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Travel, Subjectivity, and Empire: British Cases from the Romantic Period,
A 3-year Research Project Funded by the NSC: The Final Report

by Eric K.W. Yu

This is a three-year project on travel, subjectivity, and empire in British writings, inspired by the postcolonial approach to travel literature pioneered by Mary Louise Pratt and Sara Mills. Although excellent work has been done with respect to eighteenth-century and Victorian travel writing, similar studies of the Romantic Period markedly lag behind. In order to fill this gap, my study commenced with the famous Romantic writers as proposed, but during my investigation, I found myself much obliged to extend my period of study to the Victorian Period as well for more comprehensive treatments.

In the first year, I spent much time reading the canonical poems of William Wordsworth in regard to walking, labor, and patriotism, and I further looked into the journals of Dorothy Wordsworth on their European tours. I found that, so far as pretty much the same places of travel are concerned, the Wordsworths' writings differ significantly, and the different presentations are not only determined by gender expectations but also depend on the sub-genres concerned ("private" female journals versus "public" poems addressing the public for instance). My own undertaking was primarily a synthesis of earlier studies by Robin Jarvis, Ann D. Wallace, and David Simpson. No real "breakthrough" was eventually attained. But at the same time, I worked on a somewhat different line of inquiry: a comparison of the German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt's *Personal Narrative of a Journey to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent* (1814-1829) and Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897). In other words, I had moved beyond British Romanticism and dealt with a foreign writer and also a Victorian British writer. My focus, though still

within the scope of travel, (gendered) subjectivity and empire, then shifted to the exploration of the significance of weather in two travel classics in relation to the ambivalence of imperial encounters and authority. This “side-line” of my research project turned out to be much more fruitful, affording a greater sense of originality. I continued with my studies of Humboldt and Kingsley in the second year, and the research results appeared in the form of a conference paper at the 9th Quadrennial International Conference on Comparative Literature in June 2004 which took place at National Taiwan University. The revised paper was published in *Tamkang Review* in Summer 2005. My 4-week research trip to the British Library during the Summer of 2003 had proven to be very helpful, for the readings involved helped me with the second line of inquiry in particular and the invaluable materials collected were used for the second stage of my project.

For the second year, I proceeded to travel writings about London by male Romantic writers exactly as proposed. The selected writers include William Wordsworth, Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, and Thomas De Quincey. Some of their books were almost impossible to find in Taiwan and I had to read and copy them at the British Library. The fruit of my investigation was published in *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* in 2005, titled “Urban Imagery, Space and Modernity: London Travels in a few Romantic and Early Victorian Writers.” Close readings of the texts concerned indicated that the direct relation to empire was hard to ascertain; consequently, I concerned myself with (spatial) troping in relation to modernity in these relatively early urban writings. I attended particularly to how the urban (middle-class) subject/observer made sense of the cityscape, to the “crowd,” and the representation of urban experiences with reference to multiplicity, hybridity, and fragmentation. I did not include the De Quincey part in my *Chung-Wai* paper, but I did present some of my preliminary findings in a talk given at National Chengchi University on March 30,

2006.

For the third year, my original plan was to study British women writers' descriptions of their trips to a radically different culture and in relation to Elizabeth Bohls's pioneering study of feminine aesthetics. Since I had already touched on the topic of aesthetics and worked on an important Victorian "lady-traveler" (Kingsley), I decided to alter my original plan a little bit; instead of confining myself to the familiar Romantic Period, I moved on to the Victorian Age. In England I happened to have discovered an immensely interesting travel book by Mrs. Archibald Little called *In the Land of the Blue Gown*, which deals with a British lady's long sojourns in China during the turbulent years of the late nineteenth century. I found that Susan Schoenbauer Thurin's postcolonialism-inspired book *Victorian Travelers and the Opening of China, 1842-1907* had dealt with Little's writings. Fortunately, my chosen book was still little explored. So I concentrated on this book and tried to refute or revise some of the conventional ways of reading in feminist-cum-postcolonial travel writing scholarship. I went beyond Bohls's feminist reading and argue that the aesthetic experience presented in European female travel writers could mingle with "vulgar" daily activities and betray complicity with empire. I also tried to demonstrate that sometimes Saidean critique of "Orientalism" might be undermined by ambivalence or undecidability characterizing some female travel writings. My preliminary findings were presented as a conference at the Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities on January 14, 2006.

Concrete Results and Self-Evaluation:

This 3-year project has resulted in 3 major papers. The first 2 are journal articles, while the last one is a conference paper, to be revised for contribution to an international journal.

- (1) Weather, Aesthetics and Imperial Ambivalence in Two Nineteenth Century Travelogues about the “Torrid Zones.” *Tamkang Review*. 35.3-4(2005): 87-113.
- (2) 〈都市意象、空間與現代性——試論浪漫時期至維多利亞前期幾位作家的倫敦遊記〉 (Urban Imagery, Space and Modernity: London Travels in a few Romantic and Early Victorian Writers) 。《中外文學》 (*Chung-Wai Literary Monthly*) 34.2(2005): 11-30 。
- (3) “The Representation of China in Mrs. Archibald Littles' *In the Land of the Blue Gown*.” Presented at 2006 Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities, in Honolulu, January 14, 2006.

Overall, this 3-year project is quite fruitful. Although at times I was obliged to modify my original plan as written on the proposal submitted to the NSC earlier on, the changes never simply meant dead ends but new possibilities and even surprise findings. The two overseas trips did help me gather important materials otherwise inaccessible to me and made intellectual exchange with foreign scholars possible. Rendered below are the full texts representing the concrete results of my project.

Weather, Aesthetics and Imperial Ambivalence in Two Nineteenth Century Travelogues about the “Torrid Zones”*

Abstract:

This essay explores the significance of weather in two travel classics in relation to the ambivalence of imperial encounters and authority in European travel writing during the heyday of imperialism. Alexander von Humboldt's *Personal Narrative of a Journey to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent* (1814-1829) and Mary

Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897) are examined in turn. With respect to the former, I examine Humboldt's ambivalent attitude toward colonialism as exemplified by his unequal treatment of the Creole settlers and the natives in Spanish America. I argue that the author's descriptions of the unwelcoming climate and his own frustrations during the renowned 5-year scientific expedition do not really amount to a critique of empire. With Kingsley, I highlight the conflicts between what Sara Mills calls "colonial" and "feminine" discourses in her travel writing, conflicts which indicate her much more profound imperial ambivalence. I try to deepen Mills' analysis with a keen eye for the depiction of weather conditions in *Travels*. As the representation of weather often involves landscape descriptions, where necessary I try to account for the ideological implications of the aesthetics in these two nineteenth century travelogues about the "torrid zones."

Keywords: aesthetics, Alexander von Humboldt, imperial ambivalence, Mary Kingsley, travel and exploration, weather

The ambivalence of authority in the context of "imperial encounters" is a major concern of contemporary travel writing scholarship.¹ In some European women's travelogues about the exploration of "uncivilized" places during the heyday of imperialism, one finds the adoption of the "masculine" tradition of adventure and discovery, characterized by a heroic style, a patronizing, if not supremacist, attitude toward the natives and an impulse toward "ownership, mastery or possession of the land," to use K. Schaffer's words (80).² At the same time, in these texts there is the simultaneous presence of "feminine" discourses marked by such features as humility, self-deprecating humor, and a much greater sympathy for the indigenous people or deeper empathy for the land, undermining the aggressive "masculine" voice or "imperialist" style, as Sara Mills has ably demonstrated in her book *Discourses of Difference*.³ What makes these travel books particularly interesting to me is precisely such contradictions, discrepancies or unevenness. In this paper I wish to investigate the functioning of weather in two nineteenth century travel classics, especially the problem of how it might be linked to the theme of imperial ambivalence.⁴ Insofar as the treatment of weather is often closely related to landscape descriptions, where necessary, I will explain the ideological significance of the relevant aesthetics.

I have chosen two representative works for my study, namely, Alexander von Humboldt's *Personal Narrative of a Journey to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent* (1814-1829) and Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897).⁵ Humboldt's masterpiece is arguably one of the last great "integrated" travel books,

combining personal narratives which stress human interactions and aesthetic experience with objective data and specialized scientific accounts, the product of an erudite naturalist (Leask 282).⁶ Humboldt's heroic image as an indefatigable scientific traveler has been consolidated by famous critics like Mary Louise Pratt. Attending to how Humboldt deals with the weather in *Personal Narrative*, I wish to highlight his occasional "unheroic" moments. I will argue that Humboldt's text, unlike many works in the "masculine" tradition of adventure and discovery, clearly shows some aspects of imperial ambivalence. In fact, such ambivalence is by no means restricted to women travelers, nor must it exhibit the kind of "feminine" features studied by Mills.⁷ I have chosen Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* as the second text for my study not only because Kingsley was the best known Victorian "lady-traveler" but because her book most visibly demonstrates what Mills calls the "contradictory clashes" of "colonial" and "feminine" discourses in women's travel writing.⁸ I wish to further develop Mills' analysis with an eye to the descriptions of the landscape and weather conditions. Instead of searching for a common structure, I will explore how weather might figure differently in these two travelogues about the "torrid zones."

Let me begin with Humboldt, arguably the greatest German naturalist and explorer, who traveled to the Spanish colonies of tropical America on a five-year scientific expedition between 1799 and 1804. Humboldt published his encyclopedic findings in 30 volumes; *Personal Narrative* is the only full-length travelogue in his prodigious oeuvre. According to Pratt's renowned study *Imperial Eyes*, Humboldt has remarkably put forth a new discourse which fuses the "specificity of science with the esthetics of the sublime" (Pratt 121), "reinventing" a "New Continent" of primal, Edenic nature, "as if three centuries of European colonization had never happened or made no difference" (126-27). In spite of his "planetary consciousness" which aspires to objectivity and his sympathy for the independence movements in Latin America, Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* "naturalizes colonial relations and racial hierarchy" (Pratt 130). Based primarily on her analysis of *Views of Nature*, Pratt argues that Humboldt's scientific language – technical, analytical, and statistical – coexists with what he himself calls "the esthetic mode of treating subjects of natural history" (qtd. in Pratt 121), which is "filled with drama, struggle, and a certain sensuality," demonstrating the dynamic harmony of a wild nature animated by some occult forces (Pratt 121). Humboldt's Spanish America is most dramatically represented by "superabundant tropical forests (the Amazon and the Orinoco), snow-capped mountains (the Andean Cordillera and the volcanoes of Mexico), and vast interior plains (the Venezuelan *llanos* and the Argentine pampas)" (Pratt 125). As with scientific travel writing in general, there is the "erasure of the human"; yet,

Pratt continues, we have in his text “a landscape imbued with social fantasies – of harmony, industry, liberty, unalienated *joie de vivre* – all projected onto the non-human world” (125), a landscape where the natives, colonizers and their interactions with the traveler are obliterated. Framed by the spiritualist aesthetics of Romanticism, nature has become “a spectacle capable of overwhelming human knowledge and understanding,” but, paradoxically, in order to achieve this dramatic portrait the European observer-narrator must assume a “godlike, omniscient” stance *vis-à-vis* “both the planet and his reader” (Pratt 124).

I shall not object to this now-standard reading of Humboldt with respect to *Views of Nature* and some other primarily non-narrative works. Confining myself to Humboldt’s *Personal Narrative*, however, I find that nature has not been invariably “romanticized” as such. Nor is the usual claim about the “erasure of the human” and the all-powerful “seeing man” entirely valid there. Instead of dwelling on Humboldt’s aesthetics of the sublime, my reading will focus on the much more displeasing side of nature, especially in relation to unfriendly climatic conditions. Obsessed with Humboldt’s valorization of the landscapes in the “New World,” critics like Pratt and Nigel Leask have unfortunately ignored a contrary tendency noticeable in his text. Humboldt, in fact, has complained bitterly about the “monotony” of the pallid llanos and pampas of South America, for in his own words “these steppes [are] imposing, sad and oppressive”; this is a place where “everything appears motionless” (Humboldt 162). “During the rainy season they appear beautifully green, but in the dry season,” he grumbles, “they look more like deserts” (162). “The grass dries out and turns to dust; the ground cracks, crocodiles and snakes bury themselves in the dried mud waiting for the first rains of spring to wake them from prolonged lethargy” (162-63). As for rivers, they “have only a slight, often imperceptible fall. When the wind blows, or the Orinoco floods, the rivers disembodying in it are pushed backward” (163). Obviously, this wild nature is not always inspiring, nurturing or harmonious; it is not exactly hospitable to man or favorable to the growth of civilization. We get this striking portrait of the Cumaná plain:

The arid plain of Cumaná provides an extraordinary phenomenon after violent rainstorms. After being drenched with rain the earth is heated by the sun and gives off that musky smell common to many different tropical animals like the jaguar, the small tiger-cat, the capybara (*Cavia capybara*), the gallinazo vulture (*Vultur aura*), the crocodile, viper and rattlesnake. These gases seem to emanate from mould containing innumerable reptiles, worms and insect remains. I have seen Indian children from the Chaima tribe pick out 18-inch millipedes from the earth and eat them. (Humboldt 55)

In short, Humboldt’s descriptions of the “torrid zone” of South America in *Personal*

Narrative are characterized by the contrast of extremes and a sense of instability or precariousness. When there is no rain, the plain will remain very dry. Then the rain may come suddenly as violent rainstorms, when humans and animals have to hide but the plants will start to grow wonderfully. After these heavy downpours, the scorching sun reappears and we have that curious “musky smell,” surely not a fit object of aesthetic contemplation because of the dreadful warning associated with it (the presence of deadly animals and reptiles), that is, because of its filth and sense of death owing to reptiles, worms and insect remains. The image of indigenous children devouring alive huge millipedes from the earth, even if it is based on objective observation, would surely appear to be barbarous and disgusting to readers.

Again and again Humboldt stresses that “despite the apparent sterility [during the drought], the land is extremely productive wherever heat and humidity meet” (55). In the horrid zone, he contends, the “frequent and prolonged rainy season, and the extraordinary opulence of the vegetation are advantages outweighed by a climate dangerous for whites,” because the inhospitable climate leads to intermittent fevers and dysentery (115). Coastal areas like the shore of Paria Gulf are especially dangerous. The heat, the “noxious air from the jungle,” and the “germs of disease” (94) in the wind have defeated unacclimatized white men. The early Spaniards called the Paria Gulf “Golfo Triste” because of the “gloomy and wild aspect of its coasts, [which] became the graveyard of European seamen” (95). When Humboldt reached Cariaco by the sea, he was forced to shorten his stay due to the epidemic fevers there. In addition to the adverse weather conditions, there is the grave danger of earthquakes, particularly in Quito and Cumaná. Humboldt claims that in 1797 New Andalusia was “every day more and more undermined by subterranean fires,” and, reminding us of the “enormous damage” in Caracas in 1812, he emphasizes the “incredible instability of nature in the north-east of Terra Firma” (93). He also draws our attention to another nuisance, one more indigenous to the tropics: the enormous amount of ants native to the soil. In Valencia, “their excavations resemble underground canals, which flood with water during the rains and threaten buildings” (156). Furthermore, he mentions in passing that the rivers of the Orinoco are “mosquito-infested” (272) and that on their trip there he and his companions were “devoured by mosquitoes, *zancudaos*, chigoes and numberless insects” (294).

Humboldt’s depiction of the unwelcoming climate accompanied by torturous insects in *Personal Narrative* is not directly meant to be a warning against the colonization of Spanish America. Yet, while acknowledging the hospitality of his hosts, that is, the colonists and missionaries, he does openly question the value of colonization for the natives, oppose slavery, and support the independence movements headed by the Creoles against Spanish tyranny. He never doubts the missionaries’

good intention, their belief that it is their “privilege” to “console humanity for a part of the evils committed by the conquistadores,” “to plead the cause of the Indians before kings, to resist the violence of the *comendadores*, and to gather nomadic Indians into small communities called missions to help agriculture progress” (Humboldt 78). But the monastic institutions, he argues, “useful at first in preventing the spilling of blood and establishing the basis of society, have become hostile to progress” (78). Subject to “constraints and the dull monotony of the missions,” the natives “have progressively lost [their] vigor of character and natural vivacity,” showing “by their gloomy and abstracted looks that they have not sacrificed freedom for comfort without regret” (78). Toward the end of his introduction, Humboldt boldly mentions the political struggles in Spanish America, stating that, stating that:

Since I have returned from America one of those revolutions that shake the human race has broken out in the Spanish colonies, and promises a new future for the 14 million inhabitants spread out from La Plata to the remotest areas in Mexico. Deep resentments, exacerbated by colonial laws and maintained by suspicious policies, have stained with bloodshed areas that for three centuries once enjoyed not happiness but at least uninterrupted peace. Already in Quito the most educated citizens have been killed fighting for their country. While writing about certain areas I remembered the loss of dear friends. (Humboldt 13)

His “dear friends” include Carlos Montúfar and the young botanist José de Caldas, both executed by the Spaniards in 1816 (Nicolson 298n3). Hoping his book will “contribute to a new social order” (13), Humboldt in effect dedicated it to the revolutionary cause. With his contribution to the natural science of the land and his “reinvention” of a primal nature there, Humboldt’s writings later became “essential raw material for American and Americanist ideologies forged by Creole intellectuals in the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s,” and “a touchstone for the civic literature that claimed Spanish America’s literary independence,” according to Pratt (175).

