr. Brown tells him that Janey has died as she also got the fever. Janey's death is rendered as an exemplary sacrifice to be imitated. Hers is an act of Christian compassion towards her sister and, as such, a key aspect of Farro's appropriation of Wood's novel, explicitly highlighted by Farro's verbatim borrowing of Wood's words on Ethel's death when describing Janey's. Farro declares: "Ah, my dear reader, let us be thankful that it was so; it is well to be stricken down in the active path of duty, working until we can work no more" (52). And in *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*, the narrator also counsels: "Ah, child! let those, who are left, be thankful that it was so! it is well to be stricken down in the active path of duty, working until we can work no more" (Vol. I, chapter XIII, "Unavailing regrets", 185). The other direct address to the reader Farro writes in her novel is also taken verbatim from Wood's text. When Charles learns about his beloved's death he falls into a profound depression: "Ah! reader, there are griefs that tell, rending the heart as an earthquake would rend the earth, and all that can be done is to sit down under them and ask of heaven strength to bear—to bear as best we can, until time shall shed a few drops of healing balm from its wings" (49). When Thomas Godolphin

learns about his dear Ethel's death, Wood writes: "Ah, my readers, there are griefs that tell! riving the heart as an earthquake will rive the earth: and, all that can be done is, to sit down under them, and ask of Heaven strength to bear, to bear as we best may, until time shall shed a few drops of healing balm from its wings" (Vol. I, chapter XIII, 183).

After Janey's death, the plot turns to Charles's sister, Martha Taylor, and Mark Blakely, who, after the death of his malicious wife, courts his friend's sister. Farro introduces other characters that are merely sketched, as for example Reverend Davis, Mrs Brown, Miss Flint and George Taylor, Charles's immature cousin, who in *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* appears as George Godolphin, Thomas's brother. Farro's plot becomes then more complex with scenes taken from Wood's novel that deviate her narrative from the lines that she established in her first chapters. George is called away to visit a friend who is taken ill, Adam Miller, and who tells him about another friend, a Mr Bell, who has left for another town. Farro does not provide any link with previous scenes or characters and the narrative is left rambling on uninteresting events. Then the rest of the text is devoted to Charles's ailing condition and his resolution to face death while reading of the great love of God towards those who live for him. Farro ends her text with another exemplary angelical death scene. Thus the African American author focuses her text on Wood's religious ideals, and patchworks a didactic novel to promote Christian values.

An examination of the two novels reveals some of the ways Farro used Wood's novel to compose her own text. A complete comparative inventory of *True Love's* borrowings from *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* exceeds the limits of this article, but a thorough examination of the first pages of Chapter I is illustrative of her disproportionate derivative literary techniques. Thus, her thoroughly appropriative acts can be explained through two principal methods. Firstly and besides changing the names of Wood's characters, Farro replicates Wood's original with selective changes of words to blur the verbatim appropriations. She provides synonyms for adjectives,

nouns and verbs, etc.; paraphrases certain ideas and rewrites them using new expressions; eliminates certain lexical items such as adjectives, and substitutes punctuation marks—full stops by semicolons—to initiate new sequences in the plot. These textual borrowings and changes are already present in the paragraph that initiates *True Love*, and that occupies three pages (1-3) and two lines on page 4.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>True Love</i> Chapter I Mrs. Brewster's Daughters (1)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Shadow of Ashlydyat</i> (Vol. I, Chapter VI, 81)</p>
<p>A fine old door of oak, a heavy door standing deep within a portico inside of which you might have driven a coach, brings you to the residence of Mrs. Brewster. The hall was dark and small, the only light admitted to it being from windows of stained glass; numberless passages branched off from the hall, one peculiarity being that you could scarcely enter a single room in it but you must first go down a passage, short or long, to get to it; had the house been designed by an architect with a head upon his shoulders and a little common sense within it, he might have made a respectable house to say the least; as it was, the rooms were cramped and narrow, cornered and confined, and the good space was taken up by these worthless passages;</p>	<p>A fine old door of oak, a heavy door, standing deep within a portico, into which you might almost have driven a coach and six, introduced you to Ashlydyat. The hall was dark and small, the only light admitted to it being from millioned windows of stained glass. Innumerable passages branched off from the hall. One peculiarity of Ashlydyat was, that you could scarcely enter a single room in it, but you must first go down a passage, short or long, to reach it. Had the house been designed by any architect with a head upon his shoulders and a little common sense with it, he might have made it a handsome mansion with large and noble rooms. As it was, the rooms were cramped and narrow, cornered and confined; and space was lost in these worthless passages.</p>

