A Cultural History of British Accounts of Travel to México. 1589-1900

A dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Ángel Gurria Quintana
Emmanuel College
University of Cambridge
2001
This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. In compliance with section 26 of the Board of Graduate Studies' “Memorandum to Graduate Students”, its total length is 78,687 words, including appendixes, exclusive of footnotes and bibliography.

Ángel Gurria Quintana  
Emmanuel College  
A Cultural History of British Accounts of
Travel to México. 1589-1900
Ángel Gurría Quintana
Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge, 2001

Summary
What follows is a study of British accounts of travel to Mexico, from the first ever published (1589) until those published at end of the nineteenth century. The focus throughout the research has been less on the texts themselves than on what they can tell us about British cultural history. Chapter I is based on a comprehensive and comparative reading of these accounts of travel in an attempt to identify their recurrent themes. A pervasive interest in religion and wealth, and the need to explain the foreign in terms of the familiar are the most conspicuous topics discussed here. A second chapter moves away from textual analysis and into the history of the books themselves. I have concentrated on the production and reception of geographical information, in general, and books about Mexico in particular, making use of some of the methods commonly employed by bibliographers and cultural historians to sketch a general outline of this very specialised segment of the book market. In a third chapter, I have complemented this overarching historical description with a specific case-study—the analysis of production, distribution and readership of accounts of travel to Mexico in 1820s London—for which I have drawn heavily on original documentary material.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>p. ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPARTURES: AN INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THEMES</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting the riches</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious ruminations</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britannia abroad</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. TRADING AND READING LITERATURE OF TRAVEL</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The traveller as author</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The forgotten middlemen of literature”</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagined communities: readers</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. MEXICO: A LONDON PANORAMA. 1820-1830</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 Albermarle St.</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 &amp; 106 Pall Mall</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172 Piccadilly</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 The Strand</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARRIVALS: SOME CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1. British travellers in Mexico – printed sources.</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2. Some nineteenth century books and production figures.</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Even the hardiest travellers cannot fail to admit the many debts incurred with those whose help at various stages of a journey was crucial. Neither can I present the following pages dedicated to accounts of travel without mentioning the people whose assistance has been essential to my work.

I am grateful to Peter Burke, who took up the challenge of supervising my research over the last three years. His enthusiasm for the topic has been a constant source of encouragement, while his guidance has been indispensable in keeping the research on the right track. Without his counsel and generosity, this dissertation would have been less exciting and a good deal less rigorous.

This work is the outcome of research that I began as an M.Phil. student under the direction of David Brading, whose contribution to it at that early stage was essential. Since then, other specialists from a variety of fields have made useful observations about particular aspects of it. Nigel Leask, Joan-Pau Rubié, Anthony Payne, Tim Youngs, John Ford, Juan Pimentel, Lourdes de Ita, Isabel Medina, Eugenia Roldán and Thea Pitmann have been very helpful both in sharing the results of their own research and in discussing and helping to shape my own.

I am indebted to many people who gave me access to, or helped me find my way around, the documentary material I used for this dissertation. Virginia Murray, at John Murray Publishers, was particularly helpful. No less important to my research were Michael Bott, at Reading University Library, Robert Machesney at MacMillan, Gary Thorn at the British Museum Archive and Clara Bezanilla at the British Museum's Department of Anthropology. I am grateful to Jeffrey Kerr, Titus Boeder and Hugh Boff for allowing me the unexpected privilege of reading the unpublished proofs of Alexander Thompson's book while sitting at the same desk at which Charles Dickens allegedly wrote the first few pages of The Pickwick Papers. It needs not be said that without the infinite patience of staff at the Cambridge University Library and British Library in London hardly any of this work would have been possible.

At The Travellers Club, where a small part of my research was carried out, I have been shown nothing but the greatest kindness. I am especially grateful to Sheila Markham, the Club's librarian, and Thomas Sutherland, chairman of the Club's library committee. Not only have they allowed me unrestricted access to the Club's archive and to its
extraordinary collection of travel accounts, but have shown a hospitality of which I feel undeserving.

Friends and colleagues have been a constant source of companionship and fresh ideas, without which it would have been hard to put up with the inherent loneliness of researching and writing. I am particularly grateful to Alexander McGuckin, Jan Rueger, Angela Spatharou, Marc Miquel, James Miller, Audrée Isabelle Tardif, Christina Granroth, Fillippo de Vivo, Silje Normand and Katie Halsey for their refreshing insight and indefatigable support. Friendship and support has come, too, from beyond the boundaries of college life and graduate student circles. Steven Boldy, Isabel Boldy and Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke have always been a warm and welcoming presence in Cambridge.

Throughout my years as a graduate student, I received financial assistance from a number of sources. The National Council for Science and Technology, in Mexico, supported me throughout. Complementary financing has come from the Ford-McArthur-Hewlett Foundation, from the Mexican Central Bank’s FIDERH program, and from Emmanuel College in the shape of an external research studentship. Support—financial and emotional—has often come, too, from my family in Mexico, towards which I have a gratitude that goes beyond anything I might be able to express here.

A final word of gratitude must go to Gabriela, whose encouragement and uncompromising criticism have been indispensable in allowing me to reach this stage. A perfect travel partner indeed, without her constant curiosity, her company and her affection, an effort such as this one would hardly seem worth the trouble.
ABBREVIATIONS

BMA: British Museum Archive, London.
Conway collection: Conway papers, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge.
JMA: John Murray Archives, London.
Longman: Longman company archives, Reading University Library.
Maggs: Maggs Booksellers, Berkeley Square, London.
SAR: Somerset Archive and Records Office, Taunton.
TCA: Travellers Club Archive, London.
DEPARTURES: AN INTRODUCTION

"The people of Great Britain (of all other famous and glorious nations separated from the maine continents of the world) are by so much the more interested to become travellers", wrote Thomas Palmer in his Essaye on... our travailes into forraine countries, published in 1606. He was articulating what Richard Hakluyt had attempted to explain in the preface to his monumental work, The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation, which first appeared in 1589: that "[the English] have been men full of activity, stirrers abroad, and searchers of the remote parts of the world”. This restlessness often associated to the English character so alarmed a bishop of Norwich in 1617 that he felt compelled to write A lust Censure of Travell as it is Commonly Undertaken by the Gentlemen of our Nation.¹ The fashion for European travel, later dubbed the Grand Tour, cemented the idea that an English gentleman’s education was not complete without some experience of life abroad.² Further permutations of the ideal of travel had it at the centre of the quest for scientific observations and, at the height of Empire, as a direct method for survey and control. In its transit from one form to another, travel remained a central preoccupation of English, and later British, writers and thinkers, the object of both loud condemnation and wide praise.

It wasn’t only the English themselves who commented on their bent for undertaking journeys. Foreign observers concurred that England has been the cradle of the most tireless race of explorers and travellers. It was the American historian William Prescott’s opinion that “no nation, on the whole, has contributed so largely to... itinerant expeditions as the English. Uneasy, it would seem, at being cooped up in their little isle, they sally forth in all directions, swarming over the cultivated and luxurious countries of the neighbouring continent, or sending stragglers on more distant and formidable missions”.³ In the 1870s the Portuguese novelist Éça de Queiros noticed such a hunger for travel that, he claimed, whereas people used to return from a voyage and then sit down to write about it, “today the journey is undertaken purely to write the book.”⁴

¹ Hall, John.
² About the Grand Tour see Black 1985, 1992; its forerunners are discussed by Stoye.
³ Prescott, p. 342.
⁴ De Queiros, 1970, p. 18.
DEPARTURES: AN INTRODUCTION

"The people of Great Britain (of all other famous and glorious nations separated from the maine continents of the world) are by so much the more interested to become travellers", wrote Thomas Palmer in his Essaye on... our travailes into forraine countries, published in 1606. He was articulating what Richard Hakluyt had attempted to explain in the preface to his monumental work, The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation, which first appeared in 1589: that "[the English] have been men full of activity, stirrers abroad, and searchers of the remote parts of the world". This restlessness often associated to the English character so alarmed a bishop of Norwich in 1617 that he felt compelled to write A lust Censure of Travell as it is Commonly Undertaken by the Gentlemen of our Nation.¹ The fashion for European travel, later dubbed the Grand Tour, cemented the idea that an English gentleman's education was not complete without some experience of life abroad.² Further permutations of the ideal of travel had it at the centre of the quest for scientific observations and, at the height of Empire, as a direct method for survey and control. In its transit from one form to another, travel remained a central preoccupation of English, and later British, writers and thinkers, the object of both loud condemnation and wide praise.

It wasn't only the English themselves who commented on their bent for undertaking journeys. Foreign observers concurred that England has been the cradle of the most tireless race of explorers and travellers. It was the American historian William Prescott's opinion that "no nation, on the whole, has contributed so largely to... itinerant expeditions as the English. Uneasy, it would seem, at being cooped up in their little isle, they sally forth in all directions, swarming over the cultivated and luxurious countries of the neighbouring continent, or sending stragglers on more distant and formidable missions".³ In the 1870s the Portuguese novelist Eça de Queiros noticed such a hunger for travel that, he claimed, whereas people used to return from a voyage and then sit down to write about it, "today the journey is undertaken purely to write the book."⁴

¹ Hall, John.
² About the Grand Tour see Black 1985, 1992; its forerunners are discussed by Stoye.
³ Prescott, p. 342.
⁴ De Queiros, 1970, p. 18.
This last point, though overstated, suggests a possible reading of the matter of that alleged English inclination for travel. Did the island nation, landlocked and wishing to gain a foothold elsewhere, effectively produce more travellers than any other in the world, or is it perhaps that the British wrote more about their travels than anyone else? Eça (to use the first name by which he is best known to the Portuguese) could not help noticing, with a mixture of shock and admiration, how accounts of travel were churned out in outrageously large volumes.

...the appetite for travel books is... considerable, and scarcely surprising in a foot-loose and expansionist race, with fleets in every sea, colonies in every continent, administrators on every beach, missionaries among every sort of savage, and in the depths of his soul the eternal dream, the beloved dream to remake the Roman Empire. This has produced another sort of literary industrialist—the travel-writer.

Eça then counted with horror at least 32 volumes of travel published in the last fortnight. Critics had already noted, with either distaste or feigned surprise, the profusion of tales of travel published every year. At about the same time that Eça was writing his Letters from England, the English writer T.G. Appleton complained about the “turbid overflow of journalizing travel” that “every year sees deposited upon counters of the London booksellers”—and promptly offered readers his own account of an Egyptian journey. What would they have made of the 50 to 100 new travel books published weekly in the United Kingdom during 1998?5

A history of travel is in no need of an apology. In the past few years the number of scholarly studies of travel has multiplied to such a degree that reviewers are already bemoaning their ubiquity.6 The broadly defined field of study has already spawned its own journals, international conferences and seminars.7 It is no accident that travel and its telling are receiving increased attention from geographers, anthropologists, literary critics and cultural historians. For one thing, travel narratives are perceived to be at the origin of many of their disciplines: not much needs to be added here about the intimate relationship between travel accounts and the growth of geographical knowledge; many of the early notions of modern anthropology and its methods came about through the

5 Hagglund, p.5. The figures were taken from the trade’s magazine The Bookseller (Feb.-Apr. 1988).
6 McMurtry, p. 42.
7 In the U.K., Studies in Travel Writing and Journeys are the two most conspicuous periodicals devoted to the topic. Recent or forthcoming specialised conferences in Europe and the United States show a growing interest in the field, as did the Cambridge seminar on comparative cultural history, held in 1998-1999.
confrontation of European travellers and cultures alien to them; as for literature, some have argued strongly that accounts of travel, factual and fictional, from the Renaissance onwards, lie at the very heart of the modern novel. Regarding the relationship between history and travel writing, Herodotus set a trend by using travellers’ accounts as sources—albeit with some misgivings—and by profiting from his own ramblings to describe, in passing, peoples of the past. Interpretations of the “past as a foreign country” have perhaps helped in making the association between journeying and history almost inevitable: if the past is, indeed, a foreign land, then the historian is the ultimate tourist. Written accounts of travel can prove to be significant sources for cultural historians in particular. “If we can only learn how to use them,” one of them has suggested, “travelogues will be among the most eloquent sources for cultural history.” Unlike the use most often made of travel writing by anthropologists—as windows looking into the customs of foreign cultures or “primitive” peoples—cultural historians wishing to use these texts will resort to the already commonplace assumption that the narratives are often more revealing about the culture of the traveller than about that of the places and peoples visited.

And yet, the academic study of travel writing is still plagued by an essential problem: we often take the idea of travel for granted. But neither is travel, as a “culturally significant event” self-explanatory, nor do travellers necessarily fall into a neatly defined category.

Does the mere act of physical displacement signify travelling, and should the displaced thus be fashioned as travellers?