Despite his obvious sympathy for the natives, Humboldt never romanticizes them as “noble savages” in *Personal Narrative*. He asserts without much reserve that “within the Tropics [...] civilization arrived with Columbus” (Humboldt 118). And he concludes his introduction by anticipating that one day “those who live on the banks of the Orinoco or Atabapo may see cities enriched by commerce and fertile fields [cultivated] by free men on the very spot where during [his] travels [he] saw impenetrable jungle and flooded lands” (13). Apparently, Humboldt is hardly a thorough-going anti-colonialist; his critique of empire and progress is limited. While celebrating freedom and independence from direct Spanish rule, he is not precisely

advocating self-rule for the natives. While arguing that all mulatto, zambo and black subordinated races can produce sugar, cotton and indigo on their own, and that “the miserable slaves can become peasants, farmers and landowners” (148), he stakes his hopes mainly on the Creole leaders who would dominate the newly independent states. While admiring the “attractive and picturesque [...] untamed, virgin nature” in the tropics (80) and regretting the gradual loss of a “Castilian” independent spirit in the natives with the coming of missions, he still remains a believer in commerce, science and progress, as is evident in his introduction. Indeed, the very expression “Castilian” subtly obscures the essential difference between the colonizer (Spaniards) and the colonized (“Indians”).

It is with this ideological constellation in mind that we may profitably turn again to the meaning of weather in *Personal Narrative* again. Humboldt has repeatedly emphasized “immense fertility of the soil” (80) in the tropics when heat and humidity combine. Passing a mestizo plantation on his way to the mountain missions of the Chaima Indians, he reminds the reader that “an acre planted with bananas produces nearly twenty times as much food as the same space sown with cereals” (79). In the warmest and most humid parts of South America, content with “food from plants that yield more abundant harvests more quickly” (79), the natives have abandoned densely populated areas for they only have to cultivate a small number of acres to feed themselves (80). “Without neighbors, virtually cut off from the rest of mankind, each family forms a different tribe” (80). This “mythic” and primordial state of isolation postulated by Humboldt, supposedly, “retards the progress of civilization, which advances only as society becomes more populated and its connections more intimate and multiplied” (80). His seemingly “objective” analysis of the physical geography of the place quickly turns into an ideological argument justifying the “natural” backwardness of the natives in the torrid zone. If there was no “civilization” in their original state, then the coming of European civilization (read Spanish colonialism), however traumatic, could not ultimately be considered as a “loss” – if we push his implicit argument to the extreme. Commenting on the mestizos in Turbaco, he concludes that the “taste for the jungle and isolation typifies the American Indian.” Examining their farming tools, the way they build their bamboo huts, their clothes and crude arts, he laments their “lack of culture” (294).

It is precisely in this context that we must understand why Humboldt questions “what the copper race [i.e. natives] has earned by contact with European civilization” (294). Whatever he might have said about the problems of imperialism and missionary activities, he seems to be firmly on the side of trade, progress and science in the last analysis. It is therefore not surprising that never in his text does Humboldt seem to suspect that his exploration is in any way complicit with imperialist

exploitation, nor has he admitted any guilt regarding his privileges as an elitist white traveler sanctioned by the empire.⁹ In fact, if he had not been the chief inspector of mines for Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia and a renowned scholar, the Spanish king Carlos IV would not have granted him a passport so that he could conduct his studies in Spanish America, still pretty much a forbidden land for non-Spanish Europeans at that time (Leask 244). Enjoying his status as a supposedly “disinterested” cosmopolitan intellectual, Humboldt failed to see that his scientific endeavors might be appropriated by the Creoles and foreign adventurers to further deplete the natives’ natural resources.

Finally, let me turn to the relationship between weather and Humboldt’s own scientific project, his scientific “work.” Having in mind such colonial travelers as Richard Burton, much discussed in Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*, one might speculate that harsh climatic conditions would have served as mere obstacles to be subdued by Humboldt – the courageous, knowledgeable and resourceful narrator-hero in an immensely successful five-year expedition. The fact is, however, that confident as he is of his power and the value of his travels, Humboldt actually opts for a rather unpretentious, restrained style of narration.¹⁰ Hyperboles are generally reserved for scenic depiction rather than self-glorification. More than once Humboldt reminds the reader that his land journeys are “very tiresome” because they have to not only make laborious measurements but also “transport instruments and collections” (7). With an impressive array of precision instruments like thermometers, barometers, hygrometers, eudiometers and cyanometers, Humboldt and his crew must make constant measurements and collect plant and animal specimens, calculating longitude and latitude of each important place via astronomical observations, finding out “the exact height above sea-level at which [they] made each collection,” noting “the humidity, the temperature, the electricity and the transparency of the air,” drawing maps, “topographical plans,” “geological profiles” and so forth (9). One can easily imagine how devastating foul weather could be to a hard-working early scientific explorer, burdened with such daily necessities. Occasionally, Humboldt reveals nakedly to the reader his frustrations and worries. For example, having lost his last barometer, he confesses a sense of great loss and regret:

Indeed, after traveling thousands of leagues over land with astronomical and physical instruments, you are tempted to cry out: “Lucky are those who travel without instruments that break, without dried plants that get wet, without animal collections that rot; lucky are those who travel the world to see it with their own eyes, trying to understand it, and recollecting the sweet emotions that nature inspires!” (Humboldt 297)

This is precisely what we cannot see in other works of his like *System of Nature*: the

weaker side of the supposedly “god-like” white observer-narrator who champions science as well as a kind of Romantic aesthetics of the sublime – an apprehension regarding the adverse effects of the climate on his instruments and collections. If superior scientific knowledge and precision instruments afford Humboldt strength, composure, and a resolute sense of mission, the routine scientific labor required, often at the mercy of the weather, can be a source of great anxiety. During the later days of his American journey, having lost “duplicates of [their] herbal collection, and all the insects [his companion] Bonpland had gathered” because of a shipwreck, Humboldt became very anxious while waiting to see if his collections and manuscripts had arrived in Europe safely (287). The heavy weight on his mind was lifted only when he learned that his manuscripts had eventually safely reached his brother’s home in Paris. I hope my reading above has not only demonstrated the particular kind of “imperial ambivalence” in Humboldt, but has also qualified the exaggerated, idealized image of an always composed, indefatigable, and “weatherproof” explorer we may derive from elsewhere in his oeuvre.

If Humboldt’s rather restrained travelogue contains occasional grumblings about the tropical weather, it should not surprise us to find many more complaints of this kind in women-travelers’ texts like Mary Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa*. Kingsley was the best known Victorian “lady-traveler.” *Travels in West Africa* is based on her second trip to Africa in 1895, ostensibly to study new fish species and collect botanical specimens. A keyword which recurs in Kingsley is “unhealthy.” The Gold Coast, for instance, is “unhealthy” because all the natives there “have either got the guinea-worm, or kraw-kraw or ulcers” and the climate would “damage the nerves of the cultured of temperate climes” (Kingsley 25). Fernando Po, admired for its infinite “moods of beauty” (Kingsley 30) but notorious for its “periodic outbursts” of yellow fever (34), is the white man’s grave: “the sailors and merchants personally acquainted with the place [...] were able to support their information with dates and details of the decease of the victims to the climate” (28). If we read Kingsley’s depiction of these “unhealthy” volcanic islands alongside her account of the Portuguese exploitation of African workers on San Thomé, which resulted tragically in madness and fatal escape attempts (31-32), we will be tempted to see her emphasis on the unhealthiness of African settlements as a critique of empire. Inasmuch as the whites do not naturally “belong” there, at least in terms of the tropical climate, she seems to imply that colonization is doomed to failure. Yet we must bear in mind that Kingsley publicly supported imperialism if not colonialism, and her own journeys would have been impossible without the support of the various colonial authorities – British, Spanish, French and German – and her direct participation in West African trade. Kingsley’s deep ambivalence toward empire and the “contradictory clashes”

of colonial and feminine discourses have been much discussed by Sara Mills, Alison Blunt and others. Pratt has pointed out that Kingsley rejects the “textual mechanisms that created value in the discourse of her male predecessors: fantasies of dominance and possession” (Pratt 214). Mills, on the other hand, has noted Kingsley’s occasional adoption of the persona and heroics of the male explorer which go against her non-assertive “feminine” narration and self-deprecating humor (Mills 156). In what follows, I will examine the meaning of the weather in *Travels in West Africa*, particularly in relation to the author’s treatments of the picturesque.¹¹ Ultimately, I wish to explore how climatic conditions might help articulate what Blunt calls Kingsley’s “ambivalence of imperial encounters and authority” (Blunt 32).

If Humboldt’s travelogue is characterized by the “omniscient” scientific explorer’s panoramic vision, expressive of nature’s grandeur and suggestive of the observer’s superior knowledge, Kingsley’s is marked by an eye for the picturesque, which implies a much less austere and adventurous traveler. The picturesque mode, though not unique to women’s writings, was particularly popular among nineteenth century British lady-travelers.¹² “Painterly” scenic descriptions, as one might expect, can beautify the landscape, please the traveler as well as the reader, and give added value to Kingsley’s trip to “collect” African fishes and fetish.¹³ While traveling on a small steamer on her way up the Ogowé River in the French Congo, Kingsley describes a “picturesque” night scene like this: “The moonlit sea, shimmering and breaking on darkened shore, the black forest and the hills silhouetted against the star-powdered purple sky, and, at my feet, the engine-room stoke-hole, lit with the rose-coloured glow from its furnace, showing by the great wood fire the two nearly naked Krumen stokers, shining like polished bronze in their perspiration, as they throw in on to the fire the billets of red wood that look like freshly-cut chunks of flesh” (Kingsley 65). Here not only the serene natural environment but also the hardworking African stokers, probably oppressed by sheer drudgery, are magically transformed into artistic objects of admiration. Pieces of red wood, through her lively imagination, are turned into “freshly-cut chunks of flesh,” an exotic image carrying an implicit, perhaps repressed sense of barbarous violence.

As if to subvert the norms of dominant “masculine” aesthetic discourses,¹⁴ Kingsley’s picturesque descriptions sometimes seem to be closely related to, if not subverted by, inhospitable climatic conditions. When describing the great swamp region by the Bonny River shortly before her Ogowé trip, she complains about its depressing monotony and frightening unhealthiness:

In every [...] direction you will see the apparently endless walls of mangrove, unvarying in colour, unvarying in form, unvarying in height, save from perspective. Beneath and between you and them lie the rotting mud

waters of Bonny River, and away up and down river, miles of rotting mud waters fringed with walls of rotting mud mangrove-swamp. (Kingsley 60)

In other words, even the picturesque gaze, with its artful change of “perspective,” fails to redeem the utter dullness of the landscape. During the rainy season, there is the “torrential downpour [...] night and day with its dull roar” (Kingsley 60). What makes matter worse is the prevalent sense of decay (“rotting mud” everywhere), further worsened by the impending danger of fever, the most common fatal disease of the tropics. This is, in short, no place for aesthetic contemplation:

While your eyes are drinking in the characteristics of Bonny scenery you notice a peculiar smell [...] That’s the breath of the malarial mud, laden with fever, and the chances are you will be down tomorrow. If it is near evening time now, you can watch it becoming incarnate, creeping and crawling and gliding out from the side creeks and rolling in a kind of grim play, and finally crawling up the side of the ship to come on board and leave its cloak of moisture that grows green mildew in a few hours over all. Noise you will not be much troubled with: there is only that rain, a sound I have known make men who are sick with fever well-nigh mad, and now and again the depressing cry of the curlews which abound here. [...] Good Heavens, what a place! (Kingsley 60-61)

Here the picturesque gaze is completely undone by the smell of the malarial mud, smacking of death, by the vivid image of fatal infection and a madness induced by the monotonous sound of the rain, a sound typical of the climate in the swampy region of West Africa. However, Kingsley’s subsequent Ogowé trip seems to be more pleasant and more conducive to the picturesque gaze. She claims that all day long she traveled past “ever-varying scenes of loveliness whose component parts are ever the same, yet the effect ever different” like a Beethoven symphony (Kingsley 69). Still, while she is glorifying the “magnificent dramatic beauty” of the night with the moon rising like “a great orb of crimson, spreading down the oil-like, still river, a streak of blood-red reflection” (67), she reminds us that the “conversation and atmosphere are full of mosquitoes” (67) and of the necessity to “get under the mosquito curtains to write” (67). When staying under the verandah of a factory one night, she “sit[s] down under a lamp, prepare[s] to contemplate [...] the wild beauty of the scene,” only to find “lots too many mosquitoes and sandflies in the scenery to permit of contemplation of any kind” (70). And when mentioning the “grimly picturesque” old steamer by the river, she warns that there must be scorpions and nameless creatures rising “out of the floating grass, or the limitless-looking forest” (66).

Earlier on Kingsley has complained about the depressing weather and the unfriendly living organisms in the mangrove-swamps:

There are the crocodiles, more of them than any one wants; there are quantities of flies, particularly the big silent mangrove-fly which lays an egg in you under the skin; the eggs becomes a maggot and stays there until it feels fit to enter into external life. Then there are slimy things that crawl with legs upon a slimy sea” [...] [I]n the wet season there is no silence night or day in West Africa, but that roar of the descending deluge of rain that is more monotonous and more gloomy than any silence can be. (Kingsley 57)

She even parodies the picturesque mode by using it to describe the reality of the swamps: “Now a crocodile drifting down in deep water, or lying asleep with its jaws open on a sand-bank in the sun, is a *picturesque adornment* to the landscape when you are on the deck of a steamer” (emphasis added), but crocodiles are indeed dangerous reptiles which will “grab at people in small canoes” (55). And then there is the danger of getting “tide-trapped away in the swamps,” as Kingsley humorously tells us:

Of course if you really want a truly safe investment in Fame, and really care about Posterity, and Posterity’s Science, you will jump over into the black batter-like, stinking slime, cheered by the thought of the terrific sensation you will produce 20,000 years hence, and the care you will be taken of then by your fellow-creatures, in a museum. But if you are a mere ordinary person of a retiring nature, like me, you stop in your lagoon until the tide rises again; most of your attention is directed to dealing with an “at home” to crocodiles and mangrove flies, and with the fearful stench of the slime round you. What little time you have over you will employ in wondering why you came to West Africa, and why, after having reached this point of folly, you need have gone and painted the lily and adorned the rose, by being such a colossal ass as to come fooling about in mangrove swamps. (Kingsley 55)

Kingsley’s constant emphasis on the inhospitable climate and the various kinds of danger in West Africa coupled with a keen sense of self-deprecating irony are worth examining further here. She has come to Africa under the pretense of doing scientific research and yet she keeps demonstrating to the reader that she is an inadequate scientific explorer; she often laughs at her own clumsiness, admitting that she is really “a colossal ass” fooling about the place and seldom speaking in the confident tone of a naturalist or ethnographer. Mills and others have found countless examples of self-deprecating humor in her text, supposedly a hallmark of the “feminine” travel discourse.

This is not to say that such humor cannot be found in travel books written by men, but as far as the history of the genre is concerned, before the twentieth century most male travel writers always maintain their narrative authority, tending toward a

more heroic style. Alexander William Kinglake's *Eothen* (1884) is one notable exception: it is remarkable for the author's "conversational style, sense of humor, [... and] irony toward himself" (Kreiger ix). Worrying that his book would be seen by his contemporary readers as violating the norms of men's travel writing, Kinglake makes lengthy apologies in his preface. There is also an earlier "anti-conquest" tradition examined by Pratt, as exemplified by Mugo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799), where the traveler-narrator appears to be rather passive, stressing reciprocal rather than imperial relation between the European adventurer and the natives.¹⁵ Yet compared with the great "masculine" tradition of adventure and exploration, this is only a very minor tradition – a mere curiosity. Since the early twentieth century, however, one can more readily find self-doubt, self-irony and other "unheroic" traits in travelogues written by men. In other words, some of the so-called "feminine" features of earlier travel writing discussed by Mills are no longer peculiar to women's travel writing today.

