

From Westmorland To *Westmoreland*: Taming The Tropics

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Abstract

The contention is that William Wordsworth was a laureate of Empire, a stance inextricable from his identity as a Nature poet. Wordsworth's contribution to colonial discourse will be examined in a postcolonial light through a historicist approach to his own poetry and non-fiction combined with an intertextual comparison with the Jamaican poet Lorna Goodison's "To Mr William Wordsworth. Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland" and a "A Quartet of Daffodils" which present a contemporary perspective on the iconic Nature poet's legacy in the English-speaking Caribbean, one that emphasises Wordsworth's relative indifference to the plight of the enslaved.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Postcolonialism, Romanticism

"Lincolnshire wolds. Wolds? Does that mean hills? How high? Half the height of ours, or not even that?"

(Rhys, 1997, p. 70)

The speaker, Antoinette Cosway, a white creole heiress, is contemplating a maiden voyage to England and experiencing a failure of the imagination. Her mind can approximate, by way of analogy, but never quite capture the referent encoded in the English language. Similarly, for the student in the tropics "daffodils", the subject of William Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", belong to a lexicon that includes "hoarfrost", "heath", "moors" and other descriptors that cannot be applied to surrounding nature. As Ian Smith demonstrates in his analysis of the Antiguan novelist Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*, for someone reared in northern latitudes "daffodils" will have meanings that lie beyond *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*. Arriving in late winter, the harbinger of spring, daffodils connote hope and rebirth. In the tropics, however, daffodils exist only as "absent things", the substance of rote learning but with no anchor in the immediate

environment, nothing to "recollect" (Smith, 2002, p. 806). Hence, from the vantage of the Caribbean, new connotations have been grafted to "daffodils" which discord rather than chime with the ideology of English Romanticism. This paper will show that the work of Lorna Goodison charts a path similar to Kincaid's *Lucy*, from tropical to northern latitudes, from an education based on "absent things" to encounters with the referent. But while Kincaid's protagonist remains hostile to daffodils, Goodison's speaker achieves a reconciliation of sorts. The poems are "To Mr William Wordsworth, Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland" and "A Quartet of Daffodils." First, Wordsworth's contribution to discourse on the Caribbean, most notably his eulogy, "To Toussaint l'Ouverture" will be reexamined.

Part I

In 'Misusing Canonical Intertexts: Jamaica Kincaid, Wordsworth and Colonialism's "Absent Things"', Ian Smith examines the significance of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" in Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Lucy*. As a schoolchild, the eponymous protagonist wins a prize for reciting Wordsworth's poem "Daffodils" but later fails to "recognise" the referent

when she encounters it in America. Uncannily though, the transplanted Lucy wishes for a scythe to sweep away the offending blooms (Smith, 2002, p. 814). Smith (2002) attributes Lucy's pathological response to rote learning constructed on "absent things" (p. 806). "Absent things" derives from the 1802 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, where Wordsworth, defines a Poet as one having "a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions" (Wordsworth & Coleridge, 2013, pp. 103-104), a conjunct to his definition of poetry as *the spontaneous overflow of feeling recollected in tranquility*. As Smith argues, when transposed to the tropics, irony of situation invests Wordsworth's term with fresh meaning, prompting an awareness that in the Romantic Imagination when it comes to the effects of empire on Nature, "absent things", most notably the environmental and human devastation of plantation slavery, go *un-recollected*.

It might seem strange that so innocuous a subject, the daffodil, can arouse such antipathy. After all, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" doesn't suggest the tropics let alone slavery. Is Wordsworth being maligned? In his

defense Smith (2002) says that Wordsworth "cannot be held responsible for the hegemonic purposes to which his work was put in overseas cultural management ... [by] cooptation into the regime of colonial education in the West Indies", and in support mentions two sonnets from 1802, "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" and "The Banished Negroes" (p. 812) which ostensibly indicate that Wordsworth was opposed to slavery. The brevity of Smith's reference, however, if left unexamined could sanction an exculpatory reading of Wordsworth's role viz-a-vis the West Indies.

The setting of "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" alludes to the Haitian revolutionary's arrest and transfer to prison in Europe.