In the preface to the recently published Picador Book of Journeys, Robyn Davidson, the editor whose credits include a book about her camel-rides through Australia and her time among nomads in India, objects to being tagged a “travel writer”. She is, or claims to be, resolutely “against travel writing”. It is interesting to note that her provocative text was first published as an essay in a magazine known for having championed the genre so decisively, and held responsible for its reinvention in

8 Cf. Hodgen; Clifford.
9 Cf. Adams; McKeon; Hunter.
10 Cf. Lowenthal.
11 Burke, 1997, p. 94.
12 Eiñer & Rubíes, p. 7.
13 The author’s information on the book’s dust-jacket informs us that Ms. Robynson won the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award for the first, and that the second was shortlisted for the same award.
its modern form.\textsuperscript{14} David son’s gesture is a sharp reminder of how vague the term “travel writing” is in itself. What, exactly, does one mean when invoking “travel literature”? Can leisurely tourism be classified alongside journeys of devotional pilgrimage? Should forced migrants be considered within the same group as scientists collecting far-fetched specimens for a cabinet of wonders at home? Explorers and adventurers have existed in all ages, but so too have necessary or inevitable journeys of the sort that do not usually generate their own literature.

If people have had many motives for travelling, they have often had just as many reasons for writing (or not) about their travels—to communicate their findings to a learned society, to instruct future travellers, to profit from sensation, to pamphleteer or proselytise. The endless variety of motives for both travel and authorship mean that travel literature as a genre defies all attempts at delimitation. One needs only to read Percy Adam’s attempts at defining the récit de voyage by negatives—not exclusively this, not just that—to realise how little, or how much, is meant when invoking it.\textsuperscript{15} In fact the problem arises when trying to set the limits of any genre. Describing the categories suggested by eighteenth century literary reviews, one scholar has recently shown how literature of travel—even fictitious—was always slippery when it came to labelling it. “While stories from real life can be reviewed as novels, other clearly fictional works—such as many of the sentimental travels—are relegated to the realms of the miscellaneous. In practice, the definition of novel, romance, memoir, or sentimental travel, is constantly shifting with the categorisation of the monthly catalogues, and is being redefined with each new issue of the reviews”.\textsuperscript{16}

This can be argued historically as it can be said about modern travel literature that is consciously hybrid. The genre’s borders have always been difficult to define, bending as they do to include personal travel diaries, literary accounts of a journey, collected letters, ship-logs, guide books, maps, the seemingly real accounts of fictional journeys and the fictionalised accounts of true voyages. In this mixed bag, Homer’s epic Odyssey sits alongside Xavier de Maistre’s Voyage autour de ma chambre (1794) and Ibn Battuta’s Rihlah (c. 1357). But the group might also include many texts by authors who, like Davidson, would object to being called travel writers: “…what about the less fortunate travellers, tugged around the world by circumstances over which they have no control—slaves, soldiers and the victims of war?” she asks. “You would not catch them at a travel writer’s party, yet their stories all fit an acceptable definition of travel-writing.”

\textsuperscript{14} Davidson’s preface was originally published in Granta, no. 72 (Winter 2000).
\textsuperscript{15} Cf. Adams.
\textsuperscript{16} Cf. Bending.
Her own acceptable definition of travel-writing is this: "non-fiction works in which
the author moves from point a to point b and tells us something about it." Her exclusion
of fiction overlooks the fact that fictional accounts have often been read as factual by
gullible or misinformed audiences who either might have been misled (as many of
Defoe’s readers were) or who might simply not consider the distinction between fact
and fiction (as in Ginzburg’s Menocchio reading Mandeville). The movement from point
a to point b, and the recording of this movement, remains the genre’s essential
condition. And yet, Davidson’s call for a “literature of movement” seems too vague,
while her suggestion of a “literature of restlessness” again ignores the fact that people
sometimes moved because they had no choice. If one must call it something, the genre
could be more aptly described as literature of displacement.

This dissertation is an essay in British cultural history. What began as an attempt to
sketch an outline of a particular strand of British travel writing—books concerned with
Mexico, from its early colonial period until the nineteenth century—led to an
exploration of other related issues: the production, publication and readership of the
particular texts with which I had engaged. In the case of British accounts of Mexico,
these texts—the Anglo-Mexican literature of displacement—include the tales of woe of
Elizabethan seamen as told to Richard Hakluyt and also the fictitious tale of romance
and adventure of an Elizabethan sailor in the New World as narrated by the Victorian
novelist Henry Rider Haggard; the genre takes in Thomas Gage’s account of years
spent travelling through New Spain as well as the tantalisingly brief descriptions of
navigators who barely touched the Mexican coasts; unwilling travellers such as Miles
Philips, captured at Veracruz and sent in chains to Mexico City, share the same
generic space inhabited by the wives of diplomats (Calderón) and miners (Sampson),
as do late Victorian ethnographers (Tylor) and late Georgian museum proprietors
(Bullock). Had this inquiry extended into the twentieth century, famous novelists such
as Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh and D.H. Lawrence would have completed the
group.

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz used the expression of “thick description” to
explain “the technique which interprets an alien culture through the precise and
concrete description of particular practices and events.”17 We can confidently say that
historical accounts of travel of the sort studied here perform the operation of “thin
description” rather than any other. But whereas their value for the historian of Mexico is
mostly anecdotal, they have a great deal to tell us about the culture of those who wrote

and published them. This, then, was the first assumption driving my work: that an assortment of “thin descriptions”, taken together, might allow me to create my own “thick description” of British culture. I attempted a comprehensive and comparative reading of all published British accounts of travel to Mexico, from the first known, up to, and including, those published at the end of the nineteenth century, and have striven to identify the recurrent themes and conventions (if any) that inform this body of writing. What surprised me most after reading books published over three hundred years was the continuity of subject matter and treatment. Even as domestic concerns and foreign politics changed, as travelling conditions and motives for journeying altered, certain themes continued to haunt the English-British image of Mexico.

Previous studies, written on both sides of the Atlantic, have dealt with the matter of English or British travellers in Mexico in various ways. The first is what we might call the antiquarian approach. Among English historians, J.E. Froude has celebrated the adventures of Tudor seamen in the Spanish colonies, and G.R.G. Conway has complemented the study of these sailors by exhuming records of their trials by the Holy Office in New Spain. Another Briton, William Mayer, has succinctly reviewed most of the known foreigners’ tales of Mexican travel. It is worth noting that both Conway and Mayer published their books in Mexico. Mexican scholars in this group include Berta Flores Salinas, whose México visto por algunos de sus viajeros provided a useful starting point, and José Iturriaga de la Fuente, whose four-volume Anecdotario de viajeros extranjeros en México remains the most comprehensive—even though analytically poor—attempt at understanding Mexico through foreign eyes. Both are rich in anecdote and naively nationalistic in tone. A more sophisticated result was achieved by José Ortega y Medina’s México en la conciencia anglo-sajona, which relied mostly on texts from Hakluyt and Thomas Gage’s seventeenth century account. It is, as far as Anglo-Mexican travel accounts go, the closest one could find to Silvio Zavala’s excellent América en el espíritu francés del siglo XVIII.18

Scholars of diplomatic history, too, have made some use of travel accounts. This group is best represented by Lorenzo Meyer and Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach, to whom, however, travel accounts are but marginalia of diplomatic and political history. In Britain, Missions to Mexico by Henry Mackenzie Johnston is a good case study of how diplomacy and travel writing were intertwined. Artist-travellers—from the landscape painter Daniel Thomas Eggerton, mysteriously murdered at Tacubaya, to the photographer Adela Breton—have attracted attention from art historians and even novelists, although mainly in Mexico. The most famous individual travellers—Gage,

---

Bullock, Ward, Lyon, Calderón—have been studied separately, often in the form of introductory studies to translations of their books.¹⁹ A shortcoming of such studies is their consistent neglect of other travellers, or even of the cultural context of the publication of the book of travel they are a preface to. Although critical readings of accounts of travel are lacking, a few recent studies have contributed to a much needed rereading of some of the classical books.²⁰

There is already a tradition of writing about the English in Latin America. Gilberto Freyre's *Ingleses no Brasil*, which concentrates on the impact of Anglo-Brazilian encounters on the material culture of both England and Brazil, is a remarkable example, although Freyre uses the accounts of travel as sources rather than making them the object of study. Closer to this dissertation's intent are studies by Jason Wilson and Ricardo Ciccherchia, who have dealt with English accounts of travel in Argentina.²¹ A gender-oriented study of foreigners, mostly British and American, in Latin America was offered by June Hahner. Meanwhile, Mary-Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes. Travel and Transculturation* is a significant contribution to the study of scientist-travellers—mainly Humboldt and La Condamine—in the region.

The present inquiry stands at the intersection of all the approaches mentioned above, but attempts to take the topic further by combining a contextual interpretation of sources with a comparative reading. I had set out to explore British cultural history through accounts of travel. Among the most pressing problems this posed was the question of how to transcend the merely anecdotal level of the accounts and use them to provide glimpses into mentalities. We are told about travel writing in the Renaissance that it "is rarely if ever interesting at the level of sustained narrative and teleological design, but gripping at the level of anecdote."²² A study such as the one I have tried to carry out must inevitably deal in the currency of anecdotes. By necessity, a history of travel and its by-product—travel writing—calls for biographical inquiry into the lives of particular travellers, their adventures and mishaps. A cultural product as specific as a genre of writing cannot be dissociated from its authorship any more than it can be severed from its context. So if anecdotes are relevant to this history it is because they are representative anecdotes, that is, they are "significant in terms of a larger progress or pattern that is the proper subject of a history perennially deferred in the traveller's relation of further anecdotes".²³ Practitioners of microhistory, too, have argued in favour

---

¹⁹ Bullock, Lyon, Gage and Ward have all been translated into Spanish.
²⁰ De Ita on Hakluyt; Leask on Calderón.
²² Greenblatt, 1993, p. 3.
²³ Ibid.
of the study of units whose “minute dimensions are redeemed by [their] representative characteristics”.

If we wish to interpret a particular text and its relevance to the traveller’s culture—understand how, indeed, it is representative of some of the latter’s broader aspects—the study of the individual text cannot suffice. Microhistorians have argued strongly in favour of contextualization, and for the presentation of individual “events” or documents within a broader group of related ones. Whether the historian decides to interpret this “event” in consonance or opposition to its context, whether one decides to underline its singularity or appreciate its typicality, the “comparative dimension” is crucial. “Any document”, we are reminded by Carlo Ginzburg, “even the most anomalous, can be inserted into a series. In addition, it can, if properly analysed, shed light on still broader documentary series.” Rather than an invitation to indiscriminate comparison, this sweeping generalisation should nudge scholars towards a more careful choice of texts and the series they are placed within.

Contextualization does not only imply the practice of serial history. Even though in the following pages I will present books of travel covering a wide stretch of time as documents in a serial history, it has been my intention throughout this research not to engage only with texts. As sources for cultural history, accounts of travel are fascinating, allowing the historian glimpses of themes and preoccupations that were such a commonplace among contemporaries they would have gone unnoticed. But while concentrating on texts can yield interesting information at the level of discursive criticism and intertextual analysis, it can only provide a partial image of an age’s mental landscape. Anyone familiar with the publishing process knows that even printed material is, in the best of cases, the final draft in a long succession of alternative texts. Because there is nothing inevitable about the printed text, it is best to avoid using it uncritically as a source of information.

One obvious pitfall of decontextualised readings of texts is the danger of overinterpretation of the sources. Reading meaning into—and coercing meaning out of—texts must be done with caution. Even a scholar known for his advocacy of “open” interpretation has admitted that “the text imposes some constraint on its interpreters”, that there is always some intentio operis, and that even if “there are no rules to help ascertain which interpretations are the ‘best ones’, there is at least a rule for

---

26 Ginzburg, op. cit., p. 21.
27 A lengthy discussion of the dangers of overinterpretation can be found in a review article, forthcoming from Studies in Travel Writing, num. 5. [Guría Quintana].
ascertaining which ones are 'bad'. Historians, surely incapable of suggesting the former, are well placed to point out the latter. I do not wish to imply that theory or exercises in interpretation should be eschewed. Instead, that historians should be interested in possible interpretations of contemporary readership other than their own. One is reminded of Robert Darnton's call for a juncture between literary theory and the history of books:

The theory can reveal the range in potential responses to a text—that is, to the rhetorical constraints that direct reading without determining it. The history can show what readings actually took place—that is, within the limits of an imperfect body of evidence. By paying heed to history, the literary critics may avoid the danger of anachronism; for they sometimes seem to assume that seventeenth-century Englishmen read Milton and Bunyan as if they were twentieth-century college professors. By taking account of rhetoric, the historians might find clues to behaviour that would otherwise be baffling... I would therefore argue for a dual strategy, which would combine textual analysis with empirical research.