Let us return to Kingsley's text. While dramatizing the fact that she is an inadequate explorer, that she is oddly "out of place" while traveling in West Africa, Kingsley nevertheless reminds us that she has lived "long enough to allow the strange fascination of the place to get a hold on [her]" (61). The plain fact that she has outlived many male colonial officials, seamen and adventurers mentioned in her text, and thus has largely resisted the pervasive "unhealthiness" of Africa, is proof of her strength, adaptability and survival skills. "Many of [her] friends mentioned even in this very recent account of the Coast 'are dead now,'" she stresses toward the end of her introduction (8). In fact, she is not only fascinated by this "white man's grave" but has also developed some kind of friendship with the Fan people, famed cannibals. Unable to master nature like a male scientist, she can nevertheless gain more intimate knowledge of the natives because, presumably, of her "feminine" empathy, tolerance and social skills, things lacking in such male savants as Humboldt and Darwin. In the tradition of "masculine" adventure and exploration, the male narrator often travels with fellow (European) explorers, servants, guards or colonial officials, and he can afford to hire local tour guides and is accompanied by a retinue of native bearers, who carry their scientific instruments, specimens and food. Given the aloof, if not imperialist, attitude often detectable in the great explorers, it is unlikely that they would have developed a close relationship with the natives they met or hired. In any case, local guides and helpers are seldom mentioned in such travelogues, and when they are mentioned they remain mostly anonymous, even though they are indispensable for the success of the exploration.¹⁶

Thus in Humboldt's *Personal Narrative*, European settlers, missionaries and Creoles are acknowledged for their hospitality, yet native-Americans remain obscure,

nameless figures in the background. Kingsley, on the other hand, travels in West Africa often entirely unaccompanied by any Europeans. Limited in her financial resources, she is obliged to trade directly with Africans. According to George Baker, she has learnt some useful tips from the merchants about how to trade with the natives, and by driving a good bargain she earns the natives' respects despite her status as a vulnerable white woman not guarded by European men (19-20). Most male explorers, by contrast, must rely on agents and interpreters to get things done; not mixing with the natives, they are much less likely to gain an intimate knowledge of their culture.¹⁷ Although in *Travels in West Africa* Kingsley generally evades the fact that she is as much a trader as a "scientific" explorer, she does meticulously recount her interactions with the native helpers and give them nicknames.

In an age of high imperialism, Kingsley's close relationship with the natives, as recorded in the text, is truly remarkable; it is largely absent in the "masculine" tradition of adventure and exploration. To account for this exceptional intimacy, feminist critics offer two reasons. One is that women, oppressed as the "second sex," are more likely to empathize with the weak and the underprivileged in the "backward" societies. A related argument is that women, because of their social roles and gender expectations (nurturing, mothering, domestic duties, submissiveness, etc) tend to be less egoistic, more open to others, possessed of more social skills, and more compassionate. We must, however, note that "femininity" (versus "masculinity") may be primarily a cultural construct, a set of behavioral tendencies shaped by socialization, not to be confused with essential *biological* difference. Referring to her "feminine" empathy, tolerance and social skills, I am not claiming that Kingsley possesses such qualities simply because she *is* a woman; obviously not every female travel writer exhibits these "feminine" traits. However, keeping in mind the stereotype of "angel by the hearth" and all the virtues which Victorian society presumes reside in women, I do believe, together with critics like Mills and Blunt, that such traits have been much rarer among male travel writers, at least before the twentieth century. That said, her supposedly "feminine" traits combined with her remarkable resourcefulness and exceptional courage (daring to travel with the famed cannibals, etc) make Kingsley's experience almost unique.

If Kingsley as a Victorian woman is unable to receive professional training and to become a recognized naturalist, she might well have compensated for this lack of authority by claiming a curious kind of "subjective authority" – in stressing the individuality of her response to Africa. In *Travels in West Africa*, as Blunt has argued, the landscape "seems to possess magical qualities, accessible only to a certain, 'interested' individuals" who "fall under its charm," and Kingsley alleges that she herself belongs to this privileged few (95). Furthermore, as a female writer she can

afford to laugh at her own oddity and ungainliness and build up a kind of rapport with the reader, a textual advantage hardly enjoyed by those great male adventurers of the past who must maintain a high level of seriousness and objectivity in accordance with the “masculine” convention of adventure and exploration. The “unhealthy” swamps of Africa, finally, turns out to be an ideal world where Kingsley can be free of domestic duties and confinement, and follow her desire “to move beyond colonial settlements to fish, explore, and trade” (Blunt 96), even though she might be occasionally “under the weather.” It should be noted that before her African travels, Kingsley’s life was rather colorless: she had to stay at home to take care of her father and brother. Perhaps Olwen Campbell is right in suggesting that Kingsley’s strongest motivation for beginning her African travels was “to seek for the greatest possible contrast to long years of domestic imprisonment” (40).

Let me conclude my paper with an analysis of the episode of Kingsley’s ascent of the great peak of Cameroons, where her simultaneous complicity with and revision of “colonial discourse” are most dramatically shown – and again in relation to the weather. Pratt has indicted Humboldt for the “erasure of the human” in his travel writings and emphasized that Western explorers must rely “entirely on the networks of villages, missions, outposts, [...] roadways, and colonial labor systems to sustain themselves and their project, for food, shelter, and the labor pool to guide them and transport their [...] equipage” (127). Unlike Humboldt, Kingsley always recounts in details her interactions with the colonists as well as the natives. Her climbing of Cameroons, as we can readily see in her text, depends on a number of Africans who presumably serve either as her guides or porters, and on a German outpost for food and water. The demanding weather conditions up in the mountains include coldness (especially in the early morning), heavy mists, strong winds, unpredictable showers, and violent tornadoes. Curiously, in Kingsley’s portrait the small retinue of Africans she commands is incompetent, timid, eccentric, and even comical. While she can, struggling up the mountain, console herself with the “forest charms” like “patches of satin-leaved begonias and clumps of lovely tree-ferns” (335), the black always want to evade any harsh climb. For her, a sublime view can justify all the hardships of ascending the mountains:

When I reached the S.W. end, looking westwards I saw the South Atlantic down below, like a plain of frosted silver. Out of it, barely twenty miles away, rose Fernando Po to its 10,190 feet with that majestic grace peculiar to a volcanic island. Immediately below me, some 10,000 encircling it as a diadem, and Amba Bay gemmed with rocky islands lying before it. On my left away S.E. was the glorious stretch of the Cameroon estuary, with a line of white cloud lying very neatly along the course of the Cameroon River.

(Kingsley 341)

Interestingly, instead of directly claiming her ascent as a feat of heroic feat, a proof of her prowess, Kingsley presents herself primarily as a searcher for the sublime experience of nature than a “manly” adventurer. At the highest point she can reach she happens to discover several bottles on the ground, probably emptied by some energetic German officers who once climbed up there. In her deceptively humble “feminine” style, she states: “I do not meddle with anything, save to take a few specimens and to put a few more rocks on the cairn, and to put in among them my card, merely as a civility to Mungo, a civility his Majesty will soon turn into pulp. Not that it matters—what is done is done.” (355) She further insists that she is “verily” no mountaineer, for:

there is in me no exultation, but only a deep disgust because the weather has robbed me of my main object of coming here, namely to get a good view and an idea of the way the unexplored mountain range behind Calabar trends. I took my chance and it failed, so there’s nothing to complain about.

(Kingsley 355)

Here she seems to be renouncing the colonial discourse of “manly” adventure and imperial rivalry. She admits, in good humor, that she is intimidated by the weather: a heavy mist is closing in and heavy rainfall threatens. Yet even if she is no mountaineer, she still far outperforms the natives. One important reason is that she is white and thus acclimatized to the cold weather, while up the mountains, as her native helper Kefalla puts it, “too much cold kill we black man” (Kingsley 350). So we have a reversal of the usual rule regarding race and the tropical climate’s unfavorability to whites.

When Kingsley tells us about her “acrobatic performances on the top of one of the highest, rockiest hillocks,” poising on one leg, taking a rapid slide sideways and “ending in a very showy leap backwards which lands [her] on the top of [her] lantern” (Kingsley 356), she is obviously mocking at herself as an ineffectual explorer. But again and again we can learn from her text that the natives are being guided and even saved by her rather than the other way around. She claims that if she had collapsed on one particularly cold day, “they would have lain down and died in the cold sleety rain” (349). Her superior power comes not only from her Western knowledge, her bravery and resourcefulness but also from her previous experience with the cannibals on her trip. In a sense she is even more native than her native servants. Once she has saved them from cold by using two sticks to make a fire, a primitive method she learnt from the Fans. She can therefore laugh at her black company as “coast boys” used to the “luxury” of matches. Blunt has argued that Kingsley uses the Fans’ notoriety as cannibals to “establish herself within the masculine tradition of

exploration,” portraying their relationship with the blacks “in the form of masculine camaraderie” (82). To her ignorant, inept but harmless native “helpers,” however, Kingsley appears to be a kind of matron. She would take care of them, enjoy listening to their nightly chatter and laugh at their incompetence, and she calls them her “boys.”¹⁸ This is Kingsley’s peculiar version of the gendered colonial relationship, one much conditioned by the weather and rather unlike Humboldt’s unequal treatments of the Creole settlers and “Indians” in the “torrid zone” of the Spanish colonies.

Attending then to weather in Humboldt’s *Personal Narrative* and Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa*, I have already explored certain forms of “imperial ambivalence” in this paper. Humboldt’s ambivalent attitude toward colonization and his “civilizing mission” is not very difficult to see. Yet the occasional frustrations and anxieties he experiences in doing his scientific work never really undermine his belief in the value of his exploration nor prompt him to reflect upon the natives’ own rights. In comparison, Kingsley’s ambivalence, expressed through conflicting “colonial” and “feminine” discourses, seems to be much more profound. However, since the early twentieth century such supposedly “feminine” traits as self-irony and self-deprecating humor can be easily found in men’s travelogues as well. Famous writers today like Bruce Chatwin, Redmond O’Hanlon and Alain de Botton see themselves as “belated” travelers, announcing that the great age of “manly” adventure and exploration is gone (Holland and Huggan 5-6). When using the term “femininity,” we must be keenly aware that the term is not meant to be, and can no longer possibly be, a timeless marker of essential sexual difference. Rather it simply serves as a convenient label for certain stereotypically gender-related stylistic features. Keeping then in mind the potential confusion terms like “masculinity” and “femininity” may engender, I look forward to reading studies of future travel writing and its new and perhaps unexpected styles.

Notes

* This paper was published in *Tamkang Review* 15.3-4 (2005): 87-113. I have made some minor corrections here.

¹ By the “ambivalence of imperial encounters and authority,” or, in short, “imperial ambivalence,” I refer to European travel writers’ ambivalent attitudes regarding imperialism, their own rights and authority as a “civilized” being (and a professional explorer-scientist in some cases), and the natives they meet on their trips to “primitive” foreign lands (often already colonized by European countries). For instance, imperial travelers like Humboldt may firmly believe in their scientific

authority (their ability to study the foreign land and produce objective knowledge for the progress of humanity) and their right to exploration (disregarding the natives' rights). While supporting or being complicit with imperialism in some ways, at times they might question the value of imperialism, romanticize the "noble savage," and condemn some colonial policies. They might despise the natives for their "barbarity" but might be fascinated by their "exotic" cultural heritage or treat them as "children" or "pets." My use of "imperial ambivalence" should be distinguished from Homi K. Bhabha's (colonial) "ambivalence," a poststructuralist and psychoanalytically-inflected notion referring to a more or less "inherent" property of "colonial discourse": the simultaneous love-hate for the other, accompanied by fear and disavowal, in the context of colonialism (such as the British raj in India; see Bhabha 88-89) rather than in temporary cross-cultural encounters on a trip. My focus is on the more tangible rhetoric features of the travelogues which betray the writer's ambivalent attitudes; my analysis here does not depend on the psychoanalytical notion of the unconscious. In fact, I do not find Bhabha's theory about the supposedly "general" nature of colonial discourse useful in my reading.

² Rhetorically speaking, from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century, European travelogues about the exploration of "primitive" foreign lands written by men often tend to exaggerate the explorer's physical prowess, resourcefulness and knowledge. Male travel writers often labor to demonstrate the difficulties of their trips and show how they have overcome all the difficulties. They also try to convince the reader of the objectivity or authenticity of their depictions. This is what I mean by the "masculine" tradition of adventure and discovery. The will to possession is not always explicitly announced, but critics like Mary Pratt have interpreted various rhetorical figures of conquest and penetration, even the very act of naming the foreign land, in terms of "colonial desire."

³ For feminist critics, "masculinity" is characterized by aggression and the lack of empathy for the other. Imperialism, so far as it is aggression against the natives of foreign lands, is thus seen as "masculine" by Sara Mills. "Femininity," defined by such traits as greater openness, empathy, and caring, is seen as potentially antagonistic to imperialism. The opposition of "masculinity" and "femininity" here does not exactly refer to biological difference but should be understood as a matter of cultural

values or behavioral norms.

⁴ For my definition of “imperial ambivalence,” please see Note 1.

⁵ Humboldt’s *Personal Narrative* was originally written in French, comprising the last 3 volumes of his *Relation historique du voyage aux régions équinoxiales du nouveau continent*. The first English translation was undertaken by Helen Maria Williams, published as *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent, During the Years 1799-1804, by Alexander de Humboldt, and Aime Bonpland; with Maps, Plans, &c* (7 volumes) by Longman between 1814 and 1829. In this paper, with the exception of two endnotes, I quote from the widely available Penguin edition translated by Jason Wilson. Wilson’s version, unfortunately, is abridged; therefore I have also consulted Williams’ full version at the British Library during a short visit to London. I am indebted to the National Science Council of the R.O.C. for funding that research trip, which took place in the summer of 2004.

⁶ Leask contends that “after Humboldt readers would not expect scientific information from travel books so much as literary amusement, or else [...] a popularizing supplement to the specialist scientific records of an expedition” (282).

⁷ For Mills, “feminine” traits in women’s travelogues also include a constant reference to clothing and hair and the “importance of keeping them in order and clean” (178), as well as presenting oneself as “a sensitive and deeply religious observer” (180).

⁸ I myself prefer to use “imperial” rather than “colonial” because the former is more general in meaning, covering not only colonial relations (territorial control and administration) but also cultural, political and economic domination. In the case of Kingsley’s West African travels, obviously most of the places described are not British colonies at all; nonetheless, British traders and missionaries exerted no small influence there.

⁹ In one scene (in a small village near Caraccas) Humboldt does vividly contrast the

difference between the attitude of some Spanish colonists toward the “New World” and his own. While those Spaniards employed at the tobacco office “vented their displeasure in complaints and maledictions against the wretched country [...] where they were doomed to live,” Humboldt and his fellow explorers “never wearied of admiring the wild scenery that surrounded [them], the fertility of the soil, and the mildness of the climate” (Alexander de Humboldt, *Personal Narrative* 4: 78 [Williams’ translation]). This portrait, highlighting the elitist travelers’ mobility and aesthetic sensibility, dramatizes their privileged position as “cosmopolitan” naturalists from Europe in contrast with the white colonists and natives.

¹⁰ Recounting his trip to Havana, Humboldt mentions two kinds of danger at sea – breakers and pirates (*Personal Narrative* 6: 814). It is interesting to note that Humboldt’s tone remains rather clam; in fact, throughout *Personal Narrative* he seldom exaggerates the dangers encountered in order to “prove” his prowess and celebrate his achievements. During this particular trip, which is potentially unsafe, Humboldt keeps himself busy performing scientific measurements as a dutiful scientist.

¹¹ The “picturesque,” literally meaning “like a picture” or being a proper object for painting, came into vogue in the early eighteenth century (Malcolm Andrews vii-viii). Picturesque tourism in England rose roughly during the Romantic Period, much influenced by such writers as William Gilpin and Uvedale Price. While theorists like Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* distinguish between the sublime and the beautiful, most picturesque travelers, in their search for “painterly” landscapes, pay little heed to such distinctions.

¹² For instance, Nina Mazuchelli’s *The Indian Alps and How we Crossed them* (1876) contains a description of a journey to the Himalayas, not so much for the purpose of exploration as for seeing and painting the beautiful vistas. See Mills 175-94.

¹³ Birkett has warned us that: “Not all Mary Kingsley's statements of her experiences in West Africa are to be taken at face value. For example, she seldom fished. Most of her specimens, including grasses and insects, were collected by Africans whom she employed to do so. [But] she would claim these specimens as ‘my’ finds.” (37) Also

suppressed in her travelogue is her trade activity: in order to support her trips, she “made arrangements with a firm who agreed to provide her with trade goods of the kind the natives wanted, in return for native produce such as ivory, rubber and gum” (Baker 18-19). According to Birkett, she sold or gave in exchange the natives such items as handkerchiefs, matches, fish-hooks, knives, tobacco, reels of cotton, buttons, ivory and trade gin (45-46). As for different “modalities” of travel writing, Nigel Leask distinguishes between the “survey modality” and “picturesque modality” of travel writing. The “picturesque eye,” according to Leask, “could skim over any features which disturbed the composure of aesthetic form, as well as utilitarian traces of industry, improvement, or modernity” (168).

