

# “当交易突然侵犯”：艾米莉·狄金森、威廉·华兹华斯和中国

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**摘要：**本文主要探讨狄金森与华兹华斯间的诗学关联，聚焦于狄金森对华兹华斯的跨洋接受中，亚洲，特别是中国所扮演的角色。狄金森知道华兹华斯的弟弟约翰死于与东方的暴利鸦片交易，且这两位作家都各自书写了亚洲和非洲被压抑的他者形象，这些都表现出他们对大西洋、太平洋的地缘诗学与地缘政治的想象。本文的第一部分探讨了狄金森对华兹华斯“挽歌诗节”的含蓄回应，她书信中对华兹华斯弟弟远航东方的提及，以及她的诗作“春天存在着一种光”（Fr962B）。狄金森诗中的华兹华斯式的暗喻展现了她对华兹华斯“挽歌诗节”，特别是他对弟弟约翰在海难中身亡而悲痛的复杂情感与深刻洞察。文章的第二部分就狄金森在“文明—摒弃—豹！”一诗中对亚洲他者形象的描绘，和华兹华斯“9月1日，1802年”中的“黑女人”形象，探讨全球文化生产过程中狄金森的诗学实践。聚焦于这两首诗中对他者形象的置换，笔者呈现出狄金森对19世纪中期的跨洋文学交流过程中亚洲这一角色的敏锐观察。

**关键词：**狄金森；华兹华斯；亚洲；中国；他者

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## “As Trade Had Suddenly Encroached”: Emily Dickinson, William Wordsworth and China

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**Abstract:** This paper examines Dickinson's poetic engagement with Wordsworth with a particular focus on the role Asia, particularly China, plays in Dickinson's transatlantic reception of Wordsworth. Dickinson's awareness of the death of Wordsworth's brother John in a lucrative opium trade with the East, and these two writers' respective representations of the oppressed Asiatic and African other, offer a glimpse of their geo-poetic and geo-political imagination across the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The first part of

the paper explores Dickinson's implicit response to Wordsworth's "Elegiac Stanzas" and his brother's sea venture to the East in her letters and poem "A Light exists in Spring" (Fr962B). Dickinson's Wordsworthian allusions in the poem reveal her profound observation of and engagement with the emotional complexity of Wordsworth's "Elegiac Stanzas," especially his grief over the loss of his brother John in a shipwreck. The second part looks at Dickinson's portrayal of the Asiatic other in "Civilization – spurns – the Leopard!" in relation to Wordsworth's "Negro Woman" in "September 1st, 1802," to further explore Dickinson's poetic involvement in a transglobal world of cultural production. Focusing on the displacement of the other in the two poems, I outline Dickinson's acute sensitivity towards the role played by Asia in the transatlantic circle of literary exchange in the mid-nineteenth century.

**Keywords:** Emily Dickinson; William Wordsworth; Asia; China; the other

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## The light that never was, on sea or land

In an 1866 letter to Mrs J. G. Holland, Emily Dickinson quotes one line from William Wordsworth's "Elegiac Stanzas" (written in 1806, published in the 1807 *Poems*), a poem inspired by a painting of his close friend Sir George Beaumont, "Peele Castle in a storm." Written one year after the death of Wordsworth's brother John in a sea venture to China (on 5th February 1805), Wordsworth's poem shows a strong longing for a visionary light that is capable of constructing an ideal space of peace, dreams and hope:

Ah! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,  
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,  
The light that never was, on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the Poet's dream;

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile  
Amid a world how different from this!  
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;  
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house of ease,

Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;  
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,  
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life. (Lines 13–24)

Wordsworth responds to Beaumont's "Painter's hand" with his poetic eye by fusing the painterly view of his patron into his own poetic vision. He "plants" and grafts — removes and relocates Peele Castle from Beaumont's terrifying version of the sublime in the painting, to Wordsworth's own mental sanctuary. With "The light that never was, on sea or land," Wordsworth attempts to preserve the memory of a sight that he visited eleven years ago.<sup>[1]</sup>

By creating this "fond illusion of my heart," Wordsworth seems momentarily secured from his own agonizing remembrance of tragedies in the past.<sup>[2]</sup> Towards the end of the poem, however, Wordsworth appears to reject such a blithe illusion and seeks "fortitude," "patient cheer" and conciliation in "A deep distress" that "hath humanised my Soul":

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,  
Such Picture would I at that time have made:  
And seen the soul of truth in every part,  
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.  
  