The bibliographer and Hakluyt specialist Anthony Payne has complained about historians treating Hakluyt merely as a source, and called for serious study of the book itself. It was an invitation to understand The Principall Navigations not merely as a repository of anecdote, but, in an anthropological sense, as a cultural artifact, and therefore to engage with the often overlooked material aspects of its production. "Although books might be used as quarries," he wrote, "they are also objects, in a sense akin to archaeological artifacts, deserving study in their own right and which study will throw up insights and reflections on the interpretation of the past, be it the broad framework of society or the bibliographical of an individual." Furthermore, he argued, traditional bibliographical studies "neglect the other half of any bibliographical transaction: readership and dissemination, who read the text and how it was read and the extent to which the construction of the text either determined its reading or was itself determined by anticipated readership. Textual bibliography can also fail to acknowledge the relationship between author and publisher, not simply in contractual terms, but especially how the art and mechanics of publishing can determine the appearance of a text."

This is exactly what bibliographers like Donald McKenzie and historians such as Roger Chartier had been preaching: a history of the book that considers more than the actual text and its genesis. Chartier famously described this new history as "defined by three poles that the academic tradition usually keeps separate: first, the analysis of

---

28 Eco, p. 60.  
30 Payne, 1997, p. 3.  
31 Ibid., p. 4.
texts, be they canonical or ordinary, to discern their structures, their themes, and their aims; second, the history of books and, beyond that, the history of all objects and all forms that bear writings; third, the study of practices that seize on these objects and these forms in a variety of ways and produce differentiated uses and meanings." In short, Chartier was defending a three-pronged history of books that encompassed the study of authorship, production and readership. This is the same type of history of the book that is championed by Darnton, to whom "book history concerns each phase of this process and the process as a whole, in all its variations over space and time and in all its relations with other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural, in the surrounding environment." In practice, Darnton's book history encompasses the study of authors, publishers, printers, distributors, retailers and readers. Jon Klancher has summed up this approach by reminding us is the cultural critic or historian's task to multiply the mediators in a book's production process, not eliminate them.

When Anthony Payne asked for more attention to be paid to the history of the book he was referring to the best known of all English compilations of travel. But other less known books of travel deserve the same attention. What I have attempted here is a history of the production and readership of travel writing, through a comprehensive study of published accounts regarding a very specific location. This is a relatively unexplored field, although studies like Mark Davie's monograph on British travel books about Scandinavia are already being carried out. As more research of this sort is completed, a clearer picture will emerge of the history behind one of the most pervasive and significant genres of writing in the English language.

In the following pages, I will examine three hundred years in the history of publication and readership of most of the known published accounts of travel to Mexico. It is here, I believe, that this dissertation's contribution ultimately lies. Comparison over such large stretches of time has its disadvantages, the most obvious being that what I have gained in breadth I may have lost in depth. Still, I hope to have overcome this limitation by combining detailed analyses of particular cases with a concern for the overarching narrative that weaves its way through three hundred years of Anglo-Mexican encounters. Secondly, reading practices change, as do those of publishing, which means that long-term comparison can hinder rather than help our understanding of particular cases. Again I hope to have eluded this by pointing out the time-specific nature of some of them.

---

32 Chartier, pp. 2-3.
33 Darnton, 1990, p. 111
34 Klancher, p. 9.
The text is divided into three chapters. The first is an exploration of the main themes that run through British travel writing about Mexico. This attempt to show how the later texts display some of the same discursive traits shown in the earliest accounts will focus on the twin obsessions of wealth and religion, and then illustrate how Britons abroad attempted to make sense of their experiences by referring constantly to familiar references. In the second chapter I have given some consideration to the history and emergence of authors, publishers and readers of British travel books in general and, more specifically, books related to Mexico. The third chapter is a close study of a very active period in the publishing of British books about travel to Mexico (1820-1830). It is, in more ways than one, the sort of history I wished I could have written about all other texts in all other periods, had more time and sources been available.

A few words about the chronological limits of the dissertation are appropriate. The opening date for this study is unproblematic: 1589, the year of the publication of Hakluyt's first edition. The closing date, roughly at the end of the nineteenth century, might pose some problems. A natural cut-off point would have been Mexican independence (1821), although this would have left out a great wealth of nineteenth-century texts. More significantly, I would not have been able to explore whether the themes of early texts based on exceptional experiences were sustained once the door was open to foreigners in general, and the British in particular. Once it was established that the nineteenth century could not be left out, the question remained of where to draw the line. Should some external landmark date be chosen with reference to events in Britain, or in Mexico? I thought it most appropriate to reflect on the texts themselves, rather than the circumstances about them. The turn of the century ushers in a new period in British books about Mexico. To begin with, as the travelogue by Ethel Tweedie shows, it marks the rise of a new type of text—the travel guide—that had for long been in existence about European countries and the United States, but was new in the literature about Mexico. A different type of travel-related material, one more concerned with the practical needs of travellers, was beginning to grow alongside the confessional account of travel. There is a second consideration: owing to the growing popularity of American authors in nineteenth century Britain, and the growing cooperation between American and British publishers, it is less justified in the latter part of the century to speak of British accounts of travel and their readership. In more ways than one the two book markets were converging. In the same way that early nineteenth century readers were getting many of their ideas of Mexico from translations of Alexander von Humboldt, during the second half of the century most were getting their cues from American authors like William Prescott.
Like travel, research and writing proceed by a combination of predetermination and chance. Rarely is the mind of the traveller or the historian a blank slate. We know too well that when travellers set out, they carry among their baggage some idea—more often a very inaccurate idea—of what lies ahead. A traveller's first operation, then, is that of making his expectations come to terms with his or her actual findings. A second problem faced by those who write about their travels is in communicating their discoveries in a language that is at once true to their experience and familiar to others who have not shared it. Scholars approaching their subject perform similar operations. The research behind this dissertation has taken unexpected turns. The unexpected discoveries have—as they tend to on the road—provided some of the most fruitful moments. I set out to produce a textual exploration of accounts of travel, convinced that they would yield some information about British attitudes and mentalities. The necessary diversion into the history of publishing and reading was most rewarding. "Tis not to divert the reader", wrote William Dampier in his preface, "but for Method's sake, and for the reader's satisfaction" that he presented his book of travels. I hope that, in presenting here some of my own discoveries, I will be able to engage the reader while remaining true to my sources. Should I succeed, I am confident this dissertation will prove to be a significant contribution to the fields of British cultural history, Mexican history, and to the growing history of travel and travel writing.
I. THEMES

Sailing back to Acapulco after her maiden voyage to the Philippine islands, the Santa Ana came within sight of the coast of Lower California. The 700-ton ship, an Admiral of the Seas in the Spanish fleet of the Pacific, drifted towards Cape San Lucas on a tradewind, heavily laden with Chinese silk, satin, damask and porcelain, Indian cotton, wine-filled barrels and musk-filled flasks, tropical fruit preserves, chests full of nutmeg, cinnamon and pepper from the Spice Islands, and sacks of pearls from the China sea. Also on board were 122 thousand gold pesos—in all, one chronicler later surmised, “enough to make them all Gentlemen that shared in it”.

Never before, it was commented, had a ship with such valuable cargo arrived in New Spain. The galleon was carrying more than 300 passengers and—except for a few muskets, arquebuses and some gunpowder—had very little in the way of defense. On the afternoon of November 4, 1587, according to the Gregorian calendar, her lookout spotted the sails of two vessels that he fatally mistook for pearl-fishers.

The English flagship Desire, a man-of-war of 120 tons armed with 29 brass cannons and captained by Thomas Cavendish, and the Content, of only 60-ton capacity and 10 cannons on board, had been moored off the Californian peninsula for many days. At the harbored inlet of San Lucas the sea-stricken sailors had been able to recover after a trying 15-month journey from Plymouth. Already 23 men and one vessel had been lost to scurvy and to the unmerciful crossing of the Magellan strait. But, as this expedition of circumnavigation had earlier skipped along the western coast of Central America, it had managed to capture a Spanish ship whose pilot informed them about the arrival in Acapulco of two galleons, expected in November. The Santa Ana was one of them. Cavendish had set sail for the California peninsula hoping to intercept them on their homebound stretch.

---

35 "...now every pezo in Silver is valued at eight shillings, and consequently in proportion a pezo in Gold must be worth four pound sixteen shillings, so that the whole value of the prize [of the Santa Ana] could not be less than Ten Hundred Thousand Pound, or a Million of Sterling money, enough to make them all Gentlemen that shared in it." [Crouch, N., The English Empire in America..., London: pr. for N. Crouch, 1635, pp. 50-51]. To further put the value of the galleon’s cargo in perspective, consider that in 1592 the prize value of a Portuguese galleon, the Madre de Deus, estimated at half a million pounds sterling, amounted to “half the net value of the entire English Exchequer at that date.” [Sobel, D., Longitude, London: Fourth Estate Ltd., 1996, p.15]

in Acapulco, church bells were already announcing the long-anticipated arrival of the *naos* from Manila. However, local authorities and merchants knew they weren't the only ones waiting for the ships. A skiff had been dispatched by the Viceroy to warn the approaching galleons of the English presence, but had failed to make contact with the *Santa Ana*. So it was already early morning of November 5th when her captain realised that the ships ahead were fishing for more than pearls. By noon, these two vessels had caught up with her.

Unable to compete with the English gunfire, the Spanish galleon's crew nevertheless managed to fend off the attackers for almost six hours before capitulating. Finally, with her sails torn to shreds, her masts destroyed and her hull perforated by cannon balls, and with some 190 of her passengers or crew dead, the *Santa Ana* was boarded and stripped by the English. Out of the 700 tons of cargo, they managed to carry off only 200 on their ships. Cavendish, not one to breach procedure, gave the defeated captain a signed receipt for the loot before leaving him and the surviving passengers ashore on the nearest beach with enough provisions to stay alive for a few days. The *Content*, laden with one third of the prize, sailed north never to be heard from again. Cavendish's *Desire*, weighted with the greater part of the spoils, set sail westwards as the remains of the *Santa Ana* burned in its wake.38

For centuries to come — indeed, until the war of Mexican independence brought the galleon route to an abrupt halt in the early nineteenth century — this feat, and others inspired by it, would be endlessly celebrated as the epitome of English, and later British, naval supremacy. History does not, perhaps, repeat itself as often as historians do, and chroniclers seemed never to tire of retelling the story of how England's second circumnavigator took from the King of Spain the largest imaginable treasure. The story was spectacular enough in itself to deserve repetition. It also fit in with one of the constant themes in British travel literature about Mexico: wealth in all its forms. It was foremost among the handful of topics consistently discussed by British travellers to Mexico, from the accounts published by Hakluyt until the late nineteenth century. In this chapter I will attempt to illustrate the recurrence of the two themes that are by far the most conspicuous in this particular literature — riches and religion. To close this chapter on the common *topoi*, a final section will shed some light on that inevitable operation, so familiar to travel writers, whereby their experiences of the foreign are translated into the terms of the familiar.

---

37 In England, where the Gregorian calendar was not used until 1752, this date was registered as Saturday Nov. 14th.
Reporting the riches

From the time of the actual occurrence until the end of New Spain's trade with the Philippines, Cavendish's accomplishment was trumpeted in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589), Purchas' *Pilgrimes* (1626), Nathaniel Crouch's *English Empire in America* (1635) and John Harris' *Compleat Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1705); it was notoriously mentioned in a naval tract in the Churchill brothers' *Collection of voyages* (1732), included in the fifth volume of Samuel Johnson's *World Displayed* (1774) and in the collections edited by Charles Jenkins (1739), Edward Drake (1768) and J.H. Moore (1785). Only a year after the event, no less than three ballads —now lost— were entered at the Stationers' Hall.\(^{39}\) Needless to say, the episode was quoted by most of the English navigators who sailed in Cavendish's wake and later published their exploits in print. By taking the *Santa Ana*, perhaps even more so than by successfully sailing around the world, Cavendish entered the pantheon of British naval heroes, invariably mentioned alongside the greatest of them, Sir Francis Drake. But by capturing the famed galleon, something not even Drake had achieved, he also captured his countrymen's imagination and helped in fixing New Spain, if only vaguely, somewhere on the blurred mental map of contemporary readers. Fernando Benítez has beautifully summed up the impact that the near-legendary Manila or China galleons had on contemporary minds:

> What was the China *Nao*? Something that escapes history, one of Turner's ships fading away into twilight's luminousness, Aladdin's treasure galloping on the ocean's back, a sea-borne purgatory, a phantom vessel, the ship of fools, women's dresses, Damask tablecloths, farewell handkerchiefs, human suffering, the poor man's lottery, the wealth of nations, the bird of paradise, that magic that lasted for 250 years and was only extinguished when the wind of independence made it sink to the ocean floor, where it still remains intact.\(^{40}\)

In innumerable maritime accounts following the time of Cavendish, New Spain thus became not only another necessary stepping stone in long voyages of circumnavigation, but, above all, the place where the great wealth of the Pacific trade could be more easily looted. The fame of places like Acapulco grew with every new description of the riches that were shipped in and out of the port, and every new attempt at capturing it from the Spaniards. Material enrichment, hierarchical advancement and —as Admiral George Anson would discover over a century later— editorial fame lay in store for those who succeeded. This trend seems consistent with the prevalent and lingering vision of New Spain as the treasure house of the Spanish

\(^{40}\) Introduction to Wimer, p. 39.
Empire. Thus, from Drake’s raid of Huatulco, in 1579, to Captain Basil Hall’s arrival in Acapulco, in 1821, there appears to be a sub-genre of nautical travel writing in which New Spain figures as a powerful magnet for gold-hungry mariners. Mostly described or recalled from the ships’ decks as an unbroken coastline often undistinguished from that of other Spanish possessions, it nevertheless appears to have been an almost obligatory stopover for any captain worth his salt.