TOUSSAINT, the most unhappy of men!
Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough
Within thy hearing, or thy head be now
Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den;
O miserable Chieftain! where and when
Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;

There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

(Wordsworth, 1994, pp. 363-364)

What's striking here is the language. Terms such as "Rustic" and "plough" evoke the same rural idyll on which Wordsworth based his doctrine of Nature. Toussaint is the prisoner of Napoleon but also incongruently an inhabitant of Wordsworth's realm of Nature. Moreover, in the lines that follow there is a sense of the equivocal about the poet's commitment to the cause of his addressee. Two critics who have subjected the sonnet to close scrutiny are Mary Kelly Persyn and Judith Page.

Persyn (2002) in "The Sublime Turn Away from Empire: Wordsworth's Encounter with Colonial Slavery, 1802" argues that Wordsworth's turn to the Sublime in Nature involved a turning away from the material reality of colonial slavery. This can be inferred from the sonneteers's actual counsel to the captured revolutionary:

Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort.

(Wordsworth, 1994, pp. 363-364)

In saying Toussaint will never "rise again", in asking Toussaint not to despair but adopt a cheerful mien, Wordsworth is advising submission (Persyn, 2002). Following the volta, Wordsworth counsels the fallen "Chief" to find comfort in Nature, or the Romantic sublime:

Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

(Wordsworth, 1994, pp. 363-364)

What we have here, according to Persyn (2002) is not the sublime but sublimation: "Wordsworth's turn to Nature manages to turn away from the facts of History by metaphorically sacrificing Toussaint". This move, encapsulated in the poet's advice to the captive general,

Persyn (2002) says, reflects a "general tendency of sublime theory to elide historicity, materiality and particularity".

This turning away, what Persyn (2002) dubs "elision of historicity", can also be seen in the next sonnet from "Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty", a poem whose shipboard setting recalls a "white-robed Negro" female traveller, a victim of Napoleon's late decree banishing negroes from France. Just as with Toussaint, the sonnet evinces an apparent sympathy with the plight of her race:

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

(Wordsworth, 1994, p. 364)

As Persyn (2002) notes, the poem fragments the woman's body. Her eyes are detached from mind and function as a familiar sign of the Other or "illegible", their "tropic fire" typical in that it isolates one aspect of the unreadable woman and makes it signify within a conventional orientalist discourse.

What should be borne in mind, however, is that Persyn (2002) is working from the final version of the poem published in 1845, titled "September 1, 1802". Judith Page (1994) has examined the earliest version of the poem, published as "The Banished Negroes", which tells a different story from that inscribed in the *Collected Poems*:

We had a fellow-Passenger that came
From Calais with us, gaudy in array,
A negro woman, like a Lady gay,
Yet silent as a woman fearing blame;
Dejected, downcast, meek, and more than tame:
She sate, from notice turning not away,
But on our proffer'd kindness still did lay
A weight of languid speech, or at the same
Was silent, motionless in eyes and face.

She was a Negro Woman driv'n from France
Rejected like all others of that race,
Not one of whom may now find footing there;
What is the meaning of this ordinance?
Dishonour'd Despots, tell us if you dare.

(Page, 1994, pp. 68-69)

Even a cursory comparison reveals substantial rewriting. According to Page (1994), the poem was revised in "1820, 1827, 1836, 1838, 1840, 1843 and then finally in 1845" (pp. 70-71). Most markedly, the poem's original title, "The Banished Negroes", was redacted and replaced with "September 1, 1802". Page's (1994) comparison of the original and later versions, essentially prising apart the layers of a palimpsest, discloses a process whereby Wordsworth moves away from the historical circumstances of the original composition to focus on race and gender in ways that uphold the myth of the Other. To take one instance, the "white-robed Negro, like a lady gay" and "spotless in array" (1845) was originally depicted as "A negro woman, like a Lady gay", "gaudy in array" (1802). Wordsworth's revision robs her of a sumptuary materiality and erases her identity with the imposition of a white

shroud. It is also worth comparing the closing lines of the final version with those of the original:

Was silent, motionless in eyes and face.
She was a Negro Woman driv'n from France
Rejected like all others of that race,
Not one of whom may now find footing there;
What is the meaning of this ordinance?
Dishonour'd Despots, tell us if you dare.