So once it would have been, — 'tis so no more;  
I have submitted to a new control:  
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;  
A deep distress hath humanised my Soul. (Lines 29–36)

Dickinson appears to be conducting a similar poetic surgery in her letter by transplanting Wordsworth's "consecration" of his "Poetic dream" into her own observation of seasonal changes in an 1866 letter, a letter full of her Wordsworthian references. The poet claimed to outwit Wordsworth with her ability to capture "The light that never was, on sea or land": "February passed like a Skate and I know March. Here is the 'light' that the Stranger said 'was not on land or sea'. Myself could arrest it but we'll not chagrin Him." (L315)

[1] Wordsworth visited the vicinity of Peele/Piel Castle, near Rampside, during the summer of 1794. (Gill 250; Baker 248; Johnson 305–6).

[2] Kenneth R. Johnson notes that the painting might also evoke the memory of the execution of Robespierre in 1794, eleven years ago during his summer stay near Peel Castle (305–6).

Dickinson showed a particular interest in Wordsworth's "Elegiac Stanzas," especially this Wordsworthian light. In the same letter, Dickinson again evokes the Wordsworthian vision by stating that "I tell you what I see. The Landscape of the Spirit requires a lung, but no Tongue" (L315), a statement similarly echoing Wordsworth's emphasis on "silent Nature's breathing life" in stanza 7 of his "Elegiac Stanzas." A few years later, Dickinson would again allude to this Wordsworthian light in another letter (1873) to her nieces, the Norcross sisters in Boston: "I wish you were with me, not precisely here, but in those sweet mansions the mind likes to suppose ... 'The light that never was on sea or land' might just as soon be had for the knocking" (L394). While Wordsworth seeks the "treasure-house" sheltered by the Wordsworthian light away from the "toil or strife" of the stormy sea, Dickinson also attempts to create the "sweet mansions" of the mind through a visionary "light" that seems so effortlessly obtained.

Dickinson might have her own poem “A Light exists in Spring” (Fr962B/1865) in mind, when she declared she would “arrest” the mysterious light. In particular, Asia, particularly China, might have played an intriguing role in this transatlantic echo of Dickinson with Wordsworth. Two poems by Dickinson, written in the 1860s and 1870s respectively, appear to respond to Wordsworth’s grief regarding John’s shipwreck. The first poem “A Light exists in Spring” (Fr962B) was written one year before her 1866 letter and was placed in the same set as “Absent Place – an April Day –,” another Wordsworthian poem of hers about his daffodil poem:

A Light exists in Spring  
Not present on the Year  
At any other period –  
When March is scarcely here

A Color stands abroad  
On Solitary Fields  
That Science cannot overtake  
But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn,  
It shows the furthestest Tree  
Upon the furthestest Slope you know  
It almost speaks to you.

Then as Horizons step  
Or Noons report away  
Without the Formula of sound  
It passes and we stay –

A quality of loss  
Affecting our Content  
As Trade had suddenly encroached  
Upon a Sacrament –

Not only does the light exist as a harbinger of the spring, “When March is scarcely here,” a timing that corresponds to the changing season in her letter, but by setting her poem in the exchange between the winter and the spring, February and March, the poem is also a reminder of Wordsworth’s own mourning and suffering in “Elegiac Stanzas” over his brother’s death, also in February. The “Color” of the light that “stands abroad” can be associated with the light of the setting sun in the oil painting of Beaumont’s Peele Castle across the Atlantic Ocean (Matlak 139). Her “Human Nature” that “feels” seems to sympathize with the “humanized” soul of Wordsworth in “deep distress.” The encroachment of “Trade” might even refer to the loss of John Wordsworth’s potentially lucrative Bengal rice and opium trade for the East Indian Company at Canton, China, when his cargo ship *Abergavenny* sank on February 5, 1805.

A closer reading of this poem shows what Richard Brantley’s calls Dickinson’s “Wordsworthian cast,” or Wordsworth’s influences on her, especially her profound observation of the emotional complexity in Wordsworth’s “Elegiac Stanzas.”<sup>[3]</sup> This light “almost speaks to you” but not quite. It “passes” and reminds the ones who “stay” of “A quality of loss” that both poets feel acutely and yet can’t convey with speech. The expressions of loss and remembrance in the poem, about how “Human Nature feels” which “Science cannot overtake” can be seen as an echo of Wordsworth prioritizing poetry over science in “Preface to Lyrical Ballads” (1802). Dickinson’s imagery of the natural landscape, such as “Solitary Fields” and “furthest Tree” also evokes Wordsworth’s single tree and “A single Field” in

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[3] Dickinson’s role as a poetic heir of Wordsworth, particularly her relation to Romanticism, has been extensively explored by critics such as Harold Bloom, Joanne Feit Diehl, Inder Nath Kher, Cristanne Miller, Patrick J. Keane, Richard Brantley (Pace and Scott, eds) and Richard Gravil.