According to his own account, John Chilton, an English merchant who “being desirous to see the world” did extensive travelling in New Spain between 1568 and 1586, lost “above a thousand duckets” when Francis Drake raided the port of Huatulco, on the Pacific coast of New Spain.\textsuperscript{41} Drake’s own account of the event is remarkably understated:

The next harbour therefore which we chanced on, on April 15, in 15 deg. 40 min., was Guatulco so named of the Spaniards who inhabited it, with whom we had some entercourse, to the supply of many things which we desired, and chiefly bread &c. And now having reasonably, as wee thought provided for our selves, we departed from the coast of America for the present: but not forgetting, before we gate a shipboard, to take with us also a certaine pot (of about a bushell in bignesse) full of ryalls of plate, which we found in the town; together with a chaine of gold, and some other jewells, which we intreated a gentleman Spaniard to leave behind him, as he was flying out of towne.\textsuperscript{42}

It is no small irony that Chilton, one of the first English to visit New Spain, should have ended up on the wrong side of the most infamous of his compatriot’s attack. Or that another of his countrymen, a certain Miles Philips, who had sailed to New Spain in the company of John Hawkins and Drake eleven years back, should have been forced by Spanish authorities to act as translator aboard the ship charged with chasing and capturing that scourge of all Spanish ports. However, by the time the expedition to capture “El Drake” was underway, his \textit{Golden Hind} was already near the coast of Upper California. There, in some unspecified bay, it made its last American landfall. In the name of the Queen, Drake claimed possession of an unexplored corner of the Spanish colony. It was to be called New Albion, he decided, because of the chalky white cliffs that so reminded him of the ones that had once caused Romans to speak of his homeland as Albion. “There is no part of earth here to bee taken up, wherein there is not some speciall likelihood of gold and silver”, reported an anonymous chronicler

\textsuperscript{41} “A notable discourse of M. John Chilton, touching the people, manners, mines, cities, riches, forces, and other memorable things of New Spaine, and other provinces in the West Indies, seene and noted by himselfe in the time of his travels, continued in those parts, the space of seventeene or eighteene yeeres”, in Hakluyt, \textit{Principall Navigations} (1926), 268.

\textsuperscript{42} The \textit{World Encompassed}, London, 1628, p. 62.
aboard the ship. But preoccupied as he was with trying to find the Manila galleon and continue his circumnavigation, Drake, like Cavendish nine years later, had little time to spare for what seemed an otherwise unremarkable territory.

The dearth of English voyages along the coast of New Spain from the time of Cavendish until the late seventeenth century was abundantly compensated for by a wealth of publications extolling the early expeditions. The golden age of English travel begot a golden age of English travel writing, with the compilations of Hakluyt and Purchas as witnesses to England’s hardiness.

The circumnavigation of William Dampier, and the publication of his Voyage Round the World (1697) seem to have rekindled public interest in the Spanish colony and triggered the wave of exploration that preceded the voyages of Captain Cook. But, as was the case with Drake and Cavendish, Dampier’s compass appears to have pointed to an auriferous rather than magnetic north. The few sites he mentioned must have already been familiar to his readers: “It was on the 12th of October, 1685, when we set out of the Harbour of Guatulco with our ships. The land here lies along the West... We kept near the shoar, which was all sandy Bays; the Country pretty high and woody, and a great Sea tumbling in upon the shoar.” It is not long before Dampier confesses his intentions: “the great design we had then in Hand, was to lie and wait for a rich Ship which comes to Acapulco every Year richly laden from the Philippine Islands”.

About the Pacific trade Dampier offers information presumably obtained from Indian and Spanish informers on the mainland: “The ships that trade hither are only 3, two that constantly go once a year between this and Manila in Luconia, one of the Philippine Islands, and one Ship more every year to and from Lima. This from Lima commonly arrives a little before Christmas; she brings them Quicksilver, Cacao, and pieces of Eight. Here she stays till the Manila Ship arrives, and then takes in a Cargo of Spices, Silks, Callicoes, and Muzlins, and other East India Commodities for the use of Peru, and then returns to Lima. This is but a small vessel of 20 guns, but the 2 Manila ships are each said to be above 1000 tun.”

Unfortunately for his naval and literary career, Dampier would be unable to verify this last fact—a fanciful but not untypical overestimate. While trying to find food and water on land, the galleon sailed by unnoticed. “Our hopes of meeting the

---

43 “The course which Sir Francis Drake held from the haven of Guatulco in the South sea on the backe side of Nueva Espanna, to the North-west of California as far as fourtie three degrees:...”, in Hakluyt (1926), 240.
44 Dampier, p.245.
Philippine ship were now over; for we did all conclude, that while we were necessitated to hunt here for Provisions, she was past by to the Eastward, as indeed she was... and so we were forced to be victualling when we should have been cruising off Cape Corrientes, in expectation for the Manila Ship”.

Dampier and his men still had some hope that profit might come from this leg of their voyage.

Hitherto we had coasted along here with 2 different designs. The one was to get the Manila Ship which would have enriched us beyond measure... Sir Thomas Cavendish formerly took the Manila Ship off Cape San Lucas (where we also could have waited for her, had we been early enough stored with provisions, to have met her there) and threw much rich good over-board. The other design,..., was to search along the Coast for rich towns, and Mines chiefly of Gold and Silver, which we were assured were in this country, and we hoped near the shore: not knowing (as we afterwards found out) that it was in effect an Inland Country, its Wealth remote from the South Sea Coast, and having little or no commerce with it; its trade being driven eastwards with Europe, by La Vera Cruz. Yet we still had some expectation of Mines, and so resolved to steer farther Northward.\(^{45}\)

Further north, any hint of possible riches once again came from hearsay rather than autopsy: “I have been told since by a Spaniard that said he had been at the Island of California, that there are great plenty of Pearl Oysters there, and that the native indians of California, near the Pearl-Fishery, are mortal enemies to the Spaniards”. Early Spanish explorers in the area had, in fact, been famously engaged in the search for the fabulous island of Cihuatán, populated with Amazons ruled by a Queen Calafia, its beaches strewn with pearls.\(^{46}\) The barren deserts bordering the mountains and seascapes of what cartographers still mistook for an island must have been a great disappointment to many. Although two centuries later some of the largest pearl farms in the Lower California Peninsula would indeed be in English hands,\(^{47}\) and some lustrous specimens would greatly impress the first British Chargé d’Affaires in independent Mexico, Dampier could do little at the time but report on someone else’s report. Of the northernmost shores of New Spain he had little to say. His own disillusionment, however, did not stop him from making a half-hearted injunction for his countrymen to seek what he had been unable to find:

New Mexico, by report of several English prisoners there and Spaniards I have met with, lieth N.W. from Old Mexico between 4 and 500 leagues, and the biggest Part of the Treasure which is found in this Kingdom, is in that Province; but without doubt there are plenty of Mines in other Parts, as well as in this Part of the Kingdom where we now were, as in other Places; and probably, on the Main,

\(^{46}\) Cf. Buarque de Holanda
\(^{47}\) From “Diario de viaje por el rio Balsas”, in Iturriaga de la Fuente, *Anecdotario…*, vol. IV, pp. 226 f.
bordering on the Lake of California; although not yet discovered by the Spaniards, who have Mines enough, and therefore, as yet, have no reason to discover more. In my Opinion here might be very advantageous Discoveries made by any that would attempt it; for the Spaniards have more than they can well manage.

In a similar vein, Lionel Wafer, surgeon, fellow privateer and friend of Dampier, published in 1699 the description of his New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America. He had close to nothing noteworthy to say about New Spain. His narrative is even less interesting than his brother in arms—an endless string of annotations and soundings and sea-jargon, useful perhaps to mariners or scientists only. Wafer, a member of the Royal Society, dedicated his second edition (1704) to the Society’s president, Isaac Newton. But by then England and Spain were wrestling over succession to the Spanish throne. The preface of Wafer’s first edition, in which he claims his “principal Design was to give what description [he] could of the Isthmus of Darien... without particularizing, any further, than to speak of a few Things [he] thought more or less remarkable”, had turned into cries of encouragement for the English to take over Spanish wealth in the New World:

The design of this Second Publication of my Description of the Isthmus of Darien, improved with a Late Expedition to the Gold-Mines,... being only to represent to the World how far it would be to the interest of England to make an Establishment upon that continent; the Product of whose Bowels enriches the other three Parts of the World... To conclude: I shall only desire all Men of Sense and Judgment to consider how much the interest of England would be advanced in Europe by the addition of the Spanish West-Indies, to their other Acquisitions in America; since thereby the Common enemies would be deprived of the most certain Fund they have for carrying on the War.

When, in 1718, Captain Woodes Rogers of the Royal Navy published A cruising voyage round the world, this kind of preface appears to have become commonplace. His remarks seem not to bother with justifying bellicosity. “I know ‘tis generally expected”, he realises, “that when far different voyages are printed, they should contain new and wonderful discoveries, with surprizing accounts of people and animals; but this voyage, being only designed for cruising on the enemy, it is not reasonable to expect such accounts here as are to be met with in travels, relating to history, geography, &c. Something of that, however, I have inserted to oblige the booksellers, who persuaded me that this would make it more grateful to some sort of readers...”.

What is worthy of mention about Rogers’ preface is his clear attempt at distancing himself from his predecessors. He appears to be going to great length in order to prove that he was no Drake, Cavendish, Wafer or Dampier—even while the latter happened to be his ship’s pilot.
‘Tis also a particular misfortune which attends Voyages to the South-Sea that the Bucaneers, to set off their own knight-errantry, and to make themselves pass for prodigies of courage and conduct, have given such romantic accounts of their adventures, and told such strange stories, as make the voyages of those who come after (and cannot allow themselves the same liberty) to look flat and insipid to unthinking people. Therefore I make it my request to the Candid Readers, that they would be favourable in their censures when they peruse this journal, which is not calculated to amuse them, but barely to relate the Truth.48

In Rogers’ narrative, New Spain is hardly distinguished from any other stretch of shoreline along the West coast of the American continent. Cape San Lucas, at the tip of the California Peninsula, becomes little more than a landmark, pinpointed on maps as the place to intercept precious booty. Rogers did, in fact, capture a minor Spanish treasure ship, the Encarnación, near the cape. But his attempt at taking the great galleon Nuestra Señora de Begoña on her way to Acapulco was ill-fated. The crew of the 900 ton ship resisted an armed engagement which lasted almost seven hours. By the end of it, Rogers tells his readers, 500 cannon balls had been shot into the Nuestra Señora de Begoña to no avail. A modern editor of Rogers’ diary has pointed out, quite matter-of-factly, that “as all this fighting was simply of commercial character”, Rogers let his dream prize slip away.49 One could perhaps assume that Rogers’ account would thus have had little impact had he not been the one to rescue a marooned Scotsman, Alexander Selkirk, whose return to civilisation caused great excitement in London circles, and whose ordeals on a deserted island off the South American coast inspired one of the period’s most remarkable literary works.