(Page, 1994, pp. 68-69)

Here in the original 1802 version, "The Banished Negroes", Wordsworth is making a political gesture, attacking the "ordinance" or decree of Napoleon Bonaparte which specifically mentioned San Domingo (Haiti), as a destination for those to be expelled (Page, 1994, p. 69). As Page (1994) shows, while the first version of the poem is rooted in the historical moment, the later revision trims the specifics and grafts a universalism, ending with a prayer to heaven to feel "for this afflicted Race!". The final depoliticised version of "The Banished Negroes", robbed of historicity (and rendered universal) is in keeping with Nicola Trott's (2003) description of Wordsworth's life trajectory from young radical to Tory icon. The transformation of "The

Banished Negroes" into "September 1802" shows that in curating his own legacy Wordsworth wrought enormous change, amounting to distortion of what was originally conceived in the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling [...] recollected in tranquility" (Wordsworth & Coleridge, 2013, p. 111). "The Banished Negroes" of 1802 is redolent of the actual passions surrounding their composition and not the cured emotions *recollected* decades later.

The analyses by Persyn (2002) and Page (1994) raise the question of how strenuous Wordsworth was in his support for the anti-slavery cause. The two sonnets indicate sympathy with the plight of the Negro but there is less evidence of an appetite for emancipation. While the Negress sheds her individuality and is ultimately transformed into a sign of the unfathomable Other, Toussaint is confined in a Romantic landscape. The foregoing makes it difficult to maintain along with Smith (2002) that Wordsworth's anti-slavery credentials are sound. In fact, when replaced in the sonnet sequence to which it belongs, "Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty", Toussaint's supporting role becomes apparent. For Wordsworth, Liberty is not emancipation of all but

more narrowly an Englishman's freedom from domination by a foreign power, in this case the "Tyrant", Napoleon, against whom Wordsworth (1994) will make common cause with a plethora of allies including the Swedish (Sonnet 7, part 1, p. 363), the Swiss (Sonnet 12, part 1, p. 365), the Tyrolese (Sonnet 9, Part 2, p. 375) the Biscayans (Sonnets 24-26, Part 2, pp. 379-380), the Germans (Sonnet 37, part 2, pp. 384-385), all of whom opposed the "Tyrant". Ultimately, Wordsworth's sympathy for Toussaint is part and parcel of the sentiments of a patriot. In Bonaparte, the Englishman and the Haitian Liberator share a common enemy, but that is all.

In pursuing Wordsworth's connection with the Caribbean, an ultimate track of enquiry must entail clarifying the poet's stance on the "Negro Question". Also included in "Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty" is the sonnet "To Thomas Clarkson" (Wordsworth, 1994, pp. 372-373), an ode Wordsworth penned to his friend, the prominent abolitionist, following the successful passage of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Bill in 1807. In his ode, the poet expresses the wish that now that the Slave Trade has been abolished, Clarkson,

having achieved his life's goal, will take a well-earned rest from campaigning (Tetreault, p. 56).

And thou henceforth wilt have a good man's calm
A great man's happiness; thy zeal shall find
Repose at length, firm friend of human kind.

(Wordsworth, 1994, pp. 372-373)

As Robert Browning would later lament in “The Lost Leader” (1845), Wordsworth was “bidding crouch, whom the rest bade aspire” (Browning, 2009, pp. 144-145). The 1807 Act may have outlawed the trade in slaves, which dried up the wells of slavery, but it left the institution intact, which latter lasted till final Emancipation in 1833. In the interim period, in 1824, Wordsworth wrote the following in his correspondence with Clarkson, who, contrary to Wordsworth's advice, had never given up campaigning for the end of slavery:

..., anxiously as I desire to see the condition of the Negroes improved, and slavery abolished, I feel the Question involved in so many difficulties, that I am inclined to leave it to the discretion of Government. The Petitions you are so desirous of obtaining may be of use in giving Ministers courage to act up to their own wishes; but is it not possible that those very petitions may make the Negroes

impatient under their present condition; and excite them to disturbance. I should like much to have the benefit of your knowledge on this subject.