stanza 4 of “Ode. Intimations of Immortality” (written in 1802–4, also published in the 1807 *Poems*) that stir in Wordsworth’s mind the desire for this fleeting “visionary gleam” and “the glory and the dream.”<sup>[4]</sup> Furthermore, this spring “Light” of Dickinson exists “Without the Formula of Sound,” a depiction of tranquillity and solemnity that resembles Wordsworth’s “Elysian quiet, without toil or strife” and “silent Nature’s breathing life” in stanza 7 of his “Elegiac Stanza.”<sup>[5]</sup> The word “Sacrament” also responds to Wordsworth’s “consecration” of the gleam, “The light that never was, on sea or land” in his “Poet’s dream.”

In “Elegiac Stanzas,” Wordsworth conjures up and then reflects upon his wistful longing for the preservation of John’s life through his blissful poetic vision. Dickinson’s poem continues this exploration by highlighting the fleeting nature of the light that “passes and we stay,” reminding us of Wordsworth’s “fond illusion” that is “no more.” While the “lightning bolt” on Sir George Beaumont’s canvas is fixed and to some extent immortalized and “never passed away” (Line 8 of “Elegiac Stanza”), the visionary lights of Dickinson and Wordsworth are recognized as transient, and both poems disclose the poignancy of this loss. As the “imperial affliction” in Dickinson’s “There’s a certain Slant of light” (Fr320), a poem written earlier, this light also gives “Heavenly Hurt.” It brings “A quality of loss” that is “Affecting our Content” and yet “humanizing” the soul.

As scholars have shown, Wordsworth's grief about his brother's death would have been mixed with his financial loss involved in this shipwreck, since the Wordsworths had hoped for a handsome return from his brother's opium trade to the Far East — this would, as the family had wished, support Wordsworth's writing career as a poet.<sup>[6]</sup> Peculiarly, while this Wordsworthian light fortifies the inner castle of Wordsworth against the calamities in nature and life, it also obviates the cause of this “deep distress” that is buried underneath the seemingly calm sea — the “mighty Deep” (“Elegiac Stanzas” line 11). Richard E. Matlak notes that the word “distress”

[4] On Dickinson and “Intimations,” see, for example, Patrick J. Keane’s *Emily Dickinson’s Approving God: Divine Design and the Problem of Suffering* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2008).

[5] Sharon Cameron sees the absence of “the Formula of Sound” in the poem as an indication of the failure of language to express human emotions (*Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre*, 181–2).

[6] For more details on the financial involvement of the Wordsworths in John's East Indian trip, see for example Alethea Hayter's *The Wreck of the Abergavenny: The Wordsworths and Catastrophe* (2002) and Richard E. Matlak's *Deep Distresses: William Wordsworth, John Wordsworth, Sir George Beaumont, 1800–1808* (2003); see also Peter J. Kitson's "The Wordsworth, Opium and China," 3–4.

in the poem connotes “the emotional, the meteorological, the nautical, the legal/ economic, even the journalistic” aspects of the word. The word “deep,” according to Matlak, refers literally to the submergence of John’s ship *Abergavenny* and his body “under eleven fathoms of salt water,” and thus “represent the depth of Wordsworth’s response to John’s death, now recalled by the suggestive images of Beaumont’s painting” (146). This humanizing power of this “deep distress,” generated by John’s failed attempt eastward, is somehow hidden and made an undercurrent beneath the Wordsworthian light. As Peter J. Kitson, among many other critics, remarks, China and the opium trade are erased from these poems and summed up in the generic pieties of “earthly hopes” (4).

Dickinson’s singular “Light” that “exists in Spring,” alternatively, appears to transform Wordsworth’s poetic landscape from a vertical one into a horizontal one, from the fathomable “deep distress” of Wordsworth to Dickinson’s “quality of loss” that stretches to the end of the horizon. Her spring light “shows the furtherest Tree/Opon the furtherest Slope you know,” with “Horizons” and “Noons” that suggest hemispheric movements, the transitions of which evoke the transglobal route that William’s brother Captain John might have taken for his sea venture. Instead of erasing the traces of India, China and the opium trade in which John’s sea venture and the Wordsworths’ financial and emotional investment were involved, Dickinson’s poem reveals an attempt to trace back that silenced (“Without the Formula of Sound”) and yet lingering story of loss and grief, or modern “Trade” and its discontent. Although Wordsworth might have suppressed “China and the opium trade” in his “Elegiac Stanzas” (4), Dickinson’s receptiveness of the Wordsworthian light and her evocation of commercial intrusion imply that she might have been aware of the role transnational trade such as the Bengal-China line had played in this Wordsworthian conjuring of a visionary poetic space.