* 

A map printed in 1782 by a certain J. Bew, of London’s Pater Noster Row—home to many of the age’s most prominent printers, booksellers and plattmakers—shows an island specking the Pacific Ocean at approximately 39 degrees West and 23 degrees North, right on the Tropic of Cancer off the Mexican coast. Its name is Shelvocke Island. Although in this “Map of Mexico or New Spain from the latest authorities” it occupies a place roughly attributable to today’s Revillagigedo archipelago, the island’s position on other maps makes it difficult to place with accuracy. The first edition of George Shelvocke’s A Voyage Round the World by Way of the South Sea, published in 1726, was illustrated with a copy of the Dutch cartographer Herman Moll’s globe, crisscrossed by the trail of Shelvocke’s circumnavigation trajectory. To the plate, originally used in Woodes Rogers’ book to indicate the route followed by him, had been added a new island. In a later map, included in Edward Drake’s New Universal

48 Rogers, pp. xiii f.
Collection of Authentic and Entertaining Voyages and Travels (1768), Shelvocke's Island was situated West of the California Peninsula, not far from Cape San Lucas. In 1785, a plate from John Hamilton Moore's New and Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels has it lying South of the cape. About the discovery and christening of the island, George Shelvocke himself only says this much: "August 21. [1721] We discover'd an island bearing W.S.W. 110 leagues distant from the cape St. Lucas; I endeavour'd to get in with it, but could not approach it nearer than the distance of 2 leagues. And the night coming on, and it blowing very fresh, I did not think it proper to lose so much way as we might in the night by laying by, or plying in for it. I judged it to be 7 or 8 leagues in circumference; on the S.W. of it there appear'd a large bay with a high rock in the middle of it; this isle my people call'd after my name." 50

Shelvocke's journal has some pertinence beyond the history of Pacific cartography. It is relevant to the history of English literature, one of its episodes regarding an annoying and ultimately unfortunate black albatross having inspired Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner." 51 In the history of British exploration and travel in Mexico, Shelvocke can be singled out for his attempts at systematic description and explanation of what he observed, relying on what he had seen over what he had merely heard of. To be sure, some of the already typical themes are as conspicuous in his text as they were in earlier ones. The obsession with the galleon, for instance:

_Puerto Seguro_, so call'd by Sir Thomas Cavendish, is about 2 leagues to the North-eastward of Cape St. Lucas, which is the Southermost land of California, and is almost right under the tropick of Cancer...

This water is excellent for sea service; in short, the Port in general is very convenient for such as may have occasion to lay in wait for the Manila ship, or lie for some time conceal'd after the coasts have been alarm'd. 52

Or his tangible sense of loss at a missed opportunity to capture it owing to a squabble with his commanding officer:

Thus this man, through an excess of mean spiritedness, dreading an engagement with a ship that was always known to defend itself with some obstinacy, neglected as fine an opportunity as most of our nation ever had of taking this ship, who (as I was inform'd by some Spaniards from Manila, when I was in China) came out of Aquapulco about a week after we left the cruize; she was called the _Santo Christo_, had 40 odd brass guns, and was extremely rich. How great a prospect we had, how great an opportunity we lost of taking this, which is always the richest trading ship that goes to sea, I leave the world to judge, when I assure them it was hardly possible to have missed her at one of the ports I have

---

50 Shelvocke, pp. 433 f.
51 DNB (1937) "Shelvocke, George", vol. IV.
52 Shelvocke, p. 404
mention'd, and as we were prepar'd, the action would not have been very extraordinary if we had subdued her".53

More importantly, Shelvocke, a fellow of the Royal Society, was perhaps the first to apply a systematic approach to descriptions of what he saw, very much in the way prescribed by the Royal Society's Robert Boyle, in 1665. Using headings such as "Account of the Inhabitants", "Their Manner and Disposition", "Their Language", "Their Manner of Living", "Their Arms", "Their Government", Shelvocke proceeded in strict descriptive order, as if following the questionnaires published in the first number of the Philosophical Transactions. In this he seems to have been in tune with the process whereby scientific academies in the 18th century began issuing the new "methods of travel" with a growing concern for systematization and verification of all information regarding foreign countries.54

Shelvocke is perhaps the first person to produce an original ethnographic description of inhabitants of New Spain for an English public—even if, because he roamed just the shores, he came in contact with the inhabitants of the Californian coastal areas only. From the outset, he shows a remarkable eagerness to please the locals. The day after his arrival, on August 11, 1721, Shelvocke "order'd a great boiler to be carried ashore, with good store of flower [sic] and sugar, and a Negroe Cook to be continually boiling hasty-pudding, for the numerous spectators on the beach".55 Drake too had found the inhabitants of California pleasant, as someone who merrily believed he was being crowned as their king would no doubt have found them. Shelvocke, expecting little of them beyond a chance to supply fresh food and water for his ship, was perhaps a better and more willing observer.

His ethnographical observations are worthy of discussion, and will receive some discussion later on. Overall, he considered the inhabitants of California to be gentle and virtuous. They certainly did not allow the English captain and his crew to indulge in their own vices:

I must not omit one thing, in which they would always have the mastery of us, and that was in taking snuff, which they would never permit any of us to use; but immediately upon seeing any of us take a pinch out of our boxes, they would run to us, and with great earnestness take it from between our fingers and throw it away. What could be the grounds of this aversion I can't conceive, except that some of them had suffer'd death or sickness by taking some particular thing up their nose; they likewise would never suffer me to look through my Prospective, imagining that there was something extraordinary in that piece of wood.56

53 Ibid. p. 327
54 Stagl. pp.324 f.
55 Shelvocke, p.394
56 Ibid., p. 408.
George Anson's account of his Voyage Round the World, which took place between 1740 and 1744, was an instant best-seller, selling 1800 advance subscriptions. Five versions of it had been published already before Anson's own journals were presented in 1753, and still more publications glossing his triumphal circumnavigation continued appearing until 1759. The number of later books and biographies reviewing his nautical achievements and personal virtues — including one called *The Private Character of Admiral Anson, by a Lady* (1800) — is not surprising considering he was soon to be Lord Admiral Anson, "Father of the British Navy". But how can one explain the almost instant appeal of his narrative among contemporary readers?

Although some of the alternative versions of his journey were suitably embellished for a reading public, Anson's own journal is, in most places, extraordinarily unexciting. Typical entries are but passing remarks on weather conditions: "Saturday, 6: Moderate and Fair Weather"; "Sunday, 7: Fresh Gales. This day we excercised our Great Guns and Small arms. Still cruizing off the coast of Acapulco"; "Monday 8: Fresh gales and hazy weather." There are very few places where the Captain interrupts the brisk reporting of daily occurrences, but entire pages are dedicated to the coveted Manila galleon whose capture made Anson famous. The description of the Pacific trade is shamelessly taken from Dampier, with a few of the buccaneer's misconceptions set straight:

Friday 20 Feb.1742. ...And here [Acapulco] Ships arrive in January from China, the East Indies, and Peru, with the Merchandize of those countries, to the fair that is annually held here, and which is one of the greatest in the whole world. There are likewise three station'd ships for trade here, two of which constantly go once a Year between this and Manila in Luconia, one of the Philippine islands, and the other every year to and from Lima; this from Lima, commonly arrives about the latter end of December, and brings with her Quicksilver, Cocoa, and Pieces of Eight, and stays here till the Manila ships arrive, and then takes in a cargo of spices, silks, callicoes, and muslins, and other East India commodities for the use of Peru, and then returns therewith to Lima; this is but a small vessel of 20 guns, but the other two which trade to Manila are considerably larger, being each about seen or eight Hundred Ton. These make their voyage alternately, so that there is always one or other of them is always at Manila. (106-7)

His inventory of the expected loot is even more alluring than in his predecessors' accounts:

The cargo of this ship consists of Diamonds, Rubies, Sapphires, and other precious stones found in the East Indies; of Cinnamon, Cloves, Mace, Nutmegs, and Pepper; of the Rich carpets of Persia; the Camphire (sic) of Borneo; the Benjamin and Ivory of Pegu and Cambadia(sic); the Silks, Muslins and Callicoes of East India; the Gold dust, tea, china ware, silk, cabinets &c. of China and Japan; all which amount to a prodigious value, this one ship having more riches in
it than some whole fleets. The merchants get one hundred, or two hundred per cent by this voyage, the boatswain even gets an Estate in one turn, the wages of every sailor is three hundred and seventy pieces of eight, and the King's Duties amount to fourscore thousand of the same pieces.

The preface of one version of the voyage, by Walter Richard, chaplain aboard Anson's *Centurion*, calls their capture of the *Nuestra Señora de Covadonga* "the most decisive, and (if the strength and number of the captures be considered) the most important [of victories] that are to be met with in our Annals". 57 The introduction to Anson's journal boldly states that "of all the private expeditions that were undertaken for annoying the Spaniards, that under the command of Commodore Anson (a gentleman of approv'd honour, courage, humanity and conduct) was undoubtedly of the greatest worth and importance." 58 Judging from Anson's own journal, the prize was indeed formidable:

...her lading was chiefly Money, Plate, and Virgin Silver; she could mount 60 guns, but had but 42, 17 of which were brass, and 28 patereros, each of which was loaded with seventy musket balls, or their equivalent in old rusty nails, flint stones, and shot cast into four quarters, like slugs...
Saturday 25 [June, 1743]: brought on board us from the Prize, by a moderate computation, two hundred and eighty two Thousand Dollars, with some wrought plate....
Sunday 26: We were all this day employ'd in transporting money from the prize to our ship, having now received on Board, in all, thirteen hundred thousand dollars, besides wrought plate....
Monday 27: This day we received on board from the prize one bag of Dollars and five parcels of plate, and twenty eight brass pateroers..
Wednesday 29: This day we receiv'd on board from our prize fifteen bags of dollars and some plate with three small casks of virgin silver."

Perhaps just as important, Anson's men found a map of the routes followed by the galleons, to which they added their own itinerary. Using it, they also managed to confirm the precision of Edmund Halley's magnetic variation chart. In his journal, Anson includes brief notes on the inhabitants of Mexico, whom he never saw, and of its wondrous creatures, of which he appears to have had experience only through books and unreliable informants. His easy acceptance of whatever information might have been useful to add some colour to his narrative seems final proof that, not uncharacteristically, his only interest in New Spain was in that small fragment of it that sailed to and fro across the great South Sea, back and forth between Acapulco and the Philippines.

57 Walter.
58 Philips, p. ii
Anson was quite clear about his objectives when he set forth in pursuit of the wealth of the Spanish crown. "Our breach with Spain being necessarily attended with obstruction of trade, and consequently, a considerable loss to the Nation", the preface to his book began, "the merchants in concert with some persons of quality and fortune, were inclined, in some measure, to indemnify themselves and their country by depredations on the enemy". Sixty years later, judging from the last, and perhaps most interesting, of the English maritime portraits of Mexico, such open contempt towards Spain had subsided.

Basil Hall, Naval Commander aboard H.M.S. Conway arrived in Mexico on the year of the consummation of its independence. He had left England behind on August 10, 1820, had followed the usual route of circumnavigators around the tip of South America, and reached Mexico’s Pacific coast early the following year. He could hardly hide his excitement at being in the place that had made some of his countrymen legendary.

On the 8th of March, we anchored in Acapulco harbour, a place familiar to the memory of most people, from its being the post whence the rich Spanish galleons, of former days, took their departure to spread the wealth of the Western over the Eastern World. It is celebrated also in Anson’s delightful Voyage, and occupies a conspicuous place in the very interesting accounts of the Buccaneers: to a sailor, therefore, it is classic ground in every sense. I cannot express the universal professional admiration excited by a sight of this celebrated port, which is, moreover, the very beau ideal of a harbour.59

Basil Hall’s Extracts from a Journal written on the Coasts of Chili, Peru and Mexico, in the Years 1821, 1822, 1823 brings to an end a tradition of bellicose approaches to a place that, until not long before his arrival, was still perceived as enemy territory. The sight of Acapulco induced awe and a sense of historical importance, rather than the raw lust for treasure that had so inflamed the most celebrated mariners before him. A fellow not only of the Royal Society, but of the Royal Astronomical, Geological and Geographical societies as well, he expressed the spirit of scientific empiricism as proudly as he did the spirit of English mercantilism. Sailing from Acapulco to San Blas, he commissioned drawings of the Colima Volcano from all possible points of view while it was in sight of the ship; he had an observatory built so that he might make pendulum measurements to ascertain the effects of latitude variation; and he set out to make precise topographical observations of the port. Like most accounts, his is a combination of first-hand experience and acquired information. Unlike most accounts,

59 Hall, p. 168.
however, his book is perhaps the first regarding Mexico that states, in precise footnotes with chapter and page reference, the sources its author drew on.

Hall’s motives are never quite clear. Wars of independence in South American states had already attracted attention from the British Foreign Office and, if contemporary authors were right, from a growing reading public. It is not implausible that the Conway had been dispatched for reconnaissance purposes so as to assist the cause of the new republics. In any case, when it was received so warmly by messengers of Mexico’s newly established head of state—the self-proclaimed Emperor Agustín de Iturbide—and when the expectation of trade with Great Britain was intimated, Hall seized the opportunity to gear Mexican eagerness for contact towards commercial benefit for His Majesty’s government. He happily sailed back to England carrying over half a million dollars’ worth of silver to be used for the purchase of English goods.\(^{60}\)

No longer roused by the thought of capturing galleons, but not yet aware of the potential for investment that travellers like William Bullock or Francis Lyon would very soon discover, Hall stands astride the long tradition of English seamen who plundered silver and gold from Spanish ships and the new wave of British miners and merchants, whetting their appetites as the possibilities of trade and profit from Mexico’s coveted mineral wealth finally lay open to them.