¹⁴ The three “founding assumptions” of modern “masculine” aesthetics established in eighteenth-century Europe are: the “idea that it is possible to make universally applicable generalizations about ‘the’ subject of aesthetic appreciation,” disinterestedness, and the “autonomy of the aesthetic domain from moral, political, or utilitarian concerns and activities” (Elizabeth Bohls 7). My reading of Kingsley’s revision or subversion of the dominant aesthetic discourse is inspired by Bohls’ pioneering study, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics*, although she works on earlier women writers.

¹⁵ See Pratt 69-85.

¹⁶ With reference to Burton’s “discovery” of Lake Tanganyika, Pratt reminds us that such “discoveries” “involved making one’s way to the region and asking the local inhabitants if they knew of any big lakes, etc. in the area, then hiring them to take you there, whereupon with their guidance and support you proceeded to discover what they already knew” (202).

¹⁷ According to Birkett, without financial backing from an official body Kingsley’s “authority in African societies was negligible. [...] She could not even have made pretences to authorization to negotiate and make contracts with local rulers and societies, as was often the case with male travelers. Her obvious lack of men and equipment did not support any claims to governmentally backed power [...] But she

began to emphasize her status as a free agent and could see a ‘raw’ Africa the empowered travelers could never could.” (48)

¹⁸ Infantilization (treating the “natives” as “children”), of course, may be considered as part of the typical rhetoric of empire. See Stevan Harrell 13-14.

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都市意象、空間與現代性——

試論浪漫時期至維多利亞前期幾位作家的倫敦遊記

[Urban Imagery, Space and Modernity: London Travels in a few Romantic and Early Victorian Writers]

摘要：

一般學者討論都市空間實踐和現代性問題，大都自十九世紀中葉談起。本文嘗試將都市意象、漫遊和相關的空間與書寫的議題，放在浪漫時期至維多利亞前期來處理，審視華滋華斯(William Wordsworth)、蘭姆(Charles Lamb)和亨特(Leigh Hunt)等幾位具有代表性的男性作家有關倫敦遊的書寫，探索早期的現代城市圖像和相關的空間修辭特色，討論書寫／觀察者和地方以及群眾的關係，並指出有關現代性的兩組典型修辭方式之間隱含的矛盾。

關鍵詞：

都市意象(urban imagery)、認知繪圖(cognitive mapping)、群眾(the crowd)、劇場之喻(theater as a trope)、現代性(modernity)

開文·林區(Kevin Lynch)在其經典名著《都市意象》(*The Image of the City*)中，研究人們如何透過通道、邊緣、地域、節點(nodes)和地標等基本地理視覺元素，來認識周遭的都市空間(Lynch 46-83)；指出高度「意象化」(imageable)的城市，形態鮮明，清晰悅目，具備「可讀性」(legibility)(9)；而異化的都市空間則混淆不清，個人身陷其中難於辨識自我的位置，亦不容易在心目中建構出城市整體的圖像。詹明信(Fredric Jameson)在其著名的論文〈晚期資本主義的文化邏輯〉中，給林區的現象學式研究賦予更深刻的社會意義，將討論對象由都市空間擴展到被跨國資本所滲透的全球化空間，發展出「認知繪圖」(cognitive mapping)的

理論，強調在所謂「後現代」社會中個人生活經驗(lived experience)與宏觀社會整體(social totality)之間的鴻溝，而提倡認知繪圖美學，試圖令個人更敏感地認識到自身在全球體系中的位置(“Cultural Logic” 51-54)。其實詹明信討論認知繪圖和異化的問題，可追溯到所謂晚期資本主義前的壟斷資本主義(monopoly capitalism)時期，亦即列寧所說的「帝國主義階段」(stage of imperialism)。在題為〈認知繪圖〉的論文中，詹明信引用倫敦作為例子，說帝國全盛時期倫敦人的日常生活經驗自有其局限性，不曉得社會「真實」原來跟印度、牙買加和香港等殖民地息息相關，事實上「大英帝國整個殖民體系決定了個人主觀生活感受的特質」(“Mapping” 349)。

研究維多利亞時期倫敦地域與階級關係的西門·喬伊斯(Simon Joyce)，在其近作中將詹明信所講的生活經驗與社會現實間的認知差距，推前到十九世紀上半葉。他指出在一八二零至四零年間，因為有不少移民來自英國鄉間和殖民地，倫敦人口劇增達百分之二十，為這個大都會帶來了混亂和焦慮，也間接孕育出維多利亞時代嶄新的都市論述，如亨利·梅休(Henry Mayhew)對低下層生活的深入調查，形形色式的城市新聞寫作，和後來狄更斯等人的寫實主義小說(Joyce 3)。倫敦東西端不平等的城市發展，早在十七世紀已經可見端倪。大抵自十九世紀中葉以至於二十世紀初期，在不少倫敦文人學者的認知圖像中，最典型的社會地理學修辭(trope)莫過於倫敦西區(West End)與東區(East End)的戲劇性對比，當中承載著富與貧、正與邪、秩序與混亂、安定與危險等重要的對立文化意義。如果說詹明信的分析重點是凸顯出在資本主義社會裡，尤其是在高度密集的都市空間中個人異化的困境，那麼喬伊斯著眼點則是人們面對都市的鉅變，在一些既有秩序崩離析的過程中，如何借助具體的圖像，亦即是在包含空間關係的修辭運作(figuration)過程裡，試圖了解、駕馭社會現實。喬伊斯的研究，也上承瓦拉考威茨(Judith R. Walkowitz)的精神，留意到上層作家學者對低下層複雜矛盾的心情——他們如何被妓女罪犯的生活所深深吸引，同時又心生恐懼、意欲敬而遠之，而在對東區民眾的關注甚或似乎是客觀的社會剖析當中，竟流露出微妙的慾望投射。一般學者討論都市空間實踐和現代性問題，大都自十九世紀中葉談起。本文嘗試將都市意象、漫遊(flânerie)和其他相關的空間與書寫議題，放在浪漫時期至維多利亞前期來處理，審視華滋華斯(William Wordsworth)、蘭姆(Charles Lamb)和亨特(Leigh Hunt)等著名男性作家有關倫敦的遊記，探索早期的現代城市圖像和相關的(空間)修辭特色，進而考察所謂現代性的涵義。本文所探視的「都市意象」，並不侷限於林區等人的地理方位式抽象空間關係，也包括任何含有空間視覺元素、可以形象化(visualize)的具體都市修辭方式。採取這個較寬鬆的定義，相信可以令論述更有彈性，分析的對象更兼容並蓄。

群眾、劇場與超然的旁觀者

光就人口而言，其實倫敦在整個十六世紀到十八世紀之間的增長幅度要比維

多利亞時期為大。根據統計，一六六零年倫敦已經有五十萬居民，在一七零零至一八二零年間，再大幅增長到一百二十多萬。往昔的封建制度在商貿發展進程中沒落，又因為農業革命等原因而有所謂農村中產階級(*agrarian bourgeoisie*)之興(Williams 146)，原本植根於鄉間的士紳階層，不少在十九世紀的工業革命中擔當重要角色，成為卡萊爾(Thomas Carlyle)筆下的「工業領袖」(*captains of industry*)。誠如威廉斯(Raymond Williams)所言，十九世紀倫敦雖然成為了工業重鎮，但倫敦的身份始終不同於污穢單調的北部新興工業城市或者狄更斯筆下的「焦煤城」(*Coketown*)，更是英國的政治、經濟、運輸以及文化中心，也是版圖不斷拓展的大英帝國裡不可取代的樞紐。古典田園詩(*pastoral*)式的城鄉二元對立(鄉村等同自足、安適和純真，城市意味著墜落、貪婪和誘惑)，固然一直流傳至今，可見諸不同時期的倫敦書寫；甚至乎倫敦被描繪成頭大身小的怪物、病態的過度生長這一類較有現代城市意味的比喻，最少也流傳了好幾百年(Williams 145-47)。在這個最先進的大都會，一個較早出現而強而有力的都市意象，卻是「群眾」(*the crowd*)。群眾作為一種修辭方式或者「形象」，當然不是抽象的空間關係或者地理概念，然而群眾——尤其是「暴民」(*the mob*)這個最極端的表現形式——卻跟特定的地點、區域乃至整體城市印象相關。卜倫(Clive Bloom)在他一本講述倫敦二千年來民眾暴亂的歷史書中，提醒我們這個大都會的街道、廣場等公共空間，一直是政治表演的「劇場」(ix)。而在不同的時代背景中，民眾活動總是集中在某些特定的場所進行，譬如東區白教堂(White Chapel)附近的大街小巷或者海德公園，成為了市民集體記憶中的重要成份。卜倫書中的暴民，幾乎都跟政治、宗教、階級或種族衝突和抗爭有關，例如一六四零年代不同階級的婦女來到國會大樓前反對內戰、十七世紀末小河街(Fleet Street)上反天主教的大遊行、一七七零年代織布工、船工、挑夫等低下層連串的請願運動、一七八零年的戈登動亂(Gordon Riots)、維多利亞時期憲章運動者(Chartists)發起的多次抗爭，還有後來種種工會、女性主義者和小數族裔的街頭運動。群眾，尤其是走上街頭爭取權益和宣洩不滿情緒的「暴民」，一直從中世紀以來被視為危險人物，必須好好懲治教化。十七、十八世紀的作家和諷刺畫家如笛福(Daniel Defoe, 1660-1731)和霍加斯(William Hogarth, 1697-1764)便深諳城市的陰暗面，刻劃出低下層民眾所謂「怠惰、無禮和放蕩」的一面(Williams 144)。由皮爾(Sir Robert Peel)於1829年建立的倫敦城市警察(*the Metropolitan Police*)的要務，則可說是鎮壓工潮和小資產階級民主訴求的街頭運動，保衛建制，企圖維持都市公共空間的秩序。即使沒有激烈的政治抗爭和宗教運動，低下層和外地移民，每當被想像成為沒有個人獨特性的群眾時，往往引起有關罪惡的聯想，也常常跟特定的地域(如貧民窟、紅燈區或者船塢區骯髒的工作環境)連結在一起；群眾決不是個人算術式的總和，而是一種修辭方式，或多或少暗含著有關階級／社群特質的偏見。在平靜的歲月裡，沒有明顯的危險性和階級族裔區別的民眾意象，依然是整體都市想像中極為重要的一環；十八世紀中葉以降吉爾端(James Gillray)等人的都市諷刺漫畫，便不時出現群眾聚集的場面。艾克洛德(Peter Ackroyd)認為十九世紀倫敦的街頭群眾，

已經頗為自覺這是一種新的社會集結形式。弗裏斯(W.P. Frith)等維多利亞時期的畫家，更經常描繪倫敦的群眾，又吸引到不少人到畫廊觀賞；倫敦劇院裡上演的通俗戲劇，也會用劇中民眾作為典型的故事背景(Ackroyd 396)。

回到浪漫時期，第一代天才詩人布萊克(William Blake)出身工匠階層，據說也曾在法國大革命的年代上街慶祝，戴上法式帽子以表示支持激進的革命黨，可是群眾卻不是他的詩作和版畫中一貫的主題。據威廉斯的分析，布萊克對城市論述的貢獻，是他不再囿於傳統的城鄉黑白對立，不只是看到城市中的動亂、喧囂和病態的人際關係，而發現善中有惡、惡中有善的複雜性；更重要的是，他在不同的個體中看出某種整體性(Williams 148)，也就是所謂「心靈中打造的鐐銬」(the mind-forg'd manacles)。換言之，布萊克看到資本主義在都市裡的運作，不光是繁密的商貿活動和勞力的剝削，更深入人們的內心，成為一種意識形態的牢籠，難於掙脫突破；既是被動地為外界加諸身上的外物，同時也是自我內化認同的模楷。這種無以名狀卻又無所不在的心理／權力結構，超出了東西區對立等社會地理想像，只好用一個同時包含視覺和聽覺的具體喻依來表達——「在每個人的聲音中〔...〕我聽到了心靈中打造的鐐銬鏗鏘」(Blake 26)。如此般用個別意象的具體修辭來暗指抽象的社會整體，即使沒有明顯的方向地圖式涵義，也不妨可視為一個浪漫時期前衛的「認知繪圖」美學案例。

浪漫詩人中華滋華斯對倫敦的描寫，比布萊克更為細膩和複雜。自幼居於鄉間的華滋華斯，似乎頗能體會大城市的生命力，遊歷其中而感受到其脈動。不少論家讀其鉅著《序曲》(Prelude)的第七章〈旅居倫敦〉時，只著眼於當中負面的都市描述，尤其是異化的經驗，夏普(William Sharpe)甚至乎說華滋華斯是個「不情願的漫遊者」(unwilling flâneur)(17)，其實都忽略了他同時被倫敦這個五光十色的大都會所吸引的矛盾心理，也忽略了他的遊歷所涉及的性別、階層和種族想像。赫弗南(Heffernan)指出華滋華斯從未「被迫」滯留在倫敦，反而在 1791 至 1802 年間曾最少五次在此地勾留，先後竟長達一年多之久(422)；又說華滋華斯的倫敦是《化身博士》中的哲基爾(Jekyll)醫生和海德(Hyde)先生，一時像巴比倫的怪物，一時是天堂般的城市(427)。約翰斯頓(Kenneth Johnston)說華滋華斯喜歡倫敦，尤愛瓦子勾欄(101)；吉爾(Stephen Gills)則說華滋華斯鍾情於倫敦在拂曉時分或者暴風雪中的美態(210)。話說回來，藉著描寫民眾和公共空間來表達人際關係的疏離，又或者是街道上展覽著的畸形怪相，似乎是〈旅居倫敦〉這一章中最明顯的修辭特色。1805 年版本中便出現以下有名的一段：

在人流泛濫的街道上
我常常隨著人群往前走，一邊對自己說：
「跟我擦身而過的路人
每張臉都像一個謎！」
．．．
我就這樣不停地看和苦思

．．．
〔直到〕熟悉的生活中所有穩定的力量
現在、往昔、希冀、所有支柱
所有人們賴以行動、思想、說話的法則
完全離我而去．．．．(The Prelude 1805, 7.594-607)

這段文字並沒有將倫敦民眾刻劃成「暴民」，也不特別針對特定階層或者性別，營造的是對都市公共空間的一個整體印象。讀者可以隱隱感覺到背景中人群的喧鬧和冷漠，令慣居鄉間的敘事者感到疏離和困惑，彷彿書寫主體與身邊的群眾互不相干，無法在所處的城市中安身立命。華滋華斯決不是蘭姆或者班雅明那般的城市人(urbanites)，懂得無所事事地漫遊於市的樂趣；也非愛倫坡小說〈人群中的人〉(The Man of the Crowd)中的漫遊者，孤身獨處時感到渾身不自在，寧願藏匿在人群中；亦不是班雅明眼中的波特萊爾，居然可以享受所謂「廁身群眾當中的孤獨感」(Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire* 48, 50)。如果說在倫敦土生土長的布萊克，在人群中瞥見共同的弱點和苦難，那麼身為「過客」的華滋華斯，在這兒要凸顯的則是在自己於城市人群中的孤單、社區認同感的失落和感官上的混亂(perceptual confusion) (Williams 150-51)或者位置錯亂感(sense of dislocation)；一方面承認大都會是個龐大複雜的社會整體，當中充斥著各式人物和紛繁複雜的活動，一方面又暗示這個整體不可解讀(illegible)、難以穿透，而觀察和敘事者始終只是個冷眼旁觀者，跟芸芸眾生格格不入。這種空間修辭方式，有時故意模糊化所處都市空間的方位或地域，更使用連串紛沓的特寫鏡頭，展示城市中各種令人目眩的快速移動和凌亂的聲色變化，既暗示地理視覺上的迷途，也預見了齊穆爾(Simmel)所言現代城市生活過度的感官刺激——「快速相接、變動不居的影像、一瞬間感受到的明顯差異和不期而遇的極度刺激」(“the rapid telescoping of changing images, pronounced differences within what is grasped in a glance, and the unexpectedness of violent stimuli”，Simmel 325)。〈旅居倫敦〉(1805年版)裡描寫河濱大道(the Strand)的一幕，早已成為早期現代都市論述的經典：「跳動著的／色彩、光線和形狀；巴別塔般的眾聲喧嘩／連綿不絕的人流和不斷移動的物件」(The Prelude 258)。接著華滋華斯一口氣用大特寫的方式鋪陳街上各式人物、店舖、招牌、疾駛而過的車輛，令讀者喘不過氣；然後筆鋒一轉，刻劃一條小街上各種奇奇怪怪的表演和圍著看表演的觀眾。借用梅耶(Michael Meyer)的說法，都市空間在〈旅居倫敦〉中宛如一個大劇場，此中奇景紛陳，為民眾提供通俗的娛樂。我認為華滋華斯「城市如劇場」這個主要的修辭方式(master trope)，似乎在暗示都市繁華的虛妄：快速的生活步伐、彷彿永無休止的過度刺激和種種物質和肉體的誘惑，不論是街上的藝人、乞丐和妓女，還是激進的傳教士和議會中喋喋不休的論戰，終究是不「真實」的存在，只能提供短暫的聲色之娛，缺乏真正的生命意義。劇場這個空間修辭形式既暗示城市生活的愚昧和失實，又為觀察／敘述者建立一個超然視點(「我」始終是清醒的旁觀者，而非演員(「庸眾」)中的一