The second poem by Dickinson, written around 1870, employs the imagery of a shipwreck more explicitly to explore the Wordsworthian theme of hope and loss. Like “A Light exists in Spring,” the poem shows similar emphasis on a transformative moment beyond words and linguistic representations, or “the Formula of Sound”:

A great Hope fell  
You heard no noise  
The Ruin was within  
Oh cunning Wreck

That told no tale  
And let no Witness in

The mind was built for mighty Freight  
For dread occasion planned  
How often foundering at Sea  
Ostensibly, on Land (Fr1187)

Written a few years later, the poem takes on a more contemplative stance from the oppressing spring light. It shifts the focus from the visual quality of the “Color” that “stands abroad” in the previous poem, to a more detached and internalized representation of the “cunning Wreck” — “The Ruin” within. This “mighty Freight” of the mind echoes the mental capability exercised by Wordsworth to insulate a heavenly vision from the invasive memories of John’s oceanic catastrophe. The lack of “noise” here also continues the absence of sound in the previous two poems by Wordsworth and Dickinson. The replacement of the catastrophe from the sea to the land, from the external landscape to the internal one, further highlights the ambiguous positioning of the Wordsworthian light “that never was, on sea or land.” In particular, this “foundering at Sea” is a “dread occasion” “planned” and rehearsed, imagined and re-enacted “Ostensibly, on Land,” an inward gesture that simultaneously evokes Wordsworth’s later and more landed imagination (Baker 32). However, the internal shipwreck in the last line subverts the seeming security of being on land. These marine metaphors, such as frights and wrecks, ruins within that “let no Witness in,” suggest an alternative type of “landing,” a process of internal insulation that is more affective and unsettling.

Dickinson's familiarity with the loss of Wordsworth's brother is also evident in "Absent Place – an April Day –" (Fr958). In the poem, Dickinson associates daffodils with "an April Day," a reference that, according to Jack Capps, presents an "unmistakable" relation to Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," since Wordsworth's depiction of the daffodils was inspired by a walk he took with his sister Dorothy around the lake at Clencoyne Bay, Ullswater, also in April of 1802.<sup>[7]</sup> Like "Elegiac Stanza," "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is also in the second

[7] A more detailed discussion of the poem in relation to Dickinson's poetic response towards Wordsworth's American reception has been presented in one of my papers in the 2013 *Symbiosis: Transatlantic Literary and Cultural Relations* conference.



volume of Wordsworth's 1807 *Poems, in Two Volumes*, a collection that Dickinson would have been aware of. In particular, Wordsworth deliberately arranged "To the Daisy," a poem written in commemoration of John as the first poem in the first volume. According to Alethea Hayter, "To the Daisy" is a "direct narrative" of John's life, shipwreck and death, a narrative "deliberately naïf, like a ballad" without "philosophical conclusions about the effect of grief on the growth of the mind" (193). Such a biographical approach of Wordsworth and his naturalistic presentation of John's catastrophe would not have escaped the sensitive Dickinson, who was not only a lover of daisies,<sup>[8]</sup> but also, as Joan Kirkby points out, prone to pain, loss and suffering in life ("[W]e thought Darwin had thrown 'the Redeemer' away: 'Darwinizing' with Emily Dickinson" 1).

Elizabeth A. Petrino suggests that Wordsworth's "Elegiac Stanzas" might have reminded Dickinson of "the sea imagery and fortress-like castle, symbols of the individual's triumph over loss, like Shelley's mariner at sea" (*Dickinson in Context* 103). If the Wordsworth light that draws Dickinson's attention symbolizes a momentary "triumph" of the individual "over loss," it also attracts Dickinson to explore the shadowy recesses of the human soul. Dickinson's explicit reference to February in her poem "A Light exists in Spring" (Fr962) and her 1866 letter, as well as her shipwreck imagery in "A great Hope fell" and seeing daffodils on "an April Day" reveal a Dickinson that was acutely conscious of the intricate relationship between Wordsworth's poetry and his biography, including his struggle with his grief over the loss of his brother and against the "encroachment" of the Opium "Trade."