*  

The first thing William Bullock noticed when he set foot in the port of Veracruz was that the pier had been “partially paved with pigs of iron, each bearing the broad arrow of the King of England”. They had once been brought over, it appears, as ballast in a British ship. “Thus the first step an Englishman takes in New Spain is upon what was once English property. May this be an auspicious omen of the future good understanding and commercial intercourse between the two countries.”\(^{61}\) What Bullock, ornithologist and proprietor of the London Museum at Piccadilly, had in mind when he spoke of commercial intercourse was, mostly, silver. He had been sent to Mexico in 1822 by the owners of the Mexican Mine Company to explore and report on the state and profitability of the “El Vado” mine, not far from the capital. Based on his report, and on his published description of the mineral wealth now open to British capitalists, the owners agreed to put the abandoned mine back into operation. It is not surprising that his employers, back in London, could be so easily persuaded. Mining company prospectuses showed great enthusiasm:

\(^{60}\) Ibid., p. 289.  
\(^{61}\) Bullock, p.15.
however, his book is perhaps the first regarding Mexico that states, in precise footnotes with chapter and page reference, the sources its author drew on.

Hall's motives are never quite clear. Wars of independence in South American states had already attracted attention from the British Foreign Office and, if contemporary authors were right, from a growing reading public. It is not implausible that the Conwy had been dispatched for reconnaissance purposes so as to assist the cause of the new republics. In any case, when it was received so warmly by messengers of Mexico's newly established head of state—the self-proclaimed Emperor Agustín de Iturbide—and when the expectation of trade with Great Britain was intimated, Hall seized the opportunity to gear Mexican eagerness for contact towards commercial benefit for His Majesty's government. He happily sailed back to England carrying over half a million dollars' worth of silver to be used for the purchase of English goods.  

No longer roused by the thought of capturing galleons, but not yet aware of the potential for investment that travellers like William Bullock or Francis Lyon would very soon discover, Hall stands astride the long tradition of English seamen who plundered silver and gold from Spanish ships and the new wave of British miners and merchants, whetting their appetites as the possibilities of trade and profit from Mexico's coveted mineral wealth finally lay open to them.

The first thing William Bullock noticed when he set foot in the port of Veracruz was that the pier had been "partially paved with pigs of iron, each bearing the broad arrow of the King of England". They had once been brought over, it appears, as ballast in a British ship. "Thus the first step an Englishman takes in New Spain is upon what was once English property. May this be an auspicious omen of the future good understanding and commercial intercourse between the two countries". What Bullock, ornithologist and proprietor of the London Museum at Piccadilly, had in mind when he spoke of commercial intercourse was, mostly, silver. He had been sent to Mexico in 1822 by the owners of the Mexican Mine Company to explore and report on the state and profitability of the "El Vado" mine, not far from the capital. Based on his report, and on his published description of the mineral wealth now open to British capitalists, the owners agreed to put the abandoned mine back into operation. It is not surprising that his employers, back in London, could be so easily persuaded. Mining company prospectuses showed great enthusiasm:

---

60 Ibid., p. 289.
61 Bullock, p.15.
The riches of the silver mines of Spanish America have, for a long period, been well known in Europe, and the researches of late travellers have more particularly explained their extent and former productiveness, and accounted for their present inactivity: of the whole, those of Mexico hold the most distinguished place, whether the number and size of the veins be considered,—the quantities of ore they have produced,—or the facilities with which they may be worked by the application of such means as are well understood in Europe, and at the present period in no place better than in England.62

The Mexican Company's charter, published a year after Bullock reported his findings to its members, is proof of how convinced they were by his account:

Encouraged by the recent measure of the British Government in stationing Agents in Mexico, and stimulated by the representations, advice, and assurances, of parties the most competent to afford correct information, and to assist in realizing the flattering expectations of advantage which they hold out; it has, after the fullest enquiry and deliberation, been determined to form an Association for Mining, and other objects connected with Mexico,..., with a Capital of One Million Sterling.63

Indeed, ever since they had known the chronicles of the conquest of Mexico, English merchants, statesmen and audiences had been interested by the abundance of precious metals in the Spanish colony. The early accounts of English travel made sure that this wealth was brought to the readers' attention.

Robert Tomson, whose description of life in New Spain (1561) is the first known account to be published by any Englishman, noticed that "[a]bout Mexico there are divers Mines of silver, and also in other places there about, but the principall Mines that are in all New Spaine are in Sacatecas, 80 leagues from Mexico, and the Mines of S. Martin, thirtie leagues, both to the Northwestward of Mexico, where is great store of gold and silver".64 Another traveller, a wine merchant from Tavistock called Henry Hawks, informed readers that "[t]oward the North from Mexico there are great store of silver mines. There is greater quantitie of silver found in these mines toward the North, than there is in any other parts: and as the most men of experience sayde alwayes, they find the richer mines the more Northerly. These mines are commonly upon great hilles and stony ground, marvellous hard to be laboured and wrought".65 It was, in fact, while employed in the mines of Zacatecas in the north of Mexico, that Hawks was arrested and tried for heresy and apostasy, proving George Francis Lyon's remark,

62 "Prospectus of a company for working the Regla mines, in Mexico", in English, 1825, p. 54.
63 "Mexican Company", in Ibid., p. 44.
64 "The voyage of Robert Tomson, Marchant, into Nova Hispania, in the yeere 1555...", in Hakluyt.
65 "A relation of the commodities of Nova Hispania, and the manners of the inhabitants, written by Henry Hawks merchant...", in Hakluyt.
made almost three hundred years later on that same site, that suspicion of all foreigners as heretics was particularly acute in the northern mining areas.  

Not only could voyagers to the Spanish colony not fail to notice the conspicuous abundance of precious metal, even in certain aspects of daily life; sometimes it was all they could take notice of. When writing about his journey to Mexico City as a prisoner of the Spaniards, Miles Philips, whom we last mentioned as the appointed translator aboard the ship that was chasing Drake along the Pacific coast, describes the sanctuary of the Virgin of Guadalupe,

In which there is an image of our Lady of silver & gilt, being as high, & as large as a tall woman, in church, and before this image, there are as many lamps of silver as there be dayes in the yeere, which upon high days are all lighted... which image they call, in the Spanish tongue, Nuestra sennora de Guadalupe.  

Few visitors to the shrine of the Guadalupana have failed to comment on either the revered image of the Virgin or on the centrality of the cult in Mexican religious practive. Philips seems to have had an interest in neither, dazzled, as he was, by the silver of the image that once adorned the altar at Tepeyac.

Like the allure of the treasure-laden galleons, the legendary wealth of the Mexican mines would be a constant source of desire. But especially among Protestant chroniclers, the mines were considered a source of material wealth as much as a source of spiritual poverty and moral depravation.

The mingling of lust and disgust is particularly dramatic in the narrative of Thomas Gage. While living in the Spanish town of Jerez with Dominican friars, in 1625, the English Dominican priest was persuaded to join a mission to the Philippines. Whatever his motives for joining the expedition that would travel through New Spain were, the abundance of worldly goods seems not to have been far from his mind. Gage appears to have succumbed to the seductive accounts of what lay ahead. He tells us of his interlocutor that

...when he thought his rhetoric had not prevailed, then would he act as Midas..., fancying the Indies paved with tiles of gold and silver, the stones to be pearls, rubies, and diamonds, the trees to be hung with clusters of nutmegs bigger than the clusters of grapes of Canaan, the fields to be planted with sugar-canapes, which should so sweeten the chocolate that it should far exceed the milk and honey of

67 "A discourse written by one Miles Philips Englishman...", in Hakluyt.
68 It is unclear whether this description is in any way related to that of his compatriot Robert Tomson, whose master, Gonzalo Cereso, "had spent a great deale of money... for that two yeres past he had made in the monastery of Santo Domingo, in the saide Citie of Mexico, an image of our Lady of pure silver and gold, with pearles and precious stones, which had cost him 7000. and odde pesos....: which indeed was true, for that I have seen many times my selfe where it stands."
the land of the Promise; the Silks of China he conceived so common that the sails of ships were nothing else... From this inducing argument, and representation of a Paradise, he fell into a strong rhetorical point of curiosity, finding out a tree of knowledge, and a philosophical maxim, *Omnis homo naturaliter scire desiderat*, man naturally inclines to know more and more; which knowledge he fancied could be nowhere more furnished with rare curiosities than in these parts, for there should the gold and the silver, which are here fingered, in their growth in the bowels of the earth be known... Who would not be moved by these his arguments to follow him...?69

It was this “last inducing argument of the increase of knowledge natural by the insight of rich America”70 that prevailed. On July 2nd of that year, he boarded a Spanish merchant ship at Cadiz, in the company of twenty-six fellow Dominicans. Temporarily hidden in a barrel of biscuit, since orders had been given to stop the English friar – although a Catholic— from sailing to Spanish colonies, he made his way to New Spain. Once there, rather than carry on with what promised to be an uncomfortable mission to the Philippines, Gage decided to remain in New Spain and started his journey towards Central America.

Three themes run through the *English American*, Gage’s invective against Catholicism in the guise of a travel narrative: the abundance of material wealth in New Spain, the rampant spiritual corruption among its Catholic clergy and parishioners, and the seemingly causal relation between these two. Gage invariably appears dazzled by the conspicuous signs of riches, and never fails to note how much a certain post was worth —“This town [Jalapa] in the year 1634 was made a new Bishop’s see...and ... is thought to be worth ten thousand ducats a year”— how many ducats the Mexican Viceroy was entitled to every year —“a hundred thousand”— or even, on a more personal note, exactly how many crowns each one of his sermons earned him.71

Gage could hardly hide his excitement whilst visiting the streets of Mexico City’s centre. Impressed by their breadth and cleanliness, he was especially taken by “the riches of the shops which do adorn them”. Above all, he commented, the shops of goldsmiths and silversmiths, “where a man’s eyes may behold in less than an hour many millions’ worth of gold, silver, pearls and jewels”, were worthy of admiration.72
Most of Gage’s attention was directed towards the wealth he observed in churches. The local headquarters for his order, the Cloister of Santo Domingo, had “a lamp hanging... with three hundred branches wrought in silver to hold so many candles, besides a hundred little lamps for oil set in it, every one being made with several workmanship so exquisitely that it is valued to be worth four hundred thousand

69 Gage, pp. 6 f.  
70 Ibid., p. 9.  
71 Ibid., p. 40.  
72 Ibid. p. 84.
ducats". But this was only one of many examples of earthly riches in the hands of the Catholic clergy.

Besides these beautiful buildings, the inward riches belonging to the altars are infinite in price and value, such as copes, canopies, hangings, altar cloths, candlesticks, jewels belonging to the saints, and crowns of gold and silver, and tabernacles of gold and crystal to carry about their sacrament in procession, all of which would mount to the worth of a reasonable mine of silver, and would be rich prey for any nation that could make better use of wealth and riches.

Further south, at the border of the province of Chiapas, Gage again finds it hard not to notice the rich furnishings of a church,

but especially the high altar where the picture standeth in a tabernacle with half a dozen curtains of silk, satin, cloth of gold, with borders of gold lace before it, wearing a rich crown of gold, thickly beset with diamonds and other precious stones. They hang before it at least a dozen rich lamps of silver; and in the vestry of the church are many more gowns, candlesticks of silver, censers to burn frankincense before it, besides rich copes, vestments, ornaments for the altar, and hangings for all the church.

To conclude, here is a treasure hid in the mountains; oh that it could be found to do the Lord service.

Behind Gage's jingoistic call for English arms to take over the Spanish colony is the anxiety of the friar who denounced the opulent wealth and abundance of the New World while undoubtedly feeling lured by them. It is no accident that a text designed to whet the English appetite for overseas colonisation should emphasise the material riches of the territory. But although in his devastating attack the renegade friar denounced the accumulation of wealth by the clergy as one of its sources of corruption, by the end of his travels through New Spain and the Central American isthmus Gage himself had managed to amass a considerable personal fortune. Most of it, however—“four thousand patacones or pieces of eight in pearls and precious stones, and nearly three thousand more in money”—he lost to a Dutch pirate while sailing back to England. Only in retrospect did his loss seem providential. While the ships that he believed to be English caught up with his own showing less than friendly intentions, Gage feared as much for his treasure as for his life: “But O, what sad thoughts did here run to an fro my dejected heart, which was struck down lower than our sail! ...How did I see that my treasure of pearls, precious stones, and pieces of eight, and golden pistoles, which by singing I had got in twelve years' space, now within one half and hour ready to be lost with weeping...”
Two hundred years later, this opulence was still a matter of surprise and admiration to Britons. William Bullock, who had read Gage—who had, in fact, grafted many pages of Gage’s text onto his own—was still commenting that the “statues, balustrades, candlesticks, candelabras, &c. of massive gold and silver, which had long disappeared in England, are here in daily use.”