員)，既身在紅塵中，又彷彿「物物而不物於物」，保持「遊」客的優越性。將龐大的社會整體，當中變化萬千的人流和物流、雜亂「不可讀」的都市現象、謎一般的民眾，化約成爲舞台上的奇觀，亦即是在有限空間裡不停流轉卻沒有深意的連串意象，可說是一種企圖駕馭都市空間多樣性(multiplicity)、混雜性(hybridity)、乃至碎裂性(fragmentation)的修辭形式。

吉洛齊(Gilloch)認爲現代都市的特殊生活經驗是「震撼」(shock)，而 1850 年版的《序曲》第七章，兩度用上「震撼」這個詞語，第一次是說他初訪倫敦，深深感受到這個大都會的「震撼」(*The Prelude*, 1850, 7.66-67)，第二次則是形容巴多羅買市集(Bartholomew Fair)給人視覺和聽覺上的「震撼」(1850, 7.685-86)。華滋華斯提到這種所謂現代經驗，比齊穆爾還要早得多。面對難以了解的群眾、「不可讀」的都市空間和聲色的「震撼」，華滋華斯倒有一種典型的浪漫主義式解脫之道。這種修辭方式，可見於他對街上偶遇的一位失明乞丐的處理，而且這段文字就緊接於先前有關難以解讀的群眾的引文後面，說他在人群中突然看到這位盲乞丐，木無表情地靠著牆壁，胸前明明有一張紙上面記錄著他的可憐身世，但華滋華斯卻對這個簡單可讀(legible)的故事毫無興趣，反而視他爲一個「奇觀」(spectacle)(1805, 7.615)，這個奇觀令華滋華斯忽然有所領悟，彷彿盲乞丐變爲一個代表著「人類有關自我和世界所能認知之極限的類型或者象徵」(“a type /Or emblem of the utmost that we know /Both of ourselves and of the universe” [1805, 7.617-18])，亦即是具有超越性(transcendental)意義的符號。於是乎這個在「謎」一樣的群眾裡最可讀的悲慘人物，被轉變爲一種寓言式讀法(allegorical reading)的對象；面對這個木然不動的軀體(“unmoving shape”)、他那張不變的臉和看不見的雙眼(“his fixed face and sightless eyes”)，華滋華斯好像得到了來自另一個世界的告誡(“as if admonished from another world”)(1805, 7.620-22)。而盲乞丐畸形的身軀原本可能帶來的威脅性可說被馴化了，抽離的旁觀者一煞那間從中得到了某種罕有的、玄妙的啓視。

華滋華斯有關盲乞丐的處理，梅耶本人的分析倒沒有任何責備之意，他寧願說盲乞丐令華滋華斯感到震撼，因爲他只代表著戲劇性的表演，彷彿並非具備血肉之軀的可憐人(“the Blind Beggar shocked Wordsworth because he is nothing but his performance” [Meyer 第十段])。梅耶說華滋華斯做爲一位大城市的過客，他自己也難免被其他市民視之爲表演者；可是廁身於眾多陌生人當中，也許他會因爲在觀看盲乞丐時沒有被別人注意到他自己同時是觀看者和表演者，而感到寬慰。然而梅耶這種「城市如劇場」的讀法，「一視同仁」的強調現代城市中人既是觀眾又是表演者，卻顯然抹平了華滋華斯跟盲乞丐的基本社會差異——前者是有學養的、漫遊於市的「有閑」旅人，後者是爲了討生計呆立街頭無奈的「表演者」。前者最終在鄉間安身立命，可以憑藉詩作將其城市經驗重整、提煉、昇華，化作藝術品，後者也許要靠行乞終其餘生。最後我想指出的是：《序曲》(*Prelude*)第七章〈旅居倫敦〉裡所刻意經營的負面都市意象，其實也不見得能全然代表當時華滋華斯對倫敦的整體印象，因爲根據不完整的傳記資料，1791 年他在倫敦

短暫逗留，生活應該還算頗愜意的。那年他剛自劍橋大學畢業，旅居倫敦時正值法國大革命的前期，激進的思潮在英國首都造成極大的迴響，著名的政論家和思想家如潘恩(Thomas Paine)和皮爾斯(Richard Price)等人都非常活躍，下議院中也不時有激烈的辯論。據吉爾的考證，那時候年青的華滋華斯曾經和一些反對英國國教的新教徒(Dissenters)接近，得到了新思想的啓蒙(Gill 54)，在這種熱鬧的氛圍之中，再加上華滋華斯常流連於劇場的事實，令人不禁質疑他所描述的異化疏離感到底有多強烈和持久。

華滋華斯倫敦遊的路線與階級、性別和種族的糾葛

雖然〈旅居倫敦〉給一些讀者的總體印象，也許只是都市空間的紛繁雜亂，但內行人卻可以從中整理出華滋華斯在 1791 年二月至五月間旅居倫敦時慣常的遊踪，所涉及的地域乃至地點，還有典型的景觀。他的行程幾乎無異於一般的遊客，走遍了所有著名的遊樂場所和觀光勝地，如倫敦塔、聖保羅大教堂、大火紀念柱、黑修士橋(Blackfriars Bridge)、西敏大堂(Westminster Hall，當時的國會大樓)、西敏寺、朱里巷劇院(Drury Lane Theater)、莎文夫人臘像館(Mrs Salmon's waxworks) 和朗尼拉花園(Ranelagh Garden) 等遊樂園。約翰斯頓提醒我們當時的倫敦市區方圓不逾四英里，華滋華斯這位健步者只消一天光景，便可以從投宿的希提區(the City)走到倫敦市的一端，再走往另一端，還可趕及在晚上九時回到旅舍吃晚餐(Johnston 182)，似乎才二十一歲的他當年在首都中玩得樂而忘返。不少負面描述，大抵是日後的想法；1799 年旅歐回來後他和妹妹桃樂西(Dorothy)開始安居於湖區，視士紳和自耕農組成的農村社會為人間天堂，在寫《序曲》時醜化城市生活、淡化甚至否認年青時在倫敦接觸到激進思潮和聲色誘惑的興奮，委實亦不難理解。赫弗南便認為華滋華斯在寫《序曲》的倫敦時，將十多年間多次的倫敦行混合在一起，而且一邊改寫一邊將記憶重整(434)。

回到地理位置和「認知繪圖」的問題，1791 年華滋華斯的倫敦漫步，基本上只有兩條路線，其一是自希提區沿著大街朝西行，經濟普賽(Cheapside)、路德門小丘(Ludgate Hill)、小河街、河濱大道、查令十字路、官府大道(Whitehall)，一直走到西敏區，最後轉赴白金漢宮甚或橫過西敏橋到南岸的休憩園地伏克索爾花園(Vauxhall Garden)；又或者在這些大道旁的小街和不同商店場所隨意流連，大概晚間才回到旅館用餐。自東往西走，沿途他可以目睹城中的商貿和文化活動，見識到政經和法律的中心，也可以在小街上看到乞丐、小販和街頭藝人，甚或在科芬園(Covent Garden)和朱里巷(Drury Lane)的茶座以及黃昏時分的皇家證券交易所外遇上風塵女子。另一條較少採用的路線是自希提區朝北走，經過史密斯區(Smithfield)，到了馬井(Saddler's Wells)這個市郊的拱廊式遊樂場，看小丑、侏儒和魔術師等藝人的表演，或者繼續向北部的鄉村進發(Johnston 182-90)，重拾郊野的閒適。顯然華滋華斯從未深入東區，造訪貧民窟，也未嘗在〈旅居倫敦〉

中描述過匪徒和罪犯的世界，但他寫妓女和各式卑下的表演者，刻意誇張他們的畸形怪異性，雖然這些群眾沒有致命的威脅性，卻總被認定會「傷風敗德」，代表著大都會的陰暗面。華滋華斯一方面意識到這些低下層的人物粗俗不堪，一方面又用獵奇的目光，不厭其煩地刻劃他們的畸零怪相，將他們呈現為奇特的(exotic)的「美學客體」，這正是他倫敦書寫的曖昧特徵。

約翰斯頓說華滋華斯有關倫敦的印象，不少和女性有關(101)；女性往往代表著大都會的誘惑，如劇場裡風華絕代的明星和俏皮好動的女孩子，教他又愛又怕。這種對道德敗壞的焦慮，在描寫劇院幕間休息時間的一段中最為明顯：一個天真無邪、非常漂亮的小孩子，竟然被置於櫃台之上，周遭盡是「放浪的男子和無耻的女子」，在吃喝談笑、講猥褻不堪的話(*The Prelude* 1805, 7.374-91)。純真的孩子也可被理解為華滋華斯曲折的自況，一個大概是風塵女子所生的孩子(其實當時不少女演員也當妓女〔Johnston 185〕)，容或能「出污泥而不染」，但那時候正當盛年而且自認很喜歡流連劇場的華滋華斯，難道能完全壓抑自己的慾望，身在「放縱」的群眾當中而又超拔於其上嗎？華滋華斯倫敦漫遊所涉及的都市意象，除了妓女、女伶和各式表演賣藝者以外，更觸及種族雜處的問題。旅居倫敦時他常常住在希提區幽靜的旅舍，然而區中有東印度公司的會館，離東端碼頭區也不遠，故此除了一般的歐洲商人、水手和旅客，偶爾亦可看到回教徒、黑人、印度人等異國人種。在〈旅居倫敦〉中的一段，華滋華斯先寫在街上看到猶太人、土耳其人和西北歐人，再寫美洲原住民，接著寫摩爾人和黃種人，最後寫非洲黑人，強調倫敦的群眾混雜著世界上各大洲的種族；然後他馬上跳接到動物園裡的「奇觀」，說來自各地不同氣候的野生動物和雀鳥雲集其中，再寫當時被認為是非常新穎的全景畫(panorama)，強調「現實」已經在大都會中被人虛擬瓦解，難分是幻是真，又彷彿暗示著打破地理空間藩籬後事物繁亂的危險性。華滋華斯描繪非西方人時，似乎隱含著薩依德(Edward Said)所說的「東方主義」曖昧心態，時而醜化他們，視之為畸形人，時而流露出對這些新奇的審美客體充滿好奇甚至愛戀。有關難以駕馭的雜多性和異常的形態、低俗的聲色之娛和種族混淆帶來的威脅感，在記敘慶祝聖巴多羅買日(St. Bartholomew Day)的市集那一段裡臻於極致。

如果用電影鏡頭來比附，常被引用寫河濱大道的一段接近蒙太奇，捕捉事物變化的動感，製造空間的分割零碎感，而對於巴多羅買市集的描述則像搖鏡多於特寫，較有連貫性，而所謂混亂感並不是由大特寫和跳接來經營，而是靠羅列表演者、展覽品的諸種奇形怪狀，來渲染此中不可掌控的多樣性、混雜性和怪異性(monstrosity)，流露出對所謂「失序」的恐懼：

所有可以搬到這裡來的奇觀都齊集於此
白化病者、黥面的印地安人、侏儒
有智慧的馬和有學識的豬
吃石頭的人、吞火魔術師

巨人、腹語表演者、隱形女子
還有會說話和轉動眼珠的半身像
臘像、鐘錶、所有現代魔法製造出來的奇異工藝品
野獸、木偶戲
一切非比尋常的、離經叛道的、病態的人與物
大自然裡的怪胎，所有人類如普羅米修斯般的思想意圖
人們的呆笨、瘋狂、本事
統統混為一體
形成怪物大會
而帳篷與攤位自四面八方吐出又吸入
男人、女人、三歲的稚子、臂彎裡的小寶寶
彷彿整個市集是一個龐大的磨坊 (*The Prelude* 7.679-94)

這個吞吐著的巨型磨坊喻依，讓我們想起巴赫丁(Mikhail Bakhtin)所說的怪異的身體(the grotesque body)。對巴赫丁而言，嘉年華會式的瘋狂、越軌，正好顛覆了等級制度森嚴的社會平日的常規，讓人們能不分貴賤平等參與，怪異性正是這種門檻狀態的特色，肉體開放與外界融合，達到一種物我高下混淆不清的共同性，無所謂誰是表演者誰是觀眾。然而思想較保守的中年華滋華斯，卻彷彿完全看不到節慶活動帶來的正面可能性，只說巴多羅買市集是個「地獄」，充滿「野蠻和煉獄的喧嘩」(*The Prelude* 7.659-60)，「不論在色彩、動態、形狀、景色還是聲音方面，都是個怪異醜惡的夢魘」(7.660-61)。在他筆下這個帝國中心的怪物嘉年華會依然像一個劇場，做為一位冷眼旁觀的觀眾，他只感到「徹底的混亂」(blank confusion)(7.695)。上述引文中各種「低俗鄙陋」的奇觀，又和先前提到的種族混雜同時帶來的好奇與不安相呼應；而「所有可以搬到這裡來的奇觀都齊集於此」，正是大英帝國向外擴張所帶來的後果，如果否定這種人物的匯集，也等於質疑帝國拓展的價值。頗堪玩味的是，一方面我們在作者的「旁白」裡感覺到一個道德家超然冷漠的角度，但與此同時他的敘述卻巨細無遺地不斷展示市集中各種奇觀，像是一個熱情的仲介，而且配合由平行句子結構造成明快的節奏感，讓讀者感受到這個特定的節慶時空實際上活力澎湃，彷彿描述者也深深受到這些奇觀所吸引，在否定和批判以外，似乎尚有一種美學的沈溺，暗示出一種複雜曖昧的心理。如果說耽樂其中是青年華滋華斯的真實經驗紀錄，而抽離批判式的角度則是一八零零年代重整記憶時才加諸其上的，恐怕也有過度簡化之嫌，或者這種矛盾的心理一直存在著，只是愛與憎的程度隨著他的心路歷程起著不同的微妙變化而已。瓦拉考威茨在〈城市觀察位置〉(urban spectatorship)一文中說維多利亞時期研究倫敦低下層的作家學者，一方面採取抽離的中產階級超然視點，同時卻又深受「他者」的誘惑，意欲深入了解卑下鄙俗的民眾，甚至有時會自願沈浸於他們的文化中、扮作他們的一分子，或者心靈上有所契入，這是一種同時涉及權力、恐懼與慾望的矛盾心理結構(Walkowitz 20)。華滋華斯寫巴多羅買市集，

雖然最終強調所見的是個「不可駕馭的景象」(an unmanageable sight)，但也許或多或少已經預示了這種複雜的情意結。

在有關現代城市的論述裡，有兩組矛盾的修辭形式，經常並置在一起。一端是誇大都市的多樣性、混雜性和碎裂性，另一端則是強調現代城市生活的呆板單調和同一性(uniformity)；前者在〈旅居倫敦〉中已經有不少先例，後者的典例，則可見於維多利亞時代卡萊爾和狄更斯等人強調工業文明帶來機械一般的刻板生活、埋沒個體性等論述中，也很早便出現在華滋華斯《抒情民謠》(*Lyrical Ballads*)的序文裡。序中說在現代城市生活裡，人們的日常事務(occupations)一成不變，再加上快速的通訊等種種原因，令人們迫切需要新奇的事物和刺激，於是要細意咀嚼的文學經典乏人問津，而賣弄奇情、浮誇失實的通俗作品則大行其道(Preface 64-65)。做為一個嚴謹的作家，華滋華斯對城市人這種「不顧身分盲目追求毫無節制的刺激」(degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation 65)，自然是感到憤憤不平。在〈旅居倫敦〉裡有關巴多羅買市集的描述，最後說作者乃至整個城市裡眾多的居民(the whole swarm of its inhabitants)，都感受到所謂「徹底的混亂」，感到這是個「難以區分」(undistinguishable)的世界，因為人們都成為了追求低俗慾望的奴隸，生活在「相同的、不斷流動的瑣事中」(the same perpetual flow /Of trivial objects)，不能自拔，「由於沒有法則、毫無意義和漫無目的之多樣性，眾人變成只有相同的單一身分」(*The Prelude* 1805, 7.695-704)。上述試圖闡釋都市的多樣性、混雜性、碎裂性相對於同一性的論調，的確頗有弔詭的味道。如果現代性的特質是快速、混雜和多變的帶來的震撼，那麼城市人生活的單調乏味又該從何說起？既然有齊穆爾等人所說的過度刺激，那麼為何人們還要「不顧身分盲目追求毫無節制的刺激」？什麼是因？什麼是果？當中各元素如何圓融？暫且不論這種邏輯性的問題，我們在寫巴多羅買市集這一段中，還可以看到一個有趣的修辭轉換：先前華滋華斯一直以抽離的旁觀者角度描述各種「非比尋常的、離經叛道的、病態的人與物」(7.684)，彷彿處於超然的地位來觀看，並沒有參與其中，心態上亦是高高在上帶著批判式的口吻；然而自「徹底的混亂」那一句開始，超然的旁觀述事者卻「暗度陳倉」，宣稱他一己的經驗就等於幾乎所有城市人的經驗，而推出上述理論來解釋。這個例子令我們不禁懷疑：是否不少有關城市和現代性的「代表性」論述，其實都是建立於一些文人學者非常特殊的生活經驗、一種異常的「游離」角度、隱含著超然的道德批判？是否「與眾同樂」，浮沈在變化萬千的「俗流」中，反而沒辦法看到種種都市的「病徵」？

