"I am merely a bird of passage" declares a character in *The Woman of Colour*, an anonymous novel, abounding in characters who migrate toward London from different trade routes of the British Empire. Written in the aftermath of the British Slave Trade Act of 1807, this novel features a rare representation of racial hybridity. The title's woman of colour, a mulatto heiress, offspring of a West-Indian planter and an African slave, travels from Jamaica to England to fulfil a condition in her father's will that entails her inheritance to her marriage to a Caucasian cousin. Such protagonism is particularly rare in a genre which relegated coloured people mostly to the margins of a white protagonist's narrative.

The essay argues that such protagonism is premised on migration. This premise is caught in an internal tension that presupposes openness toward migration of ideas and resistance to the migration of legal discourses. Two conflicting contemporaneous movements come to play here: first, the sovereignty and the impermeable borders of British legal discourse which made possible the abolitionist ethos that claimed every individual's right to own their body on British soil; second, an openness toward the remote and unknown that relativized identity, or what Norbert Elias in *The History of Manners* (1976) has called *habitus*, as a mutable product of custom and socialization. The ruling of Judge Lord Mansfield (1705-1793) in the case of the fugitive slave James Somerset is an example of the impermeability of legal discourse. Delineating the closed borders of the law and bounding the migrating body to it, Lord Mansfield asserted in his verdict that a foreigner could not be deprived of his freedom on the authority of laws existing in his own country. Upon the same logic of an impermeable law, in *A Woman of Colour*, the deceased father's injunction impels the protagonist to migrate from Jamaica toward England. At the same time, indebtedness to cosmopolitan perspectives like Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Citizen of the World* (1761) and Elizabeth Hamilton’s *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796) demonstrate *The Woman of Colour*’s appraisal of an intertwined migration of ideas and bodies. The essay will tease these conflicting attitudes toward migration, drawing on the speeches of Lord Mansfield in his 1772 ruling in favour of Somerset and on Martha Nussbaum’s notion of "cosmopolitan education". *The Woman of Colour* offers an excellent example of cosmopolitan education administered by the coloured body, insisting on the materiality of this body and replacing the voyeuristic ethics of the gaze with the empiricist ethics of the touch. Touching means permeable borders towards the migrating coloured body and proves to be the very touch of humanity that Nussbaum regards as the foundation of cosmopolitan education.