Farro's second technique--a method she will follow throughout the novel--consists of carefully selecting from different chapters in *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*. These chosen sections appear either as logical continuations of their preceding paragraphs, or patched up together by linking fragments of Farro's own invention. Thus, the initial paragraph of Chapter I provided above is followed by some fragments from a different chapter in Wood's novel:

<p>(2) a plot of ground before it was crowded with flowers, far too crowded for good taste, as the old gardener would point out to her, but Mrs. Brewster loved flowers and would not part with one of them. Being the daughter of a carpenter and the wife of a</p>	<p>(Vol. I, Chapter V, 66-67) A plot of ground before it was crowded with flowers: far too crowded for good taste, as David Jekyl would point out to Lady Sarah. But Lady Sarah loved flowers, and would not part with one of them. The daughter of one soldier, and the wife</p>
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merchant tailor, she had scrambled through life amidst bustle and poverty, **moving from one house to another**, never settled anywhere for long. It was an existence not to be envied, although it is the lot of many. She was **Mrs. Brewster** and her husband was not a very good husband to her; he was rather too fond of amusing himself, and threw all the care upon her shoulders; she **spent her time** nursing her sickly children and **endeavoring** to make one **dollar** go as far as two. One **day**, to her unspeakable embarrassment, she found herself **changed from a poor woman in moderate circumstances to an heiress to a certain degree**, her father **having received a legacy from a relative, and upon his death it was willed to her.**

She had much sorrow, **having** lost one child after another, until she had **but** two left. Then she lost her husband and father; **then settled at Bellville near her husband's native place**, upon her limited **means**. All she possessed was the interest **upon this** sum her father **had left her**, the whole not exceeding **\$2,000**.

of another, Lady Sarah had scrambled through life amidst bustle, ~~perplexity,~~ and poverty. **Sometimes quartered in barracks, sometimes following the army abroad; out of one place into another;** never settled anywhere for long ~~together~~. It was an existence not to be envied; although it is the lot of many. She was **Mrs. Grame then**, and her husband, ~~the captain,~~ was not a very good husband to her. He was rather too fond of amusing himself, and threw all care upon her shoulders. She **passed her days** nursing her sickly children, and **endeavouring** to make one **sovereign** go as far as two. One **morning**, to her unspeakable embarrassment, she found herself **converted from plain, private Mrs. Grame into the Lady Sarah**. Her father **boasted a peer in a very remote relative, and came unexpectedly into the title.**

~~Had he come into money with it, it would have been more welcome; but, of that, there was only a small supply. It was a very poor Scotch peerage, with limited estates; and they, encumbered. Lady Sarah wished she could drop the honour which had fallen to her share, unless she could live a little more in accordance with it.~~ She had much sorrow. **She had** lost one child after another, until she had **only** two left, ~~Sarah Anne and Ethel~~. Then she lost her husband; and, ~~next, her father. Chance drove her to Prior's Ash, which was near her husband's native place; and she settled there,~~ upon her limited **income**. All she possessed was ~~her pension as a captain's widow, and~~ the interest of the sum her father had been **enabled to leave her;** the whole not exceeding **five hundred a year.**

Concrete evidence of Farro's new transatlantic mis-en-scène may be seen in the several cultural adaptations she introduces for her American readers: words such as "endeavor" (2) or "color" (8, 16, 30 et al.) follow the American spelling; the protagonists use dollars (2) instead of pounds and celebrate Thanksgiving (20).