就都市意象和修辭來說，多樣性和駁雜性不一定意味著「失序」，也可帶來希望和積極的種種可能性；旅客的外在視點，不一定帶來疏離異化的感受，也可以讓人沈醉其中，愛多於懼。華滋華斯在《序曲》第九和第十章〈客居法國〉中便提供了一個跟第七章幾乎完全相反的例子。他寫在 1791 年稍後路過巴黎時短短幾天的體驗非常精彩，當中的主要修辭形式依然是渲染都市空間的多樣性和混雜性：旅館和妓院、賭場及商店並列，在大革命的熱烈氣氛中，街道上既有種種商販活動，又有不同的革命黨或者陰謀家，人數或多或少的在聚集互動，人們的

各種希冀、憂慮、喜樂、憤懣和苦惱，節慶般的活力和放浪的怠惰混和在一起：

最壞的人和最好的人完全混雜在一起
有人爲了事情奔走、有人漫無目的地閒逛
我凝視著、用外地人不靈光的耳朵聆聽
叫賣小販和高談闊論者眾聲喧嘩
還有雙眼閃著熱情的小黨派中人發出蛇一般的嘶嘶聲
這些人或獨處、或二人同行、或聚成一小群——尙有螞蟻般一大團的
社會秩序建立者和顛覆者
每一張臉都可以隨著希望和憂慮而表露出不同的表情：
在興高采烈與放浪的怠惰當中呈現著
欣喜、忿怒又或者是苦惱(1805, 9.53-62)

當時華滋華斯的法語程度有限，根本沒辦法理解革命黨內部的紛爭，但他不久後再回到巴黎，竟然說雖然自己只是個「不重要的陌生人」，拙於言詞，但甘願不惜犯險爲法國大革命獻出綿力(10.130-36)，最後因爲用盡盤川，才無奈地「被迫」(“compelled”)折返英國(10.189-91)。雖然《序曲》中隱瞞了年輕的華滋華斯遊法國時的羅曼史，我們倒可以臆測他當年對革命的熱誠，也許和他跟法國女子瓦儂(Annette Vallon)的戀情難以分割。《序曲》(1805年版)第十章寫的經驗，正是當華滋華斯因爲經濟原因，必須暫別已懷有他孩子的法國情人，打算返英而路過巴黎時的感受——面對紛擾的法國政局，他居然沒有表現出煩厭和恐懼，反而說出一些近乎山盟海誓的言辭，當中似乎隱含著對瓦儂深深的情意。又或者說得更曲折一點，當十多年後已婚的中年「愛國詩人」華滋華斯寫到往昔留法的經歷，驀然回首前塵，既不便在《序曲》中透露出對這段異國(也變成了「敵國»)情緣不能忘懷，便只好藉著重溫當年「天真的」政治理想，來寄託對瓦儂思念之情和悔咎之意也說不定？無論如何，從上述例子可以發現，討論都市意象的經營和典型的修辭形式，有時候不可能忽視作者本人的特殊經歷。大都會的多樣性、駁雜性和社會意義的無法全然駕馭，在某種特殊的氣氛下，原來也可以令來自國外的陌生人如斯感動，甚至覺得找到了生命的真義，不一定要跟所謂現代城市生活的碎裂、疏離、失落或者錯亂等負面描述掛鉤。

家園、地標、掌故：蘭姆和亨特筆下的「我城」

如果說華滋華斯描寫的倫敦，基本上是一個慣居郊野、傾向於「冷眼旁觀」的遊客眼中的倫敦，那麼他的好友蘭姆筆下的倫敦，則是一個生於斯長於斯，道地的倫敦人熟稔的「我城」(my town)。蘭姆家中有精神病遺傳的困擾，他自己曾住過瘋人院，他的姊姊瑪莉，也曾因爲發瘋而錯手殺了母親。可是成年時蘭姆自己的生活，可算是頗爲平凡穩定的，他在東印度公司會計部工作，一待便是三

十三年，直至 1825 年提早退休為止，退休後他有更多時間寫作和看戲。蘭姆說自己是個煙卷不離手的人，也是個酒鬼，但是在他的城市書寫裡，我們幾乎找不到任何極端的奇譚怪事。做為一個浪漫時期至維多利亞前期最有名的散文家和評論家，蘭姆基本上承襲了十七、十八世紀阿迪生(Joseph Addison)和史提爾(Richard Steele)等人較典雅和世故的都市文風。身為赫弗南所說的「城中鼠」(city mouse)和夜間無所事事四處遊蕩的漫遊者(*flâneur*)，蘭姆對華滋華斯極感興趣的街頭藝人、風塵女子以及「一切非比尋常的、離經叛道的、病態的人與物／大自然裡的怪胎」(*The Prelude* 1805, 7.687-88)固然非常熟悉，可是他的風格總是溫文儒雅(*urbane*)，偶爾有蒲伯(Pope)式的譏諷，也能自行節度，不失溫和的幽默感。他當然懂得有關城市的負面看法，以下一段有關倫敦的描述，便暗地裡予以反駁：

連綿不絕的商店總是堆滿俗麗的飾物和小玩意，卻從不會令我產生清教徒式的反感；有人誤以為這兒只有愚昧和浮華，其實新鮮事物都盡在其中。我愛看每一種慾望都得到滿足。彬彬有禮的顧客，樂於接待的店主，一切活動都講求文明的禮貌，彷彿一切都為了尊敬而存在，我不會覺得這是虛偽而心生嫌惡。反之，因為早已習慣了這種城市生活，我看到的只是合適的禮儀，雖然有些高尚人士只覺得俗不可耐．．．．(Lamb 376)

他也會加一點反諷，坦然自己愛倫敦的煙霧，甚至愛看流氓互相扭打，看扒手被抓和看行刑示眾(376)。雖然他承認大都會中有其「不自然」的一面，但反正「習慣」了便不足為怪。他強調自己是被這個大都會的噪音、群眾和迷霧所撫養成人，根本從未想過移居別處。而自維多利亞時期開始流行的有關城市能令人迷醉的看法，也在以下這個蘭姆的都市意象中可看出端倪：倫敦好像女性的身體，擁有「碩大無比的乳房」，讓「好奇者不斷的吮吸，永不會飽足」(376)。

有一次華滋華斯邀請蘭姆到湖區玩，蘭姆推說對湖光山色沒有興趣，而且他更捨不得離開倫敦，因為他對此地「產生了許多非常強烈的情感」，就如同華滋華斯對湖區「沒有生命的大自然」(“*dead Nature*”)中不同的地點有所依戀。他舉例說：河濱大道和小河街上夜間亮著燈的商店、各種商販和顧客、繁密的交通、劇院、茶座、科芬園四周的熱鬧與風塵女子，甚至乎「群眾、路上的灰塵和泥濘、陽光照射在房屋和人行道上」，還有他喜歡的書店和各式攤位，都是他豐富的生命中的一部分(687)。蘭姆在行文中營造出整個倫敦生氣勃勃的整體印象，也像華滋華斯那樣強調其多樣性甚至混雜性，但少了有關畸形怪相的誇飾。他寫的河濱大道夜景，完全沒有華滋華斯所呈現的「感官上的混亂」(*perceptual confusion*)，反而充滿感情，非常親切。他也用到表演場所(劇場)這個喻依，說倫敦是個啞劇劇場或者假面舞會，但重點不是架設超然的旁觀者視點，而是強調這些聲色之誤對他有莫大的吸引力，永遠覺得新奇，永不厭倦。這些新奇的景物令他愛上了在夜間的街道上漫遊，在多姿多彩的河濱大道上，他有時候會因為見證到眾生的活

力而心中滿載著盈盈的喜悅(fullness of joy at so much life)，甚至於「掉下眼淚」(687)。這種描述的方式，跟〈旅居倫敦〉相去甚遠。蘭姆既勾勒出倫敦可人的整體印象，同時又一再強調說他對此地的感情往往是和特定地點有關的。可以說蘭姆的倫敦就像班雅明的柏林，是個人身分認同中極重要的一環，當中編織著過往和現在的個人和社會的回憶、都市空間印象、種種的成長和生活經驗。他偶爾會提起黃昏時分赴城中酒館「買醉之旅」(drinking tours)。他在書信中會告訴友人喜歡走那一條路前往那一家最愛的酒家。他曾經去過巴黎旅遊，回來卻覺得倫敦以外所有城市都沒有什麼特色；他覺得世上沒有其他建築物能比得上倫敦的聖保羅大教堂，這也許不完全是建築物本身的問題，而是地點與人的親密關係，因為聖保羅大教堂在希提區，離他上班的南海會館(South Sea House)並沒有多遠，他每天早上十時在路上送文件時，總會仰望聖保羅大教堂堂皇的外貌；每天中午用餐前，帶著一點飢餓的感覺，也會不經意地瞥見這座宏大的建築物。從聖保羅大教堂到西區查令十字路這段路，是他夜遊必經之途，走在燈色繁華、路面平坦的街上，看著攘攘熙熙的人潮擦身而過、聆聽馬車咯咯作響、沈浸在街道兩旁夜店的歡欣氣氛中，他認為是都市生活中最美好的記憶，全世界沒有任何其他地方可以提供這種最高的享受(720)——這無疑是非常正面的遊記書寫。

比蘭姆和華滋華斯年輕一輩的亨特(Leigh Hunt)雖然家住市郊，也非常懂得所謂「城市學」(townosophy)——有關逛商店和各種城中玩樂和消費的知識。他打趣地說城市人偶然會暫別城市到郊外去，但回來會對商店認識更深(*Political and Occasional Essays* 305)。在講述逛商店的藝術的兩篇文章裡，亨特以「鑑賞家」的身分，世故幽默的筆調，幾乎寫盡倫敦各式商店和行業，比較其中的優劣、指出遊乎其外的各種樂趣所在。譬如他會說：「書店是有趣的，如果裡面的書非常舊或者特別新，尤其是有卷首插畫的。」(*Selected Essays* 27)，又會扮作一本正經地引用密爾頓(John Milton)的詩句來歌頌水果店賣的各式產品。亨特在一八三零年代開始寫了一系列的倫敦漫遊記，大都是以悠閒的心情，不疾不緩地描述各區的地理和建築特色，將相關的掌故和軼事，如數家珍般娓娓道來，又加上個人的觀感，用的是所謂「空間的時間化」(temporalization of space)的修辭策略，給個別地理位置賦予社會、歷史或者個人的意義。林區談都市意象和詹明信論「認知繪圖」，都側重於地理方位或者意念邏輯間的關係，未有同時深入處理不同形式的「時間化」和整理包含空間與時間的修辭形式。但亨特對地點的理解極為重視時間因素，他以為令一個地方「有趣」不外五大原因：所承載的個人感情、外表美態、保留著的古代文化、相關的歷史重要人物事蹟、將來的命運(*Political and Occasional Essays* 282)，當中除外表美態以外都和人類社會歷史有關；亨特晚年寫的《漫步西區》(*A Saunter Through the West End*)正是本著這種「在地」精神來書寫的，該書一開始就邀請讀者想像跟他閒適地漫步於西區的街道，一邊走一邊聆聽種種有趣的軼事(2)。總體來說，蘭姆和亨特的倫敦書寫有幾個共通性，其一是他們都是土生土長，屬於中產階級的知識份子，在倫敦成長和接受教育，讀者基本上亦是有教育的倫敦人，他們二人都對市內不少地點相當熟悉，甚至擁有私

密的知識(intimate knowledge)和特殊的見解；而且當中一些重要地標(如蘭姆心中的聖保羅大教堂)，可能在他們的「認知繪圖」中佔有確立區域方位的重大功能。至於各個不同的地點，除了可能跟個人回憶有關外，尚包含掌故，令人聯想起相關的人物趣聞奇事，又或者豐功偉績。如此一來，倫敦地理就一清二楚，沒有所謂迷失和錯亂；而且這種「認知繪圖」也不是抽象的平面地圖，因為當中許多地點都充滿聯想、滿載記憶和歷史，帶著蘭姆所說的「非常強烈的地方情感」(intense local attachments)，可說是多維的。當然，他們對倫敦的認識也有階級的局限，譬如說他們遊歷的路線似乎都避開被認為是危險的區域，尤其是東區這個「暴民」大本營。即使亨特思想較為激進，曾經因為批評攝政王而下獄，也不會像亨利·梅休和查理·布夫(Charles Booth)等人那般敢於深入低下層社會，也許他也不屑於窺視這些「鄙俗」之民的生活。布夫的力作叫《倫敦東區》，而亨特的遺著是《漫步西區》，此中所關注的階層和生活模式大相逕庭。

比較華滋華斯這位「過客」寫的倫敦以及蘭姆、亨特筆下的「我城」，我們可以察覺一個有趣的現象：最少在浪漫時期以至維多利亞前期的例子裡，積極投入都市生活、經常到人群裡「混」、對倫敦許多地點瞭如指掌的城市漫遊者所描繪的大都會，在修辭形式上卻可能被我們認為是保守落後的，而冷眼旁觀、不想或者無法完全投入人群當中的過客，反而更能夠戲劇化地呈現出所謂「現代」的經驗。要探究為何如此，我們不妨重看一下近人對所謂「現代性」的主流觀點。大衛·哈維(David Harvey)在《後現代狀況》(The Condition of Postmodernity)一書中，綜合了自波特萊爾以來各主要論家對現代性的看法，特別強調現代社會的碎裂(fragmentation)、短暫性(ephemerality)和雜亂無章的變化(chaotic change)(11)，這三者也和上文討論過的位置錯亂感相呼應；哈維又從全球化宏觀的角度，以「時空壓縮」(time-space compression)的概念，來闡釋因為全球資本主義高度經濟發展和通訊革命等因素，縮短了空間距離，令不同地方不同文化歷史被迫捲入同一化(homogenizing)的洪流；福特主義(Fordism)的大量生產模式，將時間「空間化」，變成井然有條的、高效率的運作。而吉洛齊根據齊穆爾和班雅明等人的理論來討論現代都市經驗，則凸顯出過度刺激的「震撼」所帶來的麻木感和失憶症、大都會使人沈醉(intoxicating)的誘惑、商品化令人盲目追求慾望等問題。這種種對現代都市生活的混亂、空間碎裂、個體異化的陳述，似乎或多或少都有傾向於超然的道德批判、遠離整天在紅塵中打滾的「庸」眾之嫌。蘭姆和亨特熱愛倫敦(除了赤貧的所謂「棄民的倫敦」(outcast London))，接受她的民眾，視倫敦為「我城」，著重時空的連續性和「認知繪圖」的穩定清晰，自然無從展示倫敦的斷裂亂象或者個人的異化；再者，如果現代化的一大危機是「時間的空間化」，那麼蘭姆和亨特「空間的時間化」式的修辭，也未嘗不可被視為抗衡現代化的書寫策略，有其積極性。至於華滋華斯在〈旅居倫敦〉中基於特殊的個人經驗所營造的負面都市意象，卻變為吾人認定具有「代表性」的現代性論述，此中過程的確耐人尋味。