## The African and Asiatic Other

Dickinson's receptiveness of the Wordsworthian light and her evocation of commercial intrusion imply the role transnational trade such as the Bengal-China line played in this Wordsworthian conjuring of a visionary poetic space. As Samuel Baker points out, "[f]or individuals, going to sea represented the ultimate in fortune-seeking, and also the ultimate in risk-taking. For Britain as a modern state, the sea presented the peril of invasion as well as the possibility of maritime

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[8] More on Dickinson's identification with daisies, see, for example, Judith Farr's *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson*, 39–40, 110–112; Marta McDowell's *Emily Dickinson's Gardens*, 71.

dominion” (*Written on the Water* 25). In “Elegiac Stanzas,” Wordsworth explores the therapeutic power of elegiac composition to comfort and “humanize” his soul, attempting to bring hope from the venturous and potentially threatening ocean back to his more inland-based imagination, secure beyond the risk of financial and imperial expansionism. The Wordsworthian light creates a poetic sanctuary that is located “never on land, or sea,” a border space both between the castle and the stormy sea, and between England and the threatening ocean, and by extension, the opium trade with the East that indirectly and yet irretrievably took John’s life.<sup>[9]</sup> David Higgins observes that “[d]uring the Romantic period, the English countryside was increasingly seen as the heart of the nation, and as a place in which the self could take refuge” (49). Wordsworth’s poetic fortification of Peele Castle against the stormy sea in “Elegiac Stanzas” reveals a similar attempt to “take refuge” in England against the unpredictable outcome of international and commercial exchange across the globe.

Dickinson, also a globally minded and yet “landed” poet, exercises a similar poetic vacillation between oceans and lands (potentially by exerting a transoceanic dialogue with Wordsworth). The geo-poetic re/dis/positioning in Wordsworth’s poem appears to have solicited Dickinson’s interest. The Wordsworthian light evokes a transient utopian existence in a transglobal context of which Dickinson was sharply aware. In particular, the transpacific route plays another intriguing role in Dickinson’s transatlantic echoes with Wordsworth. The juxtaposition of Wordsworth’s “September 1, 1802” and Dickinson’s “Civilization - spurns - the Leopard!” shows how Wordsworth’s literary representation of the racial other might find resonance in Dickinson’s Asiatic imagination, albeit with a twist.

Wordsworth's "September 1, 1802" was written around the time when Wordsworth paid a visit to Calais to settle the affair with Annette Vallon and their daughter Caroline (Gill 204–05; Page 55). His political sonnets of 1802, such as "To Toussaint L'Ouverture," "Calais, August, 1802" and "September 1, 1802," were published in the *Morning Post* the next year and consequently in his 1807 *Poems, In Two Volumes*, a collection of poems that, as mentioned earlier, also contained his "Elegiac Stanzas." Scholars such as Samuel Baker have noted that the "Calais

[9] According to Kitson, during his revision of *Prelude* Wordsworth's association of the imperial garden of Jehol with perversity and his portraying China in "rather odd ways," seem to suggest the coalescence of John's death and the family's involvement in the opium trade in Wordsworth's mind (6–8).

poems” of Wordsworth “invidiously compares a France bowed under Napoleon’s tyranny and an England blessed with liberty” (167). His “September 1, 1802” highlights such a contrast by portraying his witness of the distress of a “white-robed Negro” on his way back to England. By referring to a French statute of 1802 that forbade people of color from entering France as well as the reinstituted slavery in San Domingo by Napoleon (Page 69), Wordsworth expressed his disillusionment towards the French Revolution in the early 1800s:

September 1, 1802 (the 1845 and final version)

Among the capricious acts of tyranny that disgraced those times, was the chasing of all Negros from France by decree of the government: we had a Fellow-passenger who was one of the expelled.<sup>[10]</sup>

We had a female Passenger who came  
From Calais with us, spotless in array, –  
A white-robed Negro, like a lady gay,  
yet downcast as a woman fearing blame;  
Meek, destitute, as seemed, of hope or aim  
She sate, from notice turning not away,  
But on all proffered intercourse did lay  
A weight of languid speech, or to the same  
No sign of answer made by word or face:  
Yet still her eyes retained their tropic fire,  
That burning independent of the mind,  
Joined with the lustre of her rich attire  
To mock the Outcast – O ye Heavens, be kind!  
And feel, thou Earth, for this afflicted Race! (PW 3: 113–14)

This “gaudy” representation of this “white-robed Negro” with “the lustre of her rich attire” is in sharp contrast with her “meek,” “dejected,” “destitute” and “tame” demeanor. Similarly, the “tropic fire” in her eyes is “burning independent of the mind” implying her more primal or untameable side that comes into conflict with the stoic appearance characterized by her weighty silence and motionlessness.

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[10] According to Judith W. Page, Wordsworth revised the poem at least six times, in 1820, 1827, 1836, 1840, 1843, and 1845 respectively (71). The focus of my comparison is on the last version of the poem here as it shows the most affinity with Dickinson’s poem about the Asiatic leopard.