(qtd. in Tetreault, 1977, p. 54)

Tetreault (1977) describes the letter as "dour and unyielding" (p. 55), a "chilly rebuff" (p.54) to Clarkson who had been soliciting Wordsworth's support for his latest drive in the campaign to finally end slavery. Wordsworth's equivocation on the abolition of slavery may seem "chilly" but as Tetreault (1977) reminds us, such an attitude was not uncommon and a reminder of contemporary anxieties when only the previous year a slave rebellion had been put down in Demerara, British Guiana (p. 57). Tetreault (1977) concludes that Wordsworth like many Englishmen of his ilk was ambivalent on the issue of slavery. While Wordsworth abhorred the practice he did not favour immediate abolition but may have approved a form of gradual emancipation, which was only one strand within the variegated anti-slavery movement (Tetreault, 1977, p. 57).

From the point of view of the Creole student there can only be one conclusion: Wordsworth's relative indifference to continued suffering after 1807 is a part of

his legacy to the Caribbean. In the Romantic imagination, "absent things" are commemorated in verse but distant things remain off limits.

Part II

In the early twentieth century "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" was reaping benefits for its author in the form of goodwill from Caribbean scholars, but there was also a hint of a disjunct between two worlds.

The violent conflicts of our age enable our practised vision to see into the very bones of previous revolutions more easily than heretofore. Yet for that very reason it is impossible to recollect historical emotion in that tranquility which a great English writer, too narrowly, associated with poetry alone.

(James, 1989, p. xi)

James' (1989) preface to *The Black Jacobins*, queries the very possibility of tranquility given that at the time of writing, 1938, the Caribbean, like Africa, was still parcelled out among European powers. Despite the absence of tranquility James' (1989) gleaning of the past would produce an eloquent history of Toussaint's role in founding the first slave republic, Haiti, then called San

Domingo. Nonetheless *The Black Jacobins* has little to say about the role of women. With rare exception, women as named actors seldom make it into the foreground. Instead, in James' (1989) account women appear as pawns taken in retribution (p. 88) or female barometers of Toussaint's legendary charisma (p. 259).

Despite the limits of male historiography, it is possible within the contemporary field of historiographic metafiction to reconstruct a female perspective of the past. Such an approach extends to poetry, where the Jamaican poet Lorna Goodison's work exemplifies the “poetics of matrilineage” (Kuwabong, 1999) which, to borrow from Wordsworth's own lexicon, “recollects” the unwritten history of women in the Caribbean:

Mother, one stone is wedged across the hole in our history
and sealed with blood wax.

In this hole is our side of the story, exact figures,
headcounts, burial artifacts, documents, lists, maps
showing our way up through the stars; lockets of brass
containing all textures of hair clippings.

It is the half that has never been told, and some of us
must tell it.

(“Mother the Great Stones Got to Move” Goodison, 2000, p. 44)

A striking example of such "recollection" is "To Mr William Wordsworth, Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland" (Goodison, 2000, pp. 104-105), an apostrophe to Wordsworth in the afterlife. Conspicuously absent from the poem's title is the word, Poet.

Today, William Wordsworth enjoys an unimpeachable eminence within the English canon making it easy to overlook that in his own life-time several of Wordsworth's fellow poets denounced a penchant for tergiversation as the poet gradually abandoned his youthful stance of a revolutionary to consolidating his position as Anglican and Tory (Trott, 2003, p. 13). A milestone in this perceived apostasy was Wordsworth's appointment in 1813 as Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland, a position owing to careful cultivation of his patron, the second Lord Lonsdale. In effect a sinecure, it gave Wordsworth the authority to collect stamp duty on legal documents (Trott, 2003, p. 6). Three years later, there appeared Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet "To Wordsworth":

In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty, -

Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

(Shelley, 1995, p. 15)

What would complete the journey to settled Tory was Wordsworth's appointment as Poet Laureate in 1843. In "The Lost Leader" (1845) Robert Browning, an infant when Wordsworth settled in Westmorland, is blunt about his former hero's treachery.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat

(qtd. in Trott, 2003, p. 13)

Most heretically, the sense of abandonment becomes a rejection of not only the idol's leadership but his work:

We shall march prospering -- not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us, -- not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done, while he boasts his quiescence
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,

(Browning, 2009, p. 145)

Someone who was once a "presence" is now scorned for his "quiescence" or reconciliation with the forces he

defied as a young man. Nevertheless, it was precisely this capitulation which would make him amenable to hagiography in the Victorian era. Within this context of betraying his vocation, the omission of "Poet" from Goodison's (2000) title is apposite.

"To Mr William Wordsworth, Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland" is delivered in standard English, the verses threaded with snippets of Wordsworth's verse and prosody which recontextualised resound in a discomfiting manner. In the opening stanzas, the "host of flowers" ("I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud") are buttercups, not daffodils, which leads to a paradox that sets the tone for subsequent stanzas:

Still, it was a remarkable show of sorts
which opened my eye, the inward one,
which once opened enabled me to see
the overflowing bounty of my people's poverty

(Goodison, 2000, p. 104)

For Wordsworth, the opening of the "inward eye" is what initiates composition when recollecting in tranquility. But viewing Nature (in the tropics) through her ancestors' eyes the Creole sees only an abundance of privation. Which brings

her to the purpose of her address: she wants the Stamp Distributor for Westmoreland to pass on a message to her great grandmother, an illiterate slave (name withheld), who like Wordsworth lived in a place called Westmoreland, only her Westmoreland was a western parish of Jamaica, her vocation, slaving on a sugar plantation, the only stamp she knew, her owner's initials burnt into her flesh. Great grandmother's songs were never written down, but stored in memory, to be recited or altered at will in deference to when and where.

She never did arrange them
the exact same way twice
but they were her powerful overflow
recollected in tranquility, sir, what she chanted was poetry.

(Goodison, 2000, p. 104)

Orature is pitted against literature, performance against print, the domain of Wordsworth's verse. Unlike Wordsworth, the poet's great grandmother possesses the griot's facility to rearrange her verse from performance to performance, a dynamic component that print with its finite form precludes. But Goodison's (2000) speaker isn't here to

discuss aesthetics with a fellow poet, simply to ask the Stamp Distributor to pass on a message to her ancestor:

[tell her] that I collected up all her songs and poems
from where they fell on banana trash.
The binding ones on the star apple tree,
the ones hidden like pound notes under her coir mattress.

(Goodison, 2000, p. 105)

The message is pointedly in a lexicon that evokes a completely different Nature to the Romantic Sublime.

I rescued them, rat-cut Blue Mountain coffee,
the ratoon and dunder ones, refuse and trash
of the sugarcane, the ones they call broken
and indecent, patois, bungo, words for bondage and shame.

(Goodison, 2000, p. 105)

Plantation terms like "ratoon" and "dunder" denote detritus, the leftovers used to generate new crops or batches, which is precisely what the poetics of matrilineage entails: sifting the detritus, compiling stories of the forgotten. The same verse does homage to the use of patois, "words from bondage and shame", which is a reminder that work like great grandmother's poems, composed in Creole English,

are no longer beneath consideration, but a significant body of work within the counter canon of Black Women's Writing as testified to in the work of Olive Senior, Grace Nichols, Valerie Bloom, and others. The poem ends by naming great grandmother, symbolically appending a signature to what was previously anonymous: "Please tell Miss Leanna her poems are now written down" (Goodison, 2000, p. 105). The deflation of the Poet to sinecured Distributor of Stamps to otherworld nuncio is a calculated snub. The poem configures a mutual indifference: of Wordsworth to the plight of the enslaved, and of the descendant of the enslaved to the literary monument that is Romanticism. Still a question remains, do daffodils deserve opprobrium? Goodison's (2000) "A Quartet of Daffodils" offers a further response to the fixture in every Creole's education, "I Wandered, Lonely as a Cloud". Like Kincaid's novel *Lucy*, the poem's setting is diasporic, specifically Canada but there the similarities end, largely because it's not the speaker's initial encounter with the referent but her "third spring, the third time" she has "been witness to the cycle of the seasons" (Goodison, 2000, p. 121).