本文透過浪漫時期至維多利亞前期幾位重要作家的倫敦書寫，特別是可說是

遊記的部分，來探討早期有關現代城市的論述。在結束這個簡單的介紹之前，容我跟讀者重溫齊穆爾的經典名篇「大都會與精神生活」(The Metropolis and Mental Life)，以便提出一個值得深入研究的方向。齊穆爾有關現代城市生活令人產生厭倦麻木感(the blasé attitude)的論調，其實有兩個不盡相同的依據。首先他強調大都會因為人口的密集、各種社會活動交往頻繁，而造成不斷變動的、過度的內在與外在刺激。他認為傳統的鄉鎮生活，由於有著連綿不絕的習俗而達致穩定均衡的狀態(“the steady equilibrium of unbroken customs” 325)，這種穩定的生活模式植根於潛意識的心理層次(“rooted in the unconscious levels of the mind” 325)；然而在大都會多變的生活中，由於過度的刺激，自我必須保護其潛沈的心理層次，只用「上層」意識的部分來應付劇烈的變動，於是出現了所謂意識過度強化(intensification of consciousness)的問題。而由於神經面對過多的刺激，耗盡能量，故此無法敏銳地對新刺激予以反應。這種說法，基本上跟華滋華斯在《抒情民謠》序(1802 版本)裡所講的「在往昔未有所聞的多種因素共同影響之下，人們心靈的識別能力被削弱了……退化到一種原始的遲鈍狀態」(Preface 64)並無二致，而這種有關麻木感的解釋，也可以間接幫助我們了解華滋華斯所說的都市中人「盲目追求毫無節制的刺激」(Preface 65)之原因。齊穆爾所謂「意識過度強化」又或者「客觀性壓倒主觀性」(“the predominance of [...] the objective spirit over the subjective” 337)，還涉及現代資本主義社會過度理性化的問題，跟韋伯(Max Weber)等人對現代社會「工具理性」的批判可說一脈相承。齊穆爾認為傳統「小民」社會重視人際交往的感情元素，強調小鄉鎮中人往往互相認識(包括物品的生產者和消費者之間)，人們的關係密切，然而在大都會中因為商貿活動頻仍，社會活動要有效運作便必須傾向於純粹理性的計算，於是資本主義不重個人感情的「準時性、可計算性和準確性」(punctuality, calculability, and exactness, 328)成為了人們生活常態的特色，「排斥非理性、本能的、至高無上的人性特質」(328-29)。有關所謂麻木感，齊穆爾尚有另一種說法，不是說因為過度刺激而引致感官上的麻木，而是因為金錢已經變成了人和人、物與物之間的主要關係，在這種「交換價值」(exchange value)以外的區別，人們便也許會感到不再重要(“experienced as meaningless” 330)。齊穆爾這種「左翼」的分析，當然沒有在蘭姆和亨特這兩位「城中鼠」(city mice)論倫敦的作品中出現過，跟前面引述蘭姆歌頌倫敦的商業活動一切「符合禮儀」的一段更是背道而馳，但和華滋華斯對城市生活一貫的批評，倒是頗為吻合的。回到先前提及兩組似乎相左的重要城市修辭(多樣性、混雜性和碎裂性 vs 同一性和單調性)，齊穆爾凸顯出的是多樣性(multiplicity)，也透過厭倦麻木感的概念來解釋人們為何竟然在面對過度刺激時，卻可能感到生活單調乏味；華滋華斯則在我們所分析過的段落中同時強調多樣性、混雜性(hybridity)和碎裂性(fragmentation)，卻沒有妥善的處理所謂城市生活的同一性(uniformity)和單調性(monotony)跟另一組修辭如何圓融的問題。當他在《序曲》第七章形容都市中人生活在「相同的、不斷流動的瑣事中」，無法自拔，「由於沒有法則、毫無意義和漫無目的之多樣性，眾人變成只有相同的單一身分」(The Prelude 1805,

7.695- 704)，背後彷彿隱含著一種超然的道德批判：一方面他強調城市生活的混亂龐雜，一方面他將所有多姿多彩的物質生活貶抑為「毫無意義」、「漫無目的」，而不像齊穆爾那般比較客觀地訴諸心理防衛機制。華滋華斯對同一性和單調性的陳述，也預示了稍後狄更斯和卡萊爾等人有關現代城市的主要修辭形式，不過卻沒有涉及「機械」(machine)這個維多利亞時期普遍的有關現代性比喻。這兩組修辭到底可以有著怎麼樣的關係，是否真的可以圓通？又如何華滋華斯以後之重要作家的論述中發展下去？我想這是一個非常值得深入探討的歷史性課題。

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Representation of China in Alicia Little's *In the Land of the Blue Gown*

In recent studies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European travel writings about the East, one finds a noticeable tension between what might be called a "rhetoric of celebration" and a "rhetoric of blame." The former reaffirms the Western traveler's heroism in surmounting difficulties and the lasting value of his or her civilizing mission, while the latter is obsessed with postcolonial blame, trying to uncover the traveler's complicity with imperial expansion or colonial desire.¹⁸ In the case of a Western woman traveler, however, very often neither of the two perspectives is entirely valid on its own. Indefatigable "lady-travelers" like Isabella Bird were remarkable for their incredible prowess and resourcefulness. They were certainly no fierce critics of empire. Besides, it must be noted that European women's mobility in the East in that age had to rely on an imperial infrastructure maintained by overseas traders, officials, missionaries, an aggressively expanding transportation network, and the native country's military power as well as economic and political influences. Nonetheless, feminist critics have convincingly argued that European women travelers, belonging to the so-called "second sex" at home, have often been friendlier

to Oriental people and can better appreciate indigenous cultures.¹⁸

Sara Mills' interesting study of Mary Kingston's *Journeys to West Africa* has highlighted the co-existence of and clashes between two conflicting kinds of discourses. Associated with Western adventurers and colonizers' heroic deeds of exploration or conquest, "colonial discourses" are aggressive in nature and seen by Mills as "masculine." "Feminine discourses," on the contrary, are characterized by meekness, self-deprecating humor, and a generally more open attitude toward alien peoples and cultures. For Mills, feminine discourses soften and even undermine masculine discourses in travel writings. Her study may be considered a remedy for postcolonial criticism of the crudest kind, which compulsively returns to scenarios of imperial aggressions and historical traumas. Methodologically speaking, Mills seems to have assumed that the two kinds of discourses are sharply demarcated and easily identifiable. However, in my experience reading Western women travelers' writings, sometimes what we can find are only ambivalences, ambiguities, or indeterminacy. In fact, the text could be rather illusive or "cunning." With regard to the representation of the East involved, sometimes the reader will not find it easy to determine which part of a text is appreciative of or sympathetic to the East, and which part is unmistakably attacking, demonizing or "othering" it. If we focus on the clearest statements and simply take the words for granted, we risk over-generalizations. A more fruitful way is to explore how different discourses or rhetorical devices interact with one another. Such textual complexities question the validity of any simplistic, indiscriminate postcolonial critique of empire in travel writing scholarship. The English writer Alicia Little's (Mrs. Archibald Little) travel book *In the Land of the Blue Gown*, first published in 1901, is an interesting case in point.

Alicia Little's husband, Archibald John Little, an enterprising merchant and explorer, was the first man who successfully sailed up to Szechuan, Western China, by a steamer via the great Yang-tse River. His book *Through the Yang-tse Gorges* (1888) recounts his courageous journey upstream in 1883, supposedly an enormous achievement of defeating the Chinese conservative policy and opening up a huge market for "British manufacturing interests" (*Through the Yang-Tse Gorges* x), an achievement made possible by the opening of the Yang-tse river to foreign trade since 1860, which, in turn, was the direct result of China's humiliating defeats in the Opium War (1840-42) and the Arrow War (1856-60). To accompany her adventurous husband, Alicia Little came to China in 1887, and had visited such famous cities as Peking, Shanghai, and many remoter places along the Yang-tse River. In her writings about the Chinese experience, one naturally finds what might be considered racism and various forms of English pride and prejudice. And yet, compared with

her husband's works, Alicia Little's writings exhibit a much greater sensitivity toward and empathy with Chinese people and culture. Susan Schoenbauer Thurin contends that Little's writings in general "[mix] feminine, feminist, racist, imperialist, and humanitarian perspectives that alternately indict and support institutionalized orientalism," and that "her books of travel and description is a blending of arrogance toward and sympathy for the Chinese" (173). It would be interesting to look into how such contradictory tendencies work in some subtle ways with reference to *In the Land of the Blue Gown*.

This paper deals with four of the most important parts in Alicia Little's book, namely, her visit to Peking, her life on a Szechuan farmstead, the anti-foreign riots in Western China, and her anti-footbinding tours. Chapter 1, titled "My First Visit to Peking: Before the Siege," nicely captures Little's ambiguities regarding Chinese and English cultures in relation to the question of modernity. The longest chapter named "Life on a Farmstead: Fifteen Hundred Miles inside China," on the other hand, provides excellent materials for a close study of the descriptions of her aesthetic experience as well as her more "mundane" concerns, and of the curious interactions between these two different kinds of discourses. Finally, the last two chapters about her anti-footbinding campaigns in China show us her ambivalences toward her feminist "civilizing mission," and might be read along side two earlier chapters on anti-foreign riots in Western China.

"My First Visit to Peking" gives us Little's impressions of China on her first trip to the capital. The beginning of this chapter expresses a sense of delight, as the weary traveler returns to Tientsin after the Peking journey and sees the "then newly-arrived Thevenet steam engine and rails," "shrilly whistling" steamers, workmen hammering and sailors "encouraging their donkeys and ponies along the Bund in true English style" (1). To these unmistakable signs of modernity and Western influence is added the image of "the fair White Ensign floating from a real, live, modern man-of-war," indicating the presence of British naval power (1). This picture of the hustle and bustle of the modernizing Tientsin is then contrasted with "tawny camels" which the author must rely on to travel from Peking to Tientsin and with the unpleasant smell of Peking. Back in the old city, Little reminds us, "every whiff of air we breathed assured us we were in the pre-Sanitary Period, when not only sewers had not begun troubling, but every other thing of the kind was unknown except that last modern development, the sewage farm" (1-2). This familiar portrait of Western cultural superiority versus Oriental backwardness, however, quickly gives way to a series of ambiguous and at times humorous cultural comparisons.

In regard to the motive of her trip, Little tells us that she was "wearied of London," and "somewhat overlaid with the cant of the day, aesthetic, hygienic, and

social-economic,” and that is why a sojourn in Peking worked like a “tonic” for her sufferings. Yet she tells us that, not unlike “quinine,” her Peking experience is “bitter in the taking” (2). Interestingly, right after she mentions the negative word “bitter,” she offers the reader some extraordinarily lively or pleasing descriptions of the city which are hardly “bitter” at all – for example, “those yellow-tiled imperial pavilions, glittering in the sun [...],” “the entrance pavilions [...] – deepest blue, bright green, bright vermilion, harmonized by golden dragons, imperially taking their ease,” and “an atmosphere whose transparency makes even a mud wall beautiful” (2). The vivid images, parallel syntactic structure and light rhythm convey a sense of excitement, negating the sense of bitterness she has expressed earlier on. This serves as a relatively simple example concerning how contradictory meanings might work at a subtle textual level. More complicated instances have yet to be discussed.

When claiming that the Peking citizens are “most democratic, and yet without one touch of Radicalism, always ready to make way for Acknowledged Merit in the person of a mandarin with eight bearers, and a crowd of retainers on horseback” (3), Little might be laughing at the people’s submissiveness and the society’s very lack of democracy. Nevertheless, the overall effect is more of light humor than “bitter” verbal irony. For readers well aware of the violence of the Boxer Uprising of 1900, the expression “without one touch of Radicalism” must have been intended as a sincere compliment rather than sarcasm. But this benign portrait of the Peking people might also be considered an idealizing trope, betraying a certain nostalgic longing for the Chinese’s harmlessness “before the siege” of foreign legations there by discontented peasants during the Boxer Uprising (note that the chapter’s subtitle is precisely “before the siege”).

As a tourist having an eye for exotic customs, Little seems to have been a little disappointed for not being able to see much of religious activities in China, claiming that there is no evidence of religious service “beyond the temples and the images” (4). She associates the Chinese’s alleged lack of religious fervor to their “wonderful [...] neglect of ordinances” (5) and claims even the Romans were more pagan than the Chinese. She agrees that “The Chinese have done more to heathenise the English than the English with all their missions to Christianise them” (4). But, rather than condemning the Chinese’s stubborn paganism, she attributes the failure of the missionaries to Chinese people’s laxity. When she tries to explain why the Europeans in China might go to a picnic on Sunday instead of going to the church, she contends that such “neglect of ordinances” is “congenial [...] to the human heart” (5). In this way, she has in effect considerably downplayed the significance of cultural or religious difference and stressed a common humanity shared by the Chinese and the Europeans. While some Westerners might say that the Chinese are

simply too practical-minded, that they “care for nothing but money, talk of nothing but money” (6), Little retorts that she cannot “make out that it [is] anything else the Europeans [want] to get out of the Chinese” (6). This statement is one of the few examples of her explicit critique of imperialism. Another example can be found in her book *Intimate China*, in which she tries to defend indigenous cultures and asks: “Why should we insist upon the Chinese swallowing our ugly clothes and ugly houses before they receive our beautiful gospel of glad tidings, I never can understand, except by reminding myself that that gospel never came from Shanghai or New York, but from that very Asia where still truth and beauty seem to Asiatics synonymous and interchangeable” (244).

In the rest of the chapter Little mentions the “charming nursery gardens at Peking” and comments that “[s]een from the walls, Peking looks rather like a park than a populous city” (6). She admires the grand city plan and acknowledges that in this respect the Mongols “appears to have excelled in what the English are exceptionally deficient in” (7). At the same time, she regrets that the Peking streets are full of rowdies and the rich seldom care for the poor. Observing how the Chinese poor struggle to drag their carts and wheelbarrows along the stone road running from the capital to Tung-chow, a “Ming masterpiece” then in a sad state of disrepair, her admiration and regret turn into an “indignant pity” (8), she blames the government for not repairing the roads and causing the sheer waste of manual labor. What is most paradoxical here is that, in spite of the emotional intensity suggested by the strong word “indignant,” throughout this chapter Little never mingles with the Chinese but remains an outsider observing from a distance, unlikely to be emotionally attached to any single person she ought to feel pity for in accordance with her humanitarian morals. She does try to be impartial when making cultural comparisons. Having pointed out the general backwardness of Peking and criticized the Chinese government, for example, she reminds the reader that England herself is troubled by the problem of pollutions and a Chinese might well lament the English people’s “apparent indifference to the deterioration of property.” Admirably, she concludes this chapter warning us that: “Each nation gets accustomed to its own short-comings, and has wide-open eyes for its neighbours.” (12) However, her repeated attempts to judge the Chinese fairly, despite her good will, have a noticeably detached and rationalist flavor to it.

If “My First Trip to Peking” is too abstract and distanced in its representation of China, then “Life on a Farmstead” vividly records how the Littles mingle with the Chinese in rural Szechuan. Unlike the rest of the book, this long chapter is rather loosely organized, consisting of dairy entries, some long and some short. The contents range from the descriptions of weather conditions, domestic routines, social

activities and local customs to the accounts of her short trips to Chungking and in the neighborhood. Of particular interest there is Little's treatment of her aesthetic experience, and how it interacts with a number of "mundane" concerns. In her book *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics*, Elizabeth A. Bohls argues that from Lady Montagu to Mary Shelley, many women travel writers "struggled to appropriate the powerful language of aesthetics, written by men from a perspective textually marked as masculine" (3). The three founding assumptions of the modern "masculine" aesthetics can be summarized as follows. First, aesthetic experience is universal; it is possible to make generalizations about the subject of aesthetic appreciation. Second, as particularly clearly expressed in Immanuel Kant, aesthetic experience is a matter of "disinterested contemplation," untainted by practicality. Third, the aesthetic domain is autonomous, separable from "moral, political, or utilitarian concerns and activities" (Bohls 7). I would not claim that Alicia Little consciously appropriates or subverts the so-called "masculine" aesthetic discourse. However, the piecemeal aesthetic descriptions in her farm dairy do deviate from such norms in some interesting ways. Seldom can we find extended depiction of her solitary trip in nature. Of course, she would, sometimes accompanied by her husband, go outside of the farm to take a delightful walk along the hills, watching the birds or the sunset, "admiring the exquisite cloud effects in the extensive landscape on all sides" (139), enjoying the summer breeze or the flowers' fragrance, or even appreciating the thunderstorms in the distance. Yet Little seldom adopts what Nigel Leask has called the "picturesque modality" of travel writing. According to Leask, this aesthetic mode of writing is anti-utilitarian and anti-georgic. The picturesque eye "could skim over any features which disturbed the composure of aesthetic form, as well as utilitarian traces of industry, improvement, or modernity" (168). The English picturesque tradition rejects "georgic conventions of prosperous husbandry and smiling cornfields for wild, uncultivated 'shaggy' terrain marked by 'intricacy' and 'variety'" (168).

Although in other chapters of *Land of the Blue Gown* we can find glimpses of wilder and more sublime landscapes, "Life on a Farmstead" is decidedly "georgic" (in a Virgilian sense) in its presentation of the busy everyday life in a more or less self-sufficient rural community. No doubt farm life has its less pleasing sides. Little complains that the weavers living in the next room sometimes worked so late into the night and disturbed their sleep. She also mentions that once "all the concrete threshing floor outside [their] windows, that [made] such a good place to sit out on in the moonlight, was taken up with yarn stretched on long frames" (117). But the summer sojourn there amidst such rustic labors was, on the whole, quite pleasant and "idyllic," despite a robbery that had almost ruined the tranquil, pastoral atmosphere.

This contrasts markedly with the next two chapters about the Szuchuan anti-foreign riots, which foreshadowed the much more devastating Boxer Uprising in 1900, ending with the burning of the imperial garden by the foreign expedition forces in retaliation.