Interestingly, this “white-robed Negro” in display is also a subject that protests with “A weight of languid speech” and motionlessness, a portrayal of the silenced other that Marcus Wood sees as “defin[ing] new limits for the creative disempowerment of the colonial subject” (*Slavery, Sympathy, and Pornography* 236).<sup>[11]</sup> However, this oppressed and silenced victim, as Judith Page notes, also “returns the gaze of the other travellers” and “refuses to be either the receptacle for the speaker’s mystery and darkness or merely the object of his gaze” (72). The solemnity of her silent sitting “from notice turning not away” embodies both forms of enshrinement and entombment, courting as well as confronting the reader/viewer with Wordsworth’s condemnation of “the capricious acts of tyranny” conducted by the French government, ventriloquized through the passive-aggressive rejection of the banished woman.

Apart from “September 1, 1802,” Wordsworth’s political sonnets such as the well-known “To Toussaint L’Ouverture” was written as a response to the arrest of Toussaint in 1802, the symbolic leader who spoke for the slave Revolution of Saint Domingue in 1794 and resisted Napoleon’s re-establishment of slavery (73). Peculiarly, after the slave rebellion, according to Mary Jacobus, Britain “had sided with the colonial French against both free blacks and slaves” to “further Britain’s own colonial interests in the West Indies” until 1797 (74).<sup>[12]</sup> Understandably, while Wordsworth’s support for the abolitionist movement had been consistent, his emotional attachment and patriotic allegiance for England remained ambiguous until the early 1800s. As Michael Wiley notes, one article that appeared right before Wordsworth’s poem in the *Morning Post* (February 2, 1803) also supported Wordsworth’s condemnation by warning against this British involvement in and assistance of the French to regain their colonial control (137–38); Wordsworth’s political sonnets of 1802 reflect such an increasing British sentiment against the French by taking the moral high ground. According to Stephen C. Behrendt, these sonnets of Wordsworth indicate a more explicit geographical and emotional return to England by presenting a series of comparisons between French “spiritual desolation” and an “idealized” England through “conservative mythmaking narrative” (641). The “mythmaking narrative” of Wordsworth in these political sonnets is tied in with

[11] According to Wood, Wordsworth creates in the poem “a broken animal, a once garish Caribbean bird” that “his audience felt at home with” (236).

[12] According to Jacobus, in the 1790s, Britain was responsible for about half a million slaves shipped from Africa to the West Indies and America per year (71).

the “idealization” of his own homeland. By pleading pity and sympathy for “this afflicted Race” on the ferry back to England, Wordsworth seems to also create an imagined community in motion while regaining his emotional attachment to his native island.

Similarly, the adoption of abolitionist rhetoric surfaces in Dickinson’s portrayal of an enslaved Asiatic leopard, written during the American Civil War. Wordsworth’s seemingly sympathetic, and somehow patriotic, portrayal of the banishment of the “white-robed Negro” finds parallels in Dickinson’s Asiatic in terms of theme, tone and structure (Fr276):

Civilization – spurns – the Leopard!  
 Was the Leopard – bold?  
 Deserts – never rebuked her Satin –  
 Ethiop – her Gold –  
 Tawny – her Customs –  
  
 She was Conscious –  
 Spotted – her Dun Gown –  
 This was the Leopard’s nature – Signor –  
 Need – a keeper – frown?  
  
 Pity – the Pard – that left her Asia!  
 Memories – of Palm –  
 Cannot be stifled – with Narcotic –  
 Nor suppressed – with Balm –

Both poems of Dickinson and Wordsworth concern the themes of displacement and oppression of the exotic other. Like the “gaudy” display of the black woman’s attire, the Asiatic leopard is identified with the fabrics of “Satin” and “Ethiop — her Gold,” eastern symbols of wealth and luxury. Like the black woman being “downcast” and “fearing blame,” the leopard is also conscious of her status as an outsider that “left her Asia.” Wordsworth’s black woman combines wildness and domestication, being meek and yet fiery-eyed; Dickinson’s Asiatic leopard is similarly bold and tame, dignified and subdued at the same time. Both poems also conclude on a humanistic note that emphasizes the moral integrity of the speaker against the infliction of suffering upon the racial and sexual other. In a way, Dickinson’s Asiatic leopard reads like an allegorical version of Wordsworth’s

banished black lady. By personifying the Asiatic leopard into a victim of social oppression, Dickinson's poem transforms Wordsworth's political protest into an animal pedagogy.<sup>[13]</sup>