Where I am born, there is no such thing
seasons just shift over a bit to accommodate
the one following [...]

(Goodison, 2000, p. 121)

The poem begins with "I think it must be spring" (Goodison, 2000, p. 120) and the final stanza closes with "I know now that this is undeniably spring" (Goodison, 2000, p. 121), a progression from incipient recognition to irrefutable confirmation. The speaker having grown attuned to the cycle of seasons is finally experiencing what spring means to the native of northern latitudes.

In this case, however, the quartet of daffodils appear battered and weary in contrast with Wordsworth's "dancing host".

They stand not straight but bowed over so.
I think they must have a hard time making it out
of their frozen birthplace inside the earth.

(Goodison, 2000, p. 121)

Bedraggled though they are the first quartet of daffodils spark empathy, not the alienation of first contact experienced by Kincaid's *Lucy*:

I feel so tender, like all early things budding,
And even if I am coming in exhausted,
bowed, bent, drawn, and yellow skinned
like the very first quartet of daffodils
I know now that this is undeniably spring.

(Goodison, 2000, p. 121)

She personally feels like the beleaguered daffodils bowed in the grey dawn of spring. Her "yellow skinned" complexion paled in the sun-starved north, she experiences an affinity and quickening with the appearance of the daffodils. After three years the speaker has fallen into the rhythms of her new environment After three springs she is tired and her skin has lost its vigour, but she no longer doubts that it is spring. She welcomes it.

Wordsworth's advice to Toussaint, the transformation of "the Banished Negroes" and the correspondence with Thomas Clarkson, all disclose the familiar arc of Wordsworth's life from adherent of revolution to staid sage. Goodison's poems have a twofold effect. "To Mr Wordsworth, Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland" delivers a snub to the effete Wordsworth and his doctrine of Nature. Meanwhile, in "A Quartet of Daffodils",

Narcissus pseudonarcissus is acquitted of all blame. But the intuition of Kincaid's Lucy does not play her false. Wordsworth's complacency deserves a response, for the celebrated Lake Poet is more deeply imbricated in colonial discourse than has been heretofore acknowledged. Indeed, an explicit and panoramic view of Wordsworth's thinking on empire can be found in *The Excursion*, a nine-book tome Wordsworth published in 1814 once ensconced as Stamp Distributor. In Book 9, the Wanderer, in effect a mouthpiece for Wordsworth, dismisses Malthusian fears of overpopulation. Rather, England should "Rejoice". After all they have "the mandate from above" (Wordsworth, 1994, line 367, p. 1052) to go forth and multiply. Plucking an answer from nature the Wanderer compares England's command of the seas to bees' command of the air. Just like the bees, Britain's surplus population can leave the "thronged hive" (Wordsworth, 1994, line 373, p.1052) and found new colonies on distant shores:

For, as the element of air affords
An easy passage to the industrious bees
Fraught with their burthens; and a way as smooth

For those ordained to take their sounding flight
From the thronged hive, and settle where they list
In fresh abodes -- their labour to renew;
So the wide waters, open to the power,
The will, the instincts, and appointed needs
Of Britain, do invite her to cast off
Her swarms, and in succession send them forth;
Bound to establish new communities
On every shore whose aspect favours hope
Or bold adventure; promising to skill
And perseverance their deserved reward.

(Wordsworth, 1994, lines 370-382, p. 1053)

For the Wanderer, i.e. Wordsworth, there is no need to fret about overpopulation. England's excess population can be used to settle further shores. There is no mention, however, of the indigenous inhabitants of those shores. *Terra Nullius*, the emptiness of overseas territories ripe for settlement, is assumed. Ultimately Wordsworth's vision is based on a false analogy between a bee colony and one composed by human settlers. As any Nature Poet should know and any naturalist could have told him, bee colonies do not displace, are not invasive or nullifying. The contention holds: William Wordsworth was the laureate of empire,

not the bosom friend of the enslaved, the downtrodden and the dispossessed.

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