What is peculiar about aesthetic experience in cross-cultural encounters is that it can unite as well as divide different peoples. Sensibility to natural beauty can often serve as a proof of cultural superiority, an indication of a refined capability to transcend the drudgery of mundane existence. And yet if the universality of aesthetic experience is to be insisted, then even an illiterate Chinese coolie or peasant should, in principle, be able to appreciate natural beauty and be elevated by the experience. Furthermore, the turn to aesthetic contemplation can be a means of escape from the “heavy and the weary weight” of life and afford us “tranquil restoration,” to borrow William Wordsworth’s words (“Tintern Abbey”). Little never emphasizes that the Chinese, at least not the uneducated rural dwellers, can truly enjoy such things as sitting on the top of the house “watching the thunderstorms moving all round” (138), or relishing the “fresh northerly breeze, bright sunshine, and exquisite blue sky with white fleecy summer clouds” (141), experiences that she and her husband often indulged in while living on the farm. In “My First Visit to Peking” she even claims that “the Chinese seem to appreciate flowers solely for their perfume” (6), and we must note that in the European aesthetic tradition olfaction is generally considered to be inferior to sight. But in this chapter, it is said that the farm children would bring Little beautiful flowers from time to time, not without a sense of pride. Whether these little-educated children are capable of aesthetic contemplation is unknown, but by associating them with fresh flowers Little offers us a benign picture of childhood innocence.

Let us turn to two examples where racial, class or gender difference might be subtly reaffirmed with reference to aesthetic experience. One evening, while the Littles were “sitting outside in the moonlight, enjoying the most refreshing breeze,” a farm boy who had displayed the greatest interest in Mr. Little’s foreign gun, interrupt their peace by asking him when he would bring it out again (120). Soon they found “all the men of the farm were going out with heavy sticks and rough spears to hunt an animal” that supposedly “stole their Indian corn” (121). The men entreated the Littles’ beautiful black pointer to help them trace the animal. But the hound “refused to be in the least interested” (121). Learning that what they were hunting for might be a wild boar, which had disappeared anyway, Little was relieved that “the peaceful beauty of the moonless sky with its galaxy of stars, and landscape looking perfectly lovely, now that the somewhat ugly foreground of paddy fields was veiled by night, was unsullied by slaughter” (121). And she and her husband subsequently walked up a hill to enjoy the fresher air up there and “tried to call the stars by their names”

(122). It should be noted that the rural Chinese's earthly desire of hunting is dramatically pitted against the cultivated Westerners' much "purer" sensibility. This is also a rare moment in which Little has direct recourse to the picturesque mode of representing landscape beauty – the veiling of the "ugly foreground of paddy fields" by darkness reminds us of the painterly "screening effect" recommended by such aestheticians as William Gilpin and Richard Payne Knight. [see Leask 169] The pointer's refusal to join the hunt is open to two interpretations. On the surface, Little says that her dog "rightly" remained indifferent because the boar must have already escaped and the hunt was necessarily futile. Taking into consideration the aesthetic discourse which immediately follows, however, one might as well detect a vague suggestion that the "Western-educated" pointer "rightly" stood aloof of the Chinese's utilitarian concerns. Conversely, one might say that the Chinese were more "barbaric" because of their apparent lack of aesthetic response to natural beauty and their enthusiasm about hunting wild animals. If my analysis stops here, then it would be no more than a conventional postcolonial critique, still pretty much a rhetoric of blame.

One must notice that, at the very beginning, when the boy came to the Littles, actually they were not really engaging in aesthetic contemplation – they were dozing off instead of appreciating the moon. There is a touch of sly humor in Little's treatment. Besides, throughout the dairy, Little's own mixing of aesthetic descriptions with accounts of mundane farm activities, is already transgressing the norms of Western aesthetics, which always insists on purity and autonomy of aesthetic experience. The hunt, in a sense, has stimulated rather than contaminated the couple's proper Western response to natural beauty. To assert a cultural difference, they correct their initially "improper" or "impure" response to nature. This aptly accounts for their supposedly "purposiveless" walk up the hill. The foreign gun part within this scene further complicates the picture. In another chapter, Little tells us that during the anti-foreign riots, Americans were more able to protect themselves because they always carried guns. The foreign gun, to the angry Chinese mob, is exactly a symbol of Western power and evil, an object of their fear and envy. Now we have a curious reversal here: the innocent farm boy, instead of dreading the gun, is utterly fascinated by it. In addition, Mr. Little's willingness to show him the gun also helps foster a kind of male bonding, which somehow transcends racial difference.

Another episode reveals that Little's "delightful walks" in the neighborhood might not be particularly diligent exercises. She tells us that while "walking along the shady side among the fir trees, she happened to notice a bird flying back to its nest containing four eggs and she "begged the coolies not to touch it" (123). She would like to watch birds freely flying in nature rather than being confined. Elsewhere in

this chapter we can see Little is very fond of watching birds fly. The coolies, in addition to serving as her guards, are probably also bearers of her mountain sedan chair [a photograph of a mountain sedan chair can be found on p.173]. In other words, part of her “walking” is likely to have been done by the coolies. Her superiority vis-à-vis the coolies is reaffirmed, arguably, with respect to race, class and gender. Because of her privileged position as a “woman of empire,” she had the power to command these lower-class Chinese men. Culturally speaking, she is more “civilized” as testified by her aesthetic sensibility and humanitarianism (she appreciates birds as a lively element of picturesque natural beauty, and she never wishes to harm them). Genderwise, her protection of the little bird and its eggs intimates a maternal virtue, which forcefully questions the coolies’ rough morality.

Although sometimes the Chinese are presented as “intruders” disturbing her aesthetic contemplation, more often we can see that Alicia Little happily mingles with them while taking a walk outside or riding her pony around. Maybe in the end, aesthetic experience divides more than unites. Nevertheless, the accounts of her own aesthetic experience in the diary sometimes also help smooth over cultural conflicts and must have assisted her in retaining a more “serene and blessed mood” (to borrow Wordsworth’s words again), so that she could better immerse in the local life with dignity as well as an openness sometimes greater than mere tolerance. Let me give two examples in this regard. In the first, Little talks about how she witnesses child abuse on the farm. Interestingly, right after she mentions that the little boy’s father has come to rescue him from her mother’s beating, Little moves on to describe the “[v]ery red sunsets ... last night” (151). There is no transitional device whatsoever, as though the turn to natural beauty immediately allowed her to escape from the unpleasant situation. In another example, Little begins with an account of her “ramble among the fir woods” (140), then she mentions some “very respectable-looking” local women try to talk to her. However, she is deeply annoyed when they stare at her when she goes into her bedroom to change her clothes. In fact, the Chinese women’s behavior is understandable because in that age the notion of privacy was almost unknown to them. In any case, right after she describes how she shuts the blinds “with indignation” (140-41), she moves on, seemingly effortlessly, to talk about “Scorpio, Cassiopeia and the Great Bear conspicuous in the evening” (141). Such swift transitions from the mundane to the aesthetic and vice versa, in defiance of the law of purity, suggest a remarkable cultural tolerance if not necessarily an absolute openness to the other.

Despite the Littles’ good intentions, their life on the Szechuan farm later moves toward an uneasy end. The turning point begins with the theft of a large part of their personal belongings. Suspected of collaborating with the thieves, the farmer’s son is

unjustly tortured. His sister, on the other hand, suffers from ophthalmia because of doing needlework for Alicia Little. While her son is being imprisoned indefinitely, the farmer's wife once kneels and weeps in Mr. Little's office, begging him to say her son is innocent. Seeing how the family suffer because of the burglary case, Mr. Little is "unable any longer to bear the thought of the misery [they] have anyhow been the means of bringing upon these poor people," and expresses to the authorities that "if it be but a question of recovering the stolen goods he would rather renounce them for ever than bring such trouble on [their] hosts" (181). The farm's misery does not terminate until after the true criminals are found and the young man released. When celebrating with the hosts, Alicia "with a sudden horror realized that the wretched creature, who had just knelt before [her], had once been the strong, hearty man, who used always to call out in such loud, cheery tones: 'Is it cool enough for you, T'ai t'ai [i.e. madam]?' on his frequent visits to his parents' home" (198). In the end, Little's intense feeling of guilt, revealed by the "sudden horror" she confesses, is only partly dissipated with the simultaneous appeal to the Chinese's inscrutable ability to endure sufferings and to a common humanity. "But he is a Chinaman [... and] since then he seems quite to have got over his torture" is a telling statement, hinting that maybe the writer should not feel too guilty about the young man's misery, because as a Chinese he can supposedly survive the mistreatment quite well. The keyword "but" also entails a sense of separation and otherness, implying a necessary limit to empathy. And it is after the Littles are allowed to build their own house in Szechuan rather than obliged to continue living with the locals that Alicia could write, with perfect calmness, that the Chinese "consists not only of Chinamen but of real men and women with simple wants and wishes not after all so unlike our own" (198).

In the two chapters on anti-foreign riots in Western China which immediately follow, Little's cultural tolerance faces the greatest challenge. The Chinese's resistance to Western religions has already been noted in the Szechuan farm diary; on the July 25, 1893 entry, the murder of two Swedish missionaries near Hankou is recorded. Not surprisingly, the missionaries became the main target of attack during the 1895 riots in Szechuan. All missionary premises, including churches, orphanages and houses, had been looted and destroyed. In fact, practically all foreigners' residences were robbed and the occupants were threatened to leave the province. Although their lives were not seriously endangered, Westerners must escape amid cries of "Beat them to death" (202). During the unrest, the rumor that "foreign barbarians" use children's eyes to "extract oil for photographs and worse purposes" (201) ran rampant. Little recounts that a beggar boy "was brought to the yamen with his tongue cut out, and this was said to be the work of the missionaries" (208). The tomb of a bishop had been broken into, who was murdered by the

Chinese seventy years ago; his skeleton was removed and the “poor bones were carried about the streets by the mob for the purpose of further infuriating the people against [foreigners].” “See, here are the bones of some of the people the missionaries murdered; we have just taken them from under the foreign devils’ houses,” so cried the rioters. It was reported that the Viceroy refused to take any effective action to curb the riots and might have even encouraged the mob to “pull down what [they] like and rob what [they] like” (206). Such cases of utter hostility and malicious cultural misunderstanding must have been very hard for Little to make sense of. While fully aware of some inevitable negative effects of Western cultural, economic and military “incursions,” Little never questions the value of Westerners’ “civilizing mission.” Instead of studying the larger forces at work regarding the often traumatic Chinese-Western cultural conflicts or simply demonizing the Chinese people, she resorts to the following rhetorical strategies when representing the riots. The first one is to put the blame on party politics. She explains that the “Hunan men” are then out of power; so they incite the riots in order to get the reformist “Ngan-hui men” into difficulties (199-200). In summarizing the Chinese officials’ responses, she contrasts the villainous viceroy, who in effect furthered the troubles, with the courageous Governor-General, who proclaimed martial law and quelled the riots. The second strategy is to downplay the general anti-foreign sentiments and the ferocity and determination of the mobs by presenting them as ordinary people being misled.¹⁸ Chapter XIII concludes with such a “comic” spectacle:

Chinese mobs are certainly peculiar. At Kiating the senior member of the China Inland Mission, who has so long lived there quietly winning the respect and regard of the whole neighbourhood, ventured back from the yamen, and himself inspected the rioting of his house. People all going in and helping themselves, and when he saw anything being carried off, for which he had a special value, he said, ‘Oh, put that down, will you?’ and they did so. On the other hand when a woman rushed out holding aloft with its sleeves spread out a nightdress, crying out, ‘What is this?’ he said, laughing, ‘Oh, take that home, and make clothes for your little children. It will do nicely for them.’ Thus they rioted and he looked on. (227-28)

These rioters, in spite of their utter disregard of the foreigners’ property rights, seem to be merely ignorant country folk. They might be “peculiar” and misguided, but ultimately, as represented by the woman who has the decency of asking what the nightdress is, they mean little harm. The missionary’s immense cultural tolerance and leniency had not only softened the conflicts but also testified to the moral superiority of the West, a subtle reaffirmation of the value of the “civilizing mission.” It is noteworthy that Little also mentions how the Chinese Christians boldly resist the

“pagans.” Reminding the reader of the existence of this small vanguard of a Westernized and Christianized population, Little is able to shift the focus from cultural confrontations (Westerners against the Chinese) to religious conflicts (Christians versus pagans), thus somewhat evading the question of Western cultural, economic, and political “encroachments.” Yet in her celebration of the Chinese Christians’ valor, Little reveals in one episode that these Christians “killed eleven of their assailants” (226), betraying the disquieting fact that the riots might have been more violent and devastating than what she would like to admit.

If the Chinese were only humans in their frailties, they also urgently needed to be “civilized” to become equals with Westerners – this may be one of the most important messages we can detect when reading Little’s account of the anti-foreign riots alongside the last two chapters on her anti-footbinding tours around China. Little considered footbinding “one of China’s oldest, most deep-rooted, domestic customs” (253), embarking on a campaign to emancipate Chinese women from suffering from this “unnatural” practice was thus most challenging, and, if successful, it promised to bring her the greatest sense of accomplishment. Little founded the Natural Feet Society in Shanghai in 1895 and subsequently began her “crusade” from central China to the South, publicizing her cause in such places as Hankow and Hong Kong. Her narrative concerned is primarily one of a success story, despite some temporary setbacks. It begins with the kind support of the China Merchants’ Company, which offered her a free pass to travel on board their ships all round China. And the “most learned” Viceroy, Chang Zhitong, had written his words against footbinding in beautiful classical prose, which could be shown to Little’s own audiences. With the support of some local government officials, influential merchants, and diplomats, she was able to lecture to educated and rich men as well as their less well-educated and often footbound wives or daughters. Although the audiences’ enthusiasm might vary from place to place, repeatedly Little recounts how women and even some men were moved by her words and after her talks they signed to join the society. Her talk in a room full of audiences at Soochow, described in details, marked her greatest success. An important lady while listening to her talk cried out: “I am sick and weary of the whole subject – I am tired of hearing of my feet – I am going to unbind them and join your society.” A “most literary lady” interrupted: “No! I first! I first!” (300) Elsewhere we can see that young men from foreigner-run schools also eagerly received Little’s message. With the exception of the ruling Manchu people, who did not as a custom bind their feet, quite a few of her warm supporters were already Westernized, like people in Macao, who had been colonized by the Portuguese, and people in Kityang, under the influence of the Reformist Movement. There were also people who, “by mixture with foreigners, [had] learnt to think scorn of old barbarous

ways” (287), to use Little’s own words. The grandest compliment she had ever received, however, came from an old Chinese official, the Taotai of Foochow: “You are just like Kwanyin Pusa,” that is, “the Chinese Goddess of Mercy” (293). He added: “Hitherto we Chinese have had but one Kwanyin. But now we have two. You are the second.” (293) In her postscriptum Little happily reports that in 1906 “the movement had been so advanced by official favour and Imperial edict and not-binding had become so fashionable, young ladies of high degree even stuffing their shoes to make their feet appear larger than they really were” (301-302).

Overall, the last two chapters celebrate Little’s feminist “civilizing mission,” confirming, if implicitly, the benign influences of Western education and religion. Nevertheless, two notable scenes of profound unease might also be found. One took place in a respectable residence in Hong Kong. In a room Little and her companions saw a young girl “sitting in gorgeous garments, painted and bejeweled to exaggeration” (270). When her “incredibly small feet” were exposed to the foreigners, the child “showed every sign of disliking [their] intrusion,” and she “humped her shoulder, turned her face away and almost kicked at [her] companion, making an inarticulate sound expressive of the deepest aversion” (270). Indeed, detailed depictions of deformed little feet, often accompanied by imagery of the Chinese women’s pains, appear again and again in Little’s text, arguably simultaneously catering for Western readers’ voyeuristic pleasure and justifying the Western “intrusion” as a necessary way of salvation. The deep emotional disturbance she experiences in this scene reminds us of her earlier apprehension that the Westerner’s intrusion, however well intentioned, might cause the Chinese expected sufferings, as witnessed by the burglary episode in the farm diaries. A similar scene happened in Soochow. This time round when Little touched the bandages of a merchant’s footbound daughter, meaning to loosen them and make her more comfortable, the girl “cried out and looked at [her] with an expression of such hopeless agony as [she] had never seen on a child’s face and hope never to see again” (288-89). Paradoxically, when confronted with that expression of “helpless rage and agony and hate,” Little managed her shock by making a firm resolution. She claimed that the child’s unforgettable face “would alone spur [her] n to redoubled efforts to do away with [the] custom” of footbinding. Such psychological defense mechanisms, presumably, must have helped her to maintain her optimism and carry on with her campaign, reassuring her that one day all Chinese women would be “thankful” to her mission. I have dwelled at length on *In the Land of the Blue Gown* concerning the complexity of a woman “imperial” subject’s travel writings, attentive to the rhetorical moves and all the contradictions, ambiguities and ambiguities therein that one might detect. I wish my example will be used for a reassessment of the

usefulness and limitations of Edward Said's notion of "Orientalism."

* Kindly note that the text about is still pretty much a work in progress. The Orientalism part is not yet finished.

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