Undeniably, the depictions in the poems of both Wordsworth and Dickinson turn the African and Asiatic other into an oriental spectacle and an exotic object being displayed. Wordsworth shifts his focus to “lustre” of the “rich attire” of the “banished” black woman in his last version (1845), a revision that, as Page notes, appears to grow “more general and formulaic” with his evocation of both the sonnet tradition of “lady gay” and the “European stereotype of the noble savage” (72). This “formulaic” portrayal of the racial other can also be seen in Dickinson’s leopard poem. Dickinson’s Asiatic landscape seems familiarly exotic and domestic, with the tamed leopard’s consumption of “Narcotic” and “Balm.” Her Asiatic leopard appears to be staged and remains stationary. With the minimalistic decoration of “deserts,” “Ethiop,” “Palm” and “Balm,” her setting looks more like a theatrical space despite the daring composite in her transcontinental Oriental landscaping. Peculiarly, the white robe of Wordsworth’s black lady, “spotless in array,” “the lustre of her rich attire,” and the “tropic fire” in her eyes shine “mocking” lights of indignity and indignation against the unjust treatment of the black in France. Dickinson’s Asiatic leopard, alternatively, is aware of her “Spotted” “Dun Gown” and her “Customs” are “Tawny” in color.

The contrast between the inner embarrassment of the pard and her exposure to the invasion of the public gaze is further highlighted with the speaker's partial identification with the leopard's psychological state of mind, an identification that seems less visible in Wordsworth's depiction. Scholars such as Jonathan Bate argues that Wordsworth's use of the phrase "fellow-Passenger" to refer to the black woman in some versions of his poem shows his "discourse of fraternite" by making the black woman his "doubles," who, like Wordsworth, was also driven from France, just like Wordsworth parting from his "dead revolutionary self," "from his formative years there and from his daughter" (215). Nevertheless, this sense of fraternity (or sorority) is less retained when Wordsworth changed "a fellow-Passenger" into "female-Passenger" in his 1845 and final version with

[13] As Colleen Glenney Boggs notes, Dickinson's "animal pedagogies," noted by her critics as early as the 1890s, is a literary method "that had been prevalently used since the late eighteenth-century" (534–535).

a more clear gender marker.<sup>[14]</sup> His “We” more explicitly detaches himself and Dorothy from the mysterious black woman and “this afflicted Race,” a stance that remains more ambivalent in Dickinson’s leopard poem.<sup>[15]</sup> The reflectiveness of the leopard (“She was Conscious —”) indicates the shifting gaze from the male master’s disapprovingly “frowning” look to the uneasiness of the female leopard, a subtle move of self-reflection that contrasts with the “motionless” and impenetrable appearance of the black lady.

Furthermore, by locating the leopard somewhere between the near, middle and far East, and addressing the “keeper” of the leopard “Signor,” Dickinson’s poem reveals her recognition of the transatlantic aspects of slave trade, echoing Wordsworth’s allusion to Napoleon’s reinstitution of slavery in Haiti.<sup>[16]</sup> The partial affinity of Dickinson’s speaker with the Asiatic other and her distance from the European keeper appears to endow her with a more intermediating role than Wordsworth. Wordsworth’s “September 1, 1802” is set in a border space between France and England while implicitly evoking the French colony in Haiti. Dickinson’s Asia is more ambiguously located among Africa, Asia, Europe and America, somewhere that combines wild safaris and tropical palm trees, the consumption of luxurious silk and pleasurable opium. As I have argued elsewhere, Dickinson’s Asiatic poem not only implies the transatlantic slave trade with its evocation of abolitionist dictions, but also extends to the transpacific route and the opium trade, accentuating the exploitation of European planters in Central America and the representation of the United States as the promised land of freedom and possibility.<sup>[17]</sup> Placing Dickinson’s poem in the context of Wordsworth’s Anglo-Franco tension, we can see how her naming of the leopard’s keeper “Signor” implicitly evokes the Protestant stereotype of Catholic despotism, a gesture that aligns with Wordsworth’s condemnation of the Napoleonic tyranny. Dickinson’s

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[14] Wiley also sees the African “fellow-Passenger” as being merged into the “fellow-Traveller,” Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy, in the following poem in the initial arrangement of his 1807 *Poems, in Two Volumes* (139).

[15] Scholars such as Rebecca Patterson, Helen McNeil, Paula Bennet and Pádraic Finnerty have considered the leopard poem as a representation of Dickinson’s perception of herself.

[16] Dickinson refers to the St Domingo movement in a poem “As the Starved Maelstrom laps the Navies” (Fr1063). For more details, see, for example, Daneen Wardrop’s “‘That Minute Domingo’: Dickinson’s Cooptation of Abolitionist Diction and Franklin’s Variorum Edition.” See also the website “Dickinson, Slavery, and the San Domingo Moment” by Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price.