* 

A portrait by William Hogarth, probably completed in 1732 or 33, shows John Conduit, Master of the Mint, sitting in a parlour. In the background are children representing a scene from Dryden’s play *The Aztec Emperor*. Feathered in headdresses, they scurry around enacting the climactic moment of the death of Moctezuma. Why Hogarth, whose gift for observing, satirising and depicting the mores of British society is well known, chose this particular vignette to go along with his portrait is unclear. We might, however, speculate about a possible link that could have been evident to a knowledgeable contemporary observer. Conduit, nephew by marriage to Isaac Newton, and Newton’s successor as Master of the Mint, was a famously strong advocate of the use of silver to replace the gold standard in coinage. The oblique reference to Mexico—or at least to a scene inspired by a far away nation that contemporary audiences might have recognised—in the context of discussions about silver seems likely at a time when most of the world’s silver hailed from the mines of the New World.

“The prosperity of Mexico”, William Bullock wrote in his travel account, less than a century later, “must always depend on the cultivation of the her immense mineral wealth. The silver mines have already produced more riches than those of any other portion of the globe, and more rapid fortunes have been made by individuals than are possessed by any in Europe.”

Despite the incessant berating of the country throughout his account, Bullock clearly overrated the obtainable wealth of the mines. His overestimate of the value of Mexican silver mines might have owed a lot to Alexander von Humboldt, a great extoller of the Spanish colonies’ available wealth. But there is much to be said about what seem to be Bullock’s deliberate attempts to mislead his readers, or more precisely, his capitalist employers in London, regarding the expectations.

---

77 Bullock, p. 82.
78 This painting, and the question about the meaning of the scene represented in it, were first brought to my attention by Carlos Enríquez Verdura.
79 DNB (1937), “Conduit, John”, vol. XVIII.
80 Bullock, p. 496.
Bullock's employers seem to have been taken in by his description. Mining company prospectuses showed great eagerness to believe the companies' foreign agents' accounts:

It would be a primary object to obtain the best information, and a correct report of the state of the mines, as the foundation for commencing the works with effect, and on a plan well digested; and this, it is presumed, may be done without much delay, by the employment of persons selected from some of the largest mines in this country, and which the Company may be enabled to do, by the assistance of gentlemen who are disposed to join in the undertaking.  

Like that of most authors of travel writing, the authority these gentlemen had was the authority of autopsy, that is, of an eyewitness. They had been to Mexico, they had read Humboldt's census of Mexican mines, and they had reported the riches they hoped to benefit from.

The details have been examined by persons largely interested in Mining in England, and the accounts compared with the statements in the works of the most scientific and intelligent traveller, who has ever visited America, M. Humboldt, and the conclusions have been verified by very late information communicated by most respectable individuals who have visited Mexico from this country, and are lately returned therefrom.

British audiences and entrepreneurs were perhaps prepared to believe those stories that anticipated the success of mining ventures. Contemporary theories of political economy suggested that Great Britain's commercial interest would be best served by an increase in the amount of circulating medium of the silver-producing economies, causing a rise in those countries' expenditure and labour prices, thus making British exports more competitive. "If the wealth of the world increases," one essay suggested, "or, what is the same, the abundance of the precious metals diminishes their relative value, Great Britain has obtained an advantage over all nations." Geopolitical considerations mingled with overtones of economic paternalism and hints of political interventionism:

Mexico, as a neighbour, although a giant, yet in the cradle, has much to fear from the United States, unless indeed a sound and liberal policy be adopted towards her by Great Britain, the only power which can effectually interfere in her behalf. ...Mexico, if fostered during her infancy, by Great Britain, which even the commercial relations between the two countries imperatively demand, will, ere long, be more than a match for the United States.

81 "Prospectus of a Company for Working the Regla Mines, in Mexico; Real del Monte Mining Association", in English, 1825, p. 56.
82 Ibid., p. 55.
83 Wavell, 1827, p. 5.
84 Ibid., pp. 62 ff.
Bullock’s employers seem to have been taken in by his description. Mining company prospectuses showed great eagerness to believe the companies’ foreign agents’ accounts:

It would be a primary object to obtain the best information, and a correct report of the state of the mines, as the foundation for commencing the works with effect, and on a plan well digested; and this, it is presumed, may be done without much delay, by the employment of persons selected from some of the largest mines in this country, and which the Company may be enabled to do, by the assistance of gentlemen who are disposed to join in the undertaking.\(^{81}\)

Like that of most authors of travel writing, the authority these gentlemen had was the authority of autopsy, that is, of an eyewitness. They had been to Mexico, they had read Humboldt’s census of Mexican mines, and they had reported the riches they hoped to benefit from.

The details have been examined by persons largely interested in Mining in England, and the accounts compared with the statements in the works of the most scientific and intelligent traveller, who has ever visited America, M. Humboldt, and the conclusions have been verified by very late information communicated by most respectable individuals who have visited Mexico from this country, and are lately returned therefrom.\(^{82}\)

British audiences and entrepreneurs were perhaps prepared to believe those stories that anticipated the success of mining ventures. Contemporary theories of political economy suggested that Great Britain’s commercial interest would be best served by an increase in the amount of circulating medium of the silver-producing economies, causing a rise in those countries’ expenditure and labour prices, thus making British exports more competitive. “If the wealth of the world increases,” one essay suggested, “or, what is the same, the abundance of the precious metals diminishes their relative value, Great Britain has obtained an advantage over all nations”.\(^{83}\) Geopolitical considerations mingled with overtones of economic paternalism and hints of political interventionism:

Mexico, as a neighbour, although a giant, yet in the cradle, has much to fear from the United States, unless indeed a sound and liberal policy be adopted towards her by Great Britain, the only power which can effectually interfere in her behalf. ...Mexico, if fostered during her infancy, by Great Britain, which even the commercial relations between the two countries imperatively demand, will, ere long, be more than a match for the United States.\(^{84}\)

---

\(^{81}\) “Prospectus of a Company for Working the Regla Mines, in Mexico; Real del Monte Mining Association”, in English, 1825, p. 56.

\(^{82}\) Ibid., p. 55.

\(^{83}\) Wavell, 1827, p. 5.

\(^{84}\) Ibid., pp. 62 ff.
But while some publications in 1827 rang with optimism, informing investors that "the existing Mexican companies will do well, and some of them prove enormously lucrative speculations", even assuring that "indeed, with proper management, a finer field for the employment of capital was never before offered"\textsuperscript{85}, others were already showing the first signs of disappointment. In his *Remarks on the Mines, Management, Ores, &c., &c. of the District of Guanaxuato belonging to the Anglo Mexican Mining Association*, Edward James, a former agent for the company, began scathingly: "The system on which the mines belonging to the Anglo Mexican Mining Association was conducted, was in itself ruinous in the extreme; not only in respect to the Mines, but in every other department connected with them"\textsuperscript{86}

Mismanagement was one of the main reasons for the failure of some of the seemingly promising ventures. Technological incompatibility, too, proved more of a problem than expected as miners soon discovered that the extraction techniques used in Cornwall were not suitable for the deeper and more troublesome silver veins of Mexico. European technicians complained about the inefficiency of Mexican mining methods, and the introduction of modern steam-driven machinery proved problematic as the engineers were forced —often unsuccessfully— to negotiate the dramatic geography of the Mexican *sierras* to reach the remoter mines\textsuperscript{87}. But wildly embellished accounts of the riches were in many ways accountable for the silver rush and the disappointment that followed.

Early on in his book William Bullock makes a distinction between writers and travellers based on the assumption that, unlike travellers, writers were often untruthful and misleading.\textsuperscript{88} No doubt he fancied himself as a genuine traveller, and therefore a trustworthy source of information. He was, however, far from being a truthful chronicler of his own travels. Among the most remarkable departures from the observed facts were his descriptions of invented pre-Hispanic idols (which will be discussed further on) and the implausible wealth of the mines he was sent to acquire and manage on behalf of his employers. Bullock, who seemed so unimpressed by the outskirts of Mexico City that he believed they resembled "the worst parts of Lincolnshire"\textsuperscript{89} commented on Temascaltepec, the site of the mine he was commissioned to manage, that although "the situations of mines, in general, are in sterile and barren districts, ... those of Temascaltepec [*sic.*] are an exception. It would be difficult for a traveller to point out a

\textsuperscript{86} London: Effingham Wilson, 1827, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{87} For an example of the difficulties in transporting machinery to the mines, see Robert Philips, "Particulars of a journey from Altamira to Catorce", 1827, printed in Ward.
\textsuperscript{88} Bullock, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{89} *Ibid.*, p. 122
more lovely or romantic situation than the little town in which the mine is situated."\textsuperscript{90} The beauty of the area, he wrote, reminded him of home, "the prospect [of the surroundings being] as rich as any part of Devonshire."\textsuperscript{91}

... the descent had brought us into a temperature resembling the finest parts of Europe, and our approach to the village just before sunset brought home strongly to our recollection. Our path lay through corn fields, orchards, and gardens. Apples, pears, and peaches, almost obstructed our way; and fields of potatoes and beans in blossom might, but for the swarthy and thinly clothed inhabitants, who gazed with surprise at our advance, and the luxuriance of the Nopal or the great American Aloe, in full bloom, have made us fancy ourselves in England.\textsuperscript{92}

Bullock found the mines of Temascaltepec —"which a few years since produced a considerable portion of the precious metal exported to Europe"\textsuperscript{93}—abandoned and ruined. But he remained confident that they would soon be restored to their former productive splendour:

I know of no more desirable place for human residence: it wants only the reestablishment of the mines or manufactories, to make it again what it has been, the source and mart of abundance and riches. The various remains of haciendas, and of smelting and amalgamation houses, on the banks of its rapid streams, attest its former consequence; and if ever commercial enterprise, and the employment of British capital should be established in Mexico, no place I have seen can be better adapted for the purpose, as, independent of its other advantages, any quantity of machinery could be worked by its waters, and the neighbouring woods furnish an inexhaustible supply of fuel.\textsuperscript{94}

So it was that Bullock took possession of two mines —"Milan" and "El Vado"— through a ceremony that reminded him of Scottish rituals associated to the ownership of land. He cast stones in different directions, and plucked up weeds, "to show that the land and whatever it produced was at [his] disposal".\textsuperscript{95} He promptly packed and made his way back to Mexico City, and then to Veracruz whence he sailed back to England.

What exactly happened to the mines bought by Bullock is not clear. That they failed to produce the expected profit is quite obvious in references gleaned from later accounts of travel. In one of the best known books of nineteenth-century travel through Mexico, half travelogue and half political and commercial dispatch, Henry George Ward, Great Britain’s first chargé d’affaires in the newly independent country, attempts to set the record straight. His preface promises to offer an “impartial view of the present state and capabilities of Mexico”:

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p. 428
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., p. 359.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., p. 351.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., p. 360.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., p. 365.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., pp. 427 f.
Three years ago, nothing was questioned that could tend to enhance the opinion entertained of [Mexico’s] resources. Now, the most cautious assertions are received with a smile, and facts, however well demonstrated, are hardly admitted to be such, it they militate against a preconceived opinion.

This state of things is, perhaps, the natural consequence of the advantage that was taken of the first removal of those barriers, which so long separated the Old World from the New, by men, some of whom are themselves enthusiasts, while many had no better object than to turn the enthusiasm of others to account. Both, unfortunately, concurred in exciting the imagination of the ignorant by pictures of a state of things, that could have no foundation in nature, or truth.

Viewed through the medium of delusive hope, Spanish America presented nothing but prospects of unalloyed advantage. Great, and instantaneous, success was to attend every enterprise there, without the employment of those means, upon which the experience of the world has, hitherto, proved success to depend. Time, industry, perseverance, a knowledge of the scene upon which operations were to commence—of the men by whom they were to be conducted—of the language and peculiarities of the country, in which they were to be carried on; all these were stated to be considerations of minor importance; capital alone was seen as wanting; and facts, important in themselves, were so warped and distorted, in order to favour this theory, that when its fallacy was demonstrated, the facts fell to the ground with the superstructure which had been raised upon them.

Unexampled credulity amongst the disappointed, was succeeded by obstinate unbelief. Transatlantic States, and adventurers, were involved in one indiscriminate condemnation; and, even at the present day, enterprises of the greatest public utility are stigmatised as bubbles, because, during a period of unbridled circulation, bubbles may have been recommended by a similarity of form to the notice of the Public.