The previous lines in the first paragraph of Chapter I are followed by a fragment of Farro's own invention (my italics) that ends

this long introductory paragraph. The second paragraph is then borrowed from a different chapter in Wood's novel:

<p>(2) She had two daughters, Mary Ann and Janey; the contrast between them was great, you could see it most remarkably as they sat together, and her love for them was as contrasted as light is with darkness. Mary Ann she regarded with an inordinate affection amounting almost to a passion; for Janey she did not care; what could be the reason of this; what is the reason that parents, many such may be found, will love some of their children and dislike others they cannot tell any more than she could; ask them and they will be unable to give you an answer. It does not lie in the children; it often happens that those obtaining the least love will be the most deserving of it. Such was the case here. Mary Ann Brewster was a pale, sickly, fretful girl, full of whims, full of complaints, giving trouble to everybody about her. Janey, with her sweet countenance and her merry heart, made the sunshine of her home; she bore with her sister's exacting moods, she bore with her mother's want of love—, she loved them both and waited on them, and carolled forth her snatches of song as she moved around the house, and was as happy as the day was long. Ask the servants — they kept only two — and they would tell you that Mrs. Brewster was cross and selfish, but Miss Janey was worth her weight in gold; the gold was soon to be transplanted to a home where it would be appreciated and cherished, for Janey was the affianced wife of Charles Taylor. For nearly a mile beyond Bellville lived Charles Taylor, a quiet, refined gentleman, and the son of a wealthy capitalist; his father had not only made a fortune of his own, but had several bestowed upon him; he had died several years before this time, and his wife survived him one year. There were three sisters, a cousin and two servants that had lived in this family for a number of years.</p>	<p>(Chapter V, 67-68) She had only these two daughters, and her love for them was as different as light is from darkness. Sarah Anne she loved with an inordinate affection, almost amounting to passion; for Ethel, she did not care. What could be the reason of this? What is the reason why parents (many of them may be found) will love some of their children, and dislike others? They cannot tell you, any more than Lady Sarah could have told. Ask them, and they will be unable to give you an answer. It does not lie in the children: it often happens that those obtaining the least love will be the most worthy of it. Such was the case here.</p> <p>Sarah Anne Grame was a pale, sickly, fretful girl; full of whims, full of complaints, giving trouble to every one about her. Ethel, with her sweet countenance and her merry heart, made the sunshine of the home. She bore with her sister's exacting moods, bore with her mother's want of love. <i>She</i> loved them both, and waited on them, and carolled forth her snatches of song as she moved about the house, and was as happy as the day was long.</p> <p>The servants—they kept only two— would tell you that Miss Grame was cross and selfish; but that Miss Ethel was worth her weight in gold. The gold was soon to be appropriated: transplanted to a home where it would be appreciated and cherished: for Ethel was the affianced wife of Thomas Godolphin.</p>
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<p>The beams of the setting sun streamed into the dining-room of the Taylor mansion; it was a room of fine proportions, not dull and heavy as it is the custom of some dining-rooms, but light and graceful as could be wished. Charles Taylor, with his fine beauty, sat at one end of the room, Miss Mary Taylor, a maiden lady of mature years, good looking also in her peculiar style, sat opposite him, she wore a white dress, its make remarkably young, and her hair fell in ringlets, young also; at her right-hand sat Matilda, singularly attractive in her quiet loveliness, with her silver dotted muslin dress trimmed with white ribbons; at her left sat Martha, quiet in manner, plain in features; she had large gray eyes, reflective strangely deep, with a circle of darker gray around them, when they were cast upon you it was not at you they looked, but at what was within you, at your mind, your thoughts; at least such was the impression they carried.</p>	<p>(Vol. I, Chapter III, 33) The beams of the setting sun streamed into the dining-room at Lady Godolphin's Folly. A room of fine proportions; not dull and heavy, as it is much the custom for dining-rooms to be, but light and graceful as could be wished. Sir George Godolphin, with his fine old beauty, sat at one end of the table; Lady Godolphin, good-looking also in her peculiar style, was opposite to him. She wore a white dress, its make remarkably young, and her hair fell in ringlets, young also. On her right hand sat Thomas Godolphin, courteous and calm, as he ever was; on her left hand was Bessy, whom you have already seen. On the right of Sir George sat Maria Hastings, singularly attractive in her quiet loveliness, in her white spotted muslin dress with its white ribbons. On his left sat his eldest daughter, Janet. Quiet in manner, plain in features, as was Thomas, her eyes were yet wonderful to behold. Not altogether for their beauty, but for the power they appeared to contain of seeing all things. Large, reflective, strangely-deep eyes, grey, with a circlet of darker grey round them. When they were cast upon you, it was not at you they looked, but at what was within you—at your mind, your thoughts; at least, such was the impression they conveyed.</p>
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These are some examples of the uninterrupted borrowing dispersed throughout the novel. Her last chapter shows how she replicates different fragments from *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*, Volume III, Chapters XIV, XVI, XVI and XVII, as well as the sequential order she follows to match her text to Wood's plot. This sequencing reveals the extent to which Wood's novel forms Farro's, who uses her source material not only sequentially but also chronologically:

<p>(120) Did the pastor of Bellville, standing there with his pale face, his sonorous voice echoing over the graves, recall those back funerals, when he over whom the service was now being read had stood as chief mourner? No doubt he did. Did George recall it? The pastor glanced at him once, and saw that he had a difficulty in</p>	<p>(Vol. III, Chapter XVII, 197) Did the rector of All Souls', standing there with his pale, severe face, his sonorous voice echoing over the graves, recall those back funerals, when he, over whom the service was now being read, had stood as chief mourner? No doubt he did. Did George recall them? The rector glanced at him once, and saw that he had a difficulty in suppressing</p>
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suppressing his emotion.

"I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, write from henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors." So **profound** was the silence, that every word as it fell solemnly from the lips of the minister might be heard in all parts of the churchyard; if ever that verse could apply to frail humanity, with its unceasing struggle after holiness, and its unceasing failure here, it most surely apply to him over whom it was being spoken.

Bend forward, as so many of those spectators are doing, and read the inscription on the plate, Charles **Taylor**, aged **40** years. Only **forty** years, a period at which some men think they are beginning life, it seemed to be an untimely death, and it would have been, after all his pain and sorrow, but that he had entered upon a better life.

(121)

They left him in the vaulted grave, his

his emotion. ~~This was the first time he and George had met since the crash had come. How did George feel as he stood there, between the two men whom he had so wronged? Did he envy Thomas Godolphin in his coffin? She had escaped from the turmoil of the world's care and had gone to his rest. To his rest, if ever dead man had in this world.~~

"I heard a voice from Heaven, saying unto me. Write, from henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours." So hushed was the silence, that every word, as it fell solemnly from the lips of the minister, might be heard in all parts of the churchyard. If ever that verse could apply to frail humanity, with its unceasing struggle after holiness and its unceasing failure here, it most surely applied to him over whom it was being spoken.

~~How did George Godolphin feel? Surely it was an ordeal to him to stand there before those men whom he had injured, over the good brother whom he had helped to send to the grave! His head was bowed, his face hidden in his handkerchief; the drops of rain pattered down on his golden hair. He had gone to his grave so early!~~

Bend forward, as so many of those spectators are doing, and read the inscription on the plate. ~~There's a little earth on the coffin, but the plate is visible.~~ "Thomas Godolphin of Ashlydyat: aged forty five years." 'Only forty-five years!' A period at which some men think they are but beginning life. It seemed to be an untimely death; and it would have been, after all his pain and sorrow, but that he had entered upon a better life. ~~Some of those, left to live on, might envy him now. Could they, in their thoughtful reflection, have wished, now that it was over, that one sorrow had been lightened for him, one pang removed? No; for God had but been fitting him for that other life; and it is only those who have drunk here of their fuU cup of sorrow that are eager to enter upon it.~~

(Vol. III, Chapter XVII, 198)

They left him in the vaulted grave, ~~the last~~

coffin near his mother's, who lay beside **his father**; the spectators began to draw unobtrusively away, silently and **solemnly**. In the general crowd and bustle, for everybody was on the move, George turned to the **pastor** and **shook hands with him**.

~~Godolphin of Ashlydyat, his coffin resting near his mother, who lay beside Sir George. Was that vault destined to be opened shortly again? In truth, it was little worth while to close it.—The spectators began to draw unobtrusively away, silently and decently. In the general crowd and bustle, for everybody seemed to be on the move, George turned suddenly to the rector and held out his hand. “Will you shake hands with me, Mr. Hastings?” There was a perceptible hesitation on the rector’s part, not in the least sought to be disguised, ere he responded to it, and then he put his own hand into the one held out. “I cannot do otherwise over the dead body of your brother,” was the answer. “But neither can I be a hypocrite, George Godolphin, and say that I forgive you, for it would not be true. The result of the injury you did me presses daily and hourly upon us in a hundred ways, and my mind as yet has refused to be brought into that charitable frame, necessary to entire forgiveness. This is not altogether the fault of my will. I wish to forgive you for your wife’s sake and for my own; I pray night and morning that I may be enabled heartily to forgive you before I die. I would not be your enemy; I wish you well and there’s my hand in token of it: but to pronounce forgiveness is not yet in my power. Will you call in and see Mrs. Hastings?” “I have not time to day. I must go back to London this evening, but I shall be down again very shortly, and will see her then. It was a peaceful ending.” George was gazing down dreamily at the coffin as he spoke the last words. The rector looked at him.~~