[17] For a more detailed analysis of this poem, see Hsu’s “Emily Dickinson’s Asian Consumption”, 4–9.

arbitrating position thus complicates Wordsworth's France-England-Haiti triangle by implicating an alternative perspective that underscores a broader Protestant-Catholic and Asiatic-American-European entanglement, encompassing geographical locations ranging from Africa and Europe to the Middle East, Asia and America.

## A Utopian Encounter with Asia

Considering the “elasticity”/“plasticity” of oriental representations in the eighteenth and nineteenth century West, as noted by scholars such as Yang Chi-ming and Andrew Warren, the portrayal of the East in these two poems of Wordsworth and Dickinson could be seen as practicing their own versions of Orientalism which vacillates between Saree Makdisi’s so-called “Romantic Imperialism,” a Romantic “fascination or even obsession with the pre-or anti-modern” (10), and what Srinivas Aravamudan calls “Enlightenment Orientalism,” a term used to describe the eighteenth century oriental tendency to “dream with” and “desire” the Orient. Both poems associate the racial other with a more isolated, static tropical world to create a premodern romance or political allegory through the silenced and yet resilient female characters, to voice or advocate for a more sympathetic stance or humanistic perspective. Furthermore, these two poems rely on the “visual” possibilities that the culture of the orients can offer to fabricate their African or Asiatic visions. The “visual performances” of their female characters show how the writers “dream with” or “desire the Orient” by temporarily and partially identifying with these characters in their poems. By conjuring up an “otherworldly” encounter with the African or Asiatic cultural otherness, or in Aravamudan’s words, “by reimagining it, unsettling its meaning, brooding over” the oriental other (8), these two poems provide not only critical receptions of the western notions of liberty, civilization, and modernity, but also more global and cosmopolitan outlooks that are, oxymoronically, rooted in a local and presumably patriotic perspective.

Some of Wordsworth's Calais sonnets, as Wiley argues, intend to possess a utopian space "ideologically between France and England," a border space between England and France, an in-between space that "relates to both, depends on both and comments upon and critiques both" (128-9). This poetic endeavor to create a reflexive and mediating space through mutual reflection or mirroring, to borrow Paul Giles's concept of Anglo-American mirror images (1-2), can also be seen in Wordsworth's choices of location in "Elegiac Stanzas" and "September 1, 1802."



In the first poem, Wordsworth seeks that visionary light “that never was, on sea or land,/The consecration, and the Poet’s dream” between the land and the sea, between his native island and the East that presents both hope and despair, financial opportunities a devastating family tragedy. In the second poem, Wordsworth is literally situated in such a floating space between his French past, his English future, and his comradeship with this ostracized African other on the ferry, while attempting to position himself in this transitional phase in his life, both geographically and psychologically.

In a manner similar to Wordsworth, Dickinson constantly conducts a geo-poetic and geo-political vacillation in “A Light exists in Spring” and “Civilization — spurns — the Leopard!” In the first poem, the wandering light “waits,” “shows,” “almost speaks” and then “passes” between Dickinson’s Amherst and the “furthest” “Horizons,” between local lawns and trees, and the world of commerce and “Trade.” In the second poem, her speaker further hovers over the inner thoughts of the Asiatic other and her European master, while considering her own mental or cultural allegiance. While Wordsworth seems to gradually retreat to the Lake District and side with the English conservative sentiment against either the threatening East or the despotic France, Dickinson’s poem appears to flirt with the possibilities of identifying either with Wordsworth (in terms of his grief over the loss of his brother), with the Asiatic other (the Asiatic leopard), or with her own American contemporaries. As Dickinson’s speaker in “The Robin’s my Criterion for Tune —” (Fr256), a poem David Porter would call Dickinson’s “*New England Lyrical Ballad*” (224), declares ambiguously in the last stanza of the poem:

Because I see — New Englandly —  
The Queen, discerns like me —  
Provincially —

The poems of Wordsworth and Dickinson show meandering footpaths of their thoughts across a world of transglobal slave and opium trading, and both poets, consciously or not, encounter Asia, especially China, on their quests for a poetic sanctuary through their exercising of Gaston Bachelard’s “poetics of space,” by creating an Oriental space for dreams and desires. The “rich attire” of the banished Negro woman, as well as the “beauty” of the “consecrated” light are “arrested,” revised and materialized in Dickinson’s transatlantic echoes of Wordsworth. They inform Dickinson’s awareness of transatlantic cultural production with the

Wordsworthian light “that never was, on sea or land.” Her Asiatic leopard shows her attempt to seek an alternative route for her geo-poetic imagination that transcends the Anglo-American literary horizon and expands into a transglobal vision, a vision that had substantially shaped, and been mitigated, by the mid-nineteenth-century transatlantic literary and cultural exchanges.

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