(Vol. III, Chapter XVII, 199)

“It was a peaceful ending.” George was gazing down dreamily as he spoke the last words; the pastor looked at him. “A peaceful ending! yes; it could not be **otherwise** with him.” “No, no,” murmured George; “Not **otherwise** with him.” “May God in his mercy send us all as happy a one when our time shall come.” As the words left the **pastor’s** lips the loud and heavy bell boomed out again, giving notice to **the town** that the last rites were over,

“A peaceful ending! Yes. It could not be anything else with him.” “No, no!”, murmured George. “Not anything else with him.” “May God in his mercy send us all as happy a one, when our time shall come!” As the words left the rector’s lips, the loud and heavy bell boomed out again, giving notice to Prior’s Ash that the last rites were over, that the world had closed for ever on Thomas Godolphin.

that life had closed forever on Charles Taylor . ■	
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True Love is an accumulation of verbatim, paraphrased and carefully chosen extracts from selected chapters of *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*. The comparative analysis of both texts offers evidence of the act of plagiarism that Farro effected and her appropriations. *True Love* is a celebratory text of Wood's novel with its nearly word by word requisition of the English writer's text. If for Geoffrey Sanborn, Hopkins' plagiarism in *Of One Blood* is "a means by which she can hold her text internally open to other voices and temporalities" (2020: e7), Farro's "canny subversion or artful transmutation" of Wood's fiction reveals neither an attempt to situate readers in front of a critique of her source material nor a wish to point forward "to the pleasurable possibility of a profoundly mixed-voice world" (2020: e7). Farro's plagiarism wanted to go without notice, as her Prologue defiantly suggests and her semantic and syntactical changes clearly verify. The result is a novel written by "the first negro novelist" that lacks all traces of parodic intertextuality—allusions, quotes, recreations or parodies—deployed to be recognized and appreciated.

Sarah E. Farro disappeared from history because, rather being a brilliant plagiarist's performance, her unacknowledged reworking seems to have finally failed. Originality is not an indispensable condition in writing. We can speculate if someone launched a viotriolic attack on her literary dishonesty which led to her disappearance from literary life, or if there was any controversy centered on the accusations of plagiarism concerning her novel. No polemic, however, can be found in the press of those years. Farro distances herself from mere "imitation" and reuses verbatim extracts and even whole chapters from Wood's bestseller. Her method, however, would have probably been overlooked if she had produced something unquestionably original out of these English materials. *True Love* falls short of Wood's sensation fiction *The Shadow of Ashlydyat*, and, in contrast to other texts penned by other nineteenth-century African American women writers, does not

present any trace of racial reconfiguration of its source or allegory of African Americanness.

Nonetheless, *True Love* must be recovered for reasons that go beyond the victimized position of racial forgetting and of what Eric Gardner calls "tokenism" (185), or the exclusion of unconventional or anomalous texts within African American writing. To recover the wide and full history of African American cultural production "with all its nuances and complexity", as Elizabeth McHenry claims, "we must be open to replacing our notion of a singular black literary tradition by attending to the many, diverse elements that form the groundwork of any tradition" (6-7). Under Farro's indefensible plagiarism lies an important fin-de-siècle trend in African American women's cultural world: the certainty that a new black woman's era had settled in the United States and that literary spaces previously barred were welcoming and applauding their efforts. Their excursions, though, did not necessarily involve political commitment to the racial cause or subversive critique of social issues, but an advocacy of popular conservative fictional genres. Farro's text help us to better understand the extraordinary significance of African American women writers at the turn of the century and how they struggled to see themselves in print and achieve popularity in the literary world. *True Love* belongs, then, to what Brittney Cooper calls "the unexpected archives of Black women's thought" (12), and as such, this novel redefines African American women's narrative and bears witness to their ambitions and intertextual tendencies in nineteenth-century writing.

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