It is possible that, on closer examination of the subject, we may find that the expectations of 1824, and the despondency of 1828, originate in the same cause—namely, want of proper data for the regulation of our opinions; and it is in the hope of being able to supply these data, with regard to one very interesting portion of the former dominions of Spain, that has induced me to undertake my present task.\(^6\)

Ward’s criticism of British “enthusiasts” and of those who had abused such enthusiasm, his condemnation of entrepreneurs who did not consider the soundness of “the men by whom [mining operations] were conducted”, his lamentation about an unrestrained recourse to fact-bending, all amounted to an open denunciation of traveller-writers who, like Bullock, deformed their accounts to suit their own purposes. In the second volume of his text—the personal narrative of his time in Mexico—Ward has no qualms when it comes to naming one of those responsible for the misinformation of the British public.

By a sort of fatality, Temascaltepec, although it could never rank higher than a sixth-rate district, appears to have possessed peculiar attractions for the foreigners, whom mining speculations have brought to Mexico. The beauty of the climate, and the advantages of the vicinity to the capital, have probably tended more to influence their choice than the characters of the mines themselves,

\(^{6}\) Ward, vol I, pp. i-iv.
which, I fear, will be found to present very uncertain prospects. But, whatever be
the cause, in 1826 five companies were established here, two English, two
American, and one German...

The two English companies are the United Mexican, and that formed by Mr.
Bullock.

...Mr. Bullock’s company, which has since been dissolved, was denominated
“The Mexican Mine Company”, and was formed by Mr. Baring and Sir John
Lubbock, in order to work the Mina del Vado, denounced in 1823 by Mr. Bullock,
as Mexican citizen, with all the formalities described in the account of his visit to
Mexico, which is already before the Public. The only circumstances which he has
not given to the world, are the data by which he was first induced to direct his
attention to this unfortunate speculation. Some there must have been, for Mr.
Bullock was a real enthusiast about his mine; but upon this subject I have never
been able to obtain any authentic information.

Had the mine been really valuable, there would have been nothing injudicious in
the manner in which the gentlemen, to whom Mr. Bullock transferred his rights as
proprietor, proposed to work it; but in August 1826, the state of their affairs was
very unpromising.97

Ward’s is not the only account to comment on Bullock’s misleading observations.
William Francis Lyon, explorer and captain of the Royal Navy, was also sent to Mexico
as a commissioner of a British mining company, the Real del Monte and Bolaños.
Lyon, a contemporary of Bullock and Ward, produced one of the most delightfully
splenetic texts about travel in Mexico, his Journal of a Residence and Tour in the
Republic of Mexico in the year 1826. Far more reliable than Bullock’s, and far more
entertaining than Ward’s, his book is an ironic but engaged account of the time spent
touring the country and its mines. One of its most overlooked contributions to the
tradition of travel writing is Lyon’s deliberate attempt to question, in situ, many of the
tales on which his famous predecessor had based his reputation. It is not without a
certain understated delight that he tells his readers how, on October 4, 1826, the
author attended a dinner at which he “met Mr. Bullock; who now finds how mistaken he
was in the grand ideas he had formed of this country, and how much he has misled his
countrymen in regard to the fertility of Mexico, against which and its whole population
he now rails most unmercifully”.98

Later visitors were no less concerned with mineral wealth. Many Mexicans
assumed that an Englishman in Mexico could have no other interest: Lieutenant Hardy,
travelling towards the Pacific coast, was thought by a curious host to be a miner; the
ethnographers Tylor and Christy were taken for silver miners by a group of salt
merchants; and the anonymous author of Sketches was actually offered a silver mine.
It is worth noting that the novelist Henry Rider Haggard went to Mexico as late as 1890,
according to his own memoirs, because he had shares in an old silver mine and,

which, I fear, will be found to present very uncertain prospects. But, whatever be the cause, in 1826 five companies were established here, two English, two American, and one German...

The two English companies are the United Mexican, and that formed by Mr. Bullock.

...Mr. Bullock's company, which has since been dissolved, was denominated "The Mexican Mine Company", and was formed by Mr. Baring and Sir John Lubbock, in order to work the Mina del Vado, denounced in 1823 by Mr. Bullock, as Mexican citizen, with all the formalities described in the account of his visit to Mexico, which is already before the Public. The only circumstances which he has not given to the world, are the data by which he was first induced to direct his attention to this unfortunate speculation. Some there must have been, for Mr. Bullock was a real enthusiast about his mine; but upon this subject I have never been able to obtain any authentic information.

Had the mine been really valuable, there would have been nothing injudicious in the manner in which the gentlemen, to whom Mr. Bullock transferred his rights as proprietor, proposed to work it; but in August 1826, the state of their affairs was very unpromising.97

Ward's is not the only account to comment on Bullock's misleading observations. William Francis Lyon, explorer and captain of the Royal Navy, was also sent to Mexico as a commissioner of a British mining company, the Real del Monte and Bolaños. Lyon, a contemporary of Bullock and Ward, produced one of the most delightfully splenetic texts about travel in Mexico, his Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico in the year 1826. Far more reliable than Bullock's, and far more entertaining than Ward's, his book is an ironic but engaged account of the time spent touring the country and its mines. One of its most overlooked contributions to the tradition of travel writing is Lyon's deliberate attempt to question, in situ, many of the tales on which his famous predecessor had based his reputation. It is not without a certain understated delight that he tells his readers how, on October 4, 1826, the author attended a dinner at which he "met Mr. Bullock; who now finds how mistaken he was in the grand ideas he had formed of this country, and how much he has misled his countrymen in regard to the fertility of Mexico, against which and its whole population he now rails most unmercifully".98

Later visitors were no less concerned with mineral wealth. Many Mexicans assumed that an Englishman in Mexico could have no other interest: Lieutenant Hardy, travelling towards the Pacific coast, was thought by a curious host to be a miner; the ethnographers Tylor and Christy were taken for silver miners by a group of salt merchants; and the anonymous author of Sketches was actually offered a silver mine. It is worth noting that the novelist Henry Rider Haggard went to Mexico as late as 1890, according to his own memoirs, because he had shares in an old silver mine and,

furthermore, had been told “as a bait...a wonderful and, as I believe perfectly true tale of hidden treasure”; nothing less, in fact, than “that portion of the treasure of the Aztecs which was recaptured from the Spaniards in the disaster of the Noche Triste”, comprising “eighteen large jars of gold, either in form of ornaments or dust, several jars full of precious stones, much arms and armour, also of gold, and lastly a great golden head more than life size, being a portrait of the emperor Montezuma.”99 Nothing came of his treasure hunt, naturally, except the material for a new historical romance.

A gender divide has been hinted at by Leask, who saw in the letters of Fanny Calderón the complete opposite to the male gaze which attempted to appropriate the landscape and its mineral resources.100 A comparison with another nineteenth-century female, Annie Sampson Poole, wife of the British administrator at the Guanajuato Mint during the 1860’s, proves this assertion to be right. It is surprising that even for someone living on the coveted site, silver appeared to be less noteworthy than the daily domestic matters. A different note, however, is struck by yet another woman traveller on the verge of the twentieth century. Ethel Tweedie had little patience with those countrymen of hers with wild dreams of quick fortunes, who so foolishly threw their money down the dark shafts of disused mines. Still, she could not help but ask: “Who in Mexico does not have some interest in Mines?”101 It was, of course, a rhetorical question. She knew very well that one of her predecessors had been right when he remarked that “To visit Mexico without the mines is like reading Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark.”102

Religious ruminations

“Much ... in the minute account of a Catholic church, would not be understood in a Protestant country”, readers were told by William Bullock at the point in his book where he attempted a description of the Cathedral in Mexico City. In a similar vein, a later traveller confessed that it was difficult for a Protestant to describe a Catholic church to his readers without causing offense.103 These passing remark are interesting if only because they illustrate some awareness of the difficulties entailed in translating what travellers experienced of other cultures into a framework that might be more familiar to a domestic audience. Although at no point do the authors ever attempt to bridge the perceived cultural distance—Bullock was, in fact, trying to profit from the sensationalist approach whereby the more alien a culture appeared the more interest it would
attract—the acknowledgement of such a distance between mentalities separates nineteenth century accounts from most of their predecessors.

Religion was one of the central themes of British travel writing regarding Mexico. This interest, perhaps the most conspicuous source of cultural distance experienced by the writers, ran the gamut from first-hand accounts of religious persecution in the sixteenth century, through religious pamphleteering and bigotry in the seventeenth, up to a more detached appreciation of social mores and customs in the nineteenth. Throughout, a mixed sense of wonder, hostility, incomprehension and even amusement is pervasive. Once again, the early accounts set the tone of what was to follow.

Even at the young age of twenty-five, Robert Tomson should have known better than to engage in doctrinal discussions while serving at the table of an old conquistador in the city of Mexico. His indiscretions concerning the cult of saints attracted the attention of Mexican inquisitors who, having decided that the former constituted enough proof of heretical thought, condemned him to two years of wearing the typical penitential garment and one additional year of imprisonment in Spain. When many years later the merchant from Andover told Richard Hakluyt the story of his tribulations in New Spain, he also provided the earliest known account of mainland Mexico given by any Englishman.

Profit was, without a doubt, the main reason impelling Tudor sailors like Tomson forth to the New World. Hakluyt sums it up, informing the reader (before abruptly switching from third to first person narration—a typical feature in his reporting of contemporary countrymen’s exploits) that “having seene the fleetes of ships come out of the Indies to that citie, with such a great quantitie of gold & silver, pearles and precious stones, suger, hides, ginger, and divers other rich commodities, [Tomson] did determine with himselfe to seeke means and opportunitie to pass over to see that rich country from whence such great quantitie of rich commoditites came”. Thus motivated after living in Seville for over two years, he set sail for the New World. If Tomson has to his credit the first known English record of Mexican terra firme, it must also be said that his account provides the most perceptive description of Spanish religious rituals, and thus underlines, better than any of the others, English religious idiosyncrasies. After recalling (in a passage worthy, in atmosphere, of Conrad) a storm that assailed his ship off the coast of Florida, Tomson writes:

104 Hakluyt, 1589, pp. 582-583.
...in the night, there came upon the toppe of our main yarde and maine maste, a
certaine little light, much like unto the light of a little candle, which the Spaniards
called the Corpos Sanctos, and saide it was S. Elmo, whom they take to be the
advocate of Sailers. At which sight the Spaniards fell downe upon their knees
and worshippd it, praying God and S. Elmo to cease the torment, and save
them from the perill they were in, ...The friers cast reliques into the sea, to cause
the sea to be still, and likewise said Gospels, with other crossings and
ceremonies upon the sea to make the storme to cease: which (as they said) did
much good to weaken the furie of the storm. But I could not perceive it, nor gave
no credite to it, till it pleased God to send us the remedie & delivered us from the
rage of the same, His Name be praised therefore. This light continued aboard our
ship about three houres, flying from maste to maste, & from top to top: and
sometime it would be in two or three places at once. I informed my selfe of
learned men afterward what that light should be, and they said, that it was but a
congelation of the winde and vapours of the Sea congealed with the extremitie
of the weather, which flying in the winde, many times doeth chance to hit on the
masts and shrolds of the ships that are at sea in foul weather. And in truthe I do
take it to be so: for that I have seene the like in other ships at sea, and in sundry
ships at once. By this men may see how the Papists are given to beleive and
worship such vaine things and toyes, as God, to whom all honour doth
appertaine, and in their neede and necessities do lett call upon the living God,
who is giver of all things.\footnote{105}

If Tomson had his misgivings about such outward displays of faith, he did well not to
express them there and then –lest his sea journey to the New World lead him directly
to a prison cell in the Indies. As it turned out, his stay in Mexico City would be short in
any case on account of his religious deliberations. While waiting at the table of Gonzalo
Cerezo, High constable of Mexico City, Tomson became engaged in a discussion
regarding religion in his homeland. Asked by those at dinner whether it was true that all
Catholic churches had been destroyed, images of saints incinerated, and allegiance to
the Pope denied, he replied

that it was so, that in deed they had in England put downe all the Religious
houses of friers and monks that were in England, and that the images that were
in their Churches and other places were taken away, and used there no more: for
that (as they say) the making of them, and putting of them where they were
adored, was cleane contrary to the expresse comandment of Almighty God, Thou
shalt not make to thy selfe any graven image, &c. and that for that cause they
thought it not lawfull that they should stand in the Church...

By appealing to the authority of the scriptures over any other church interpretation,
Tomson was asserting one of the main principles of Reformation doctrine. The ensuing
conversation, illustrating the attitudes of both counter-Reformation Spaniards and the
youth brought up in England under Henry VIII’s reign, appears to be a text-book
description of some of the doctrinal cleavages that set Catholics and Protestants apart.

\footnote{105 Ibid., p. 585. Italics are mine. For an account including the same theme to illustrate Spanish
superstition see Purchas, 1626, p. 856.}
...my master Gonsalo Cereso, answered and said, if it were against the commandment of God to have images in the Churches, that then he had spent a great deale of money in vaine, for that the two yeres past he had made in the Monastery of Santo Domingo, in the said cite of Mexico, an image of our Lady of pure silver & golde, with pearles and precious stones, which cost him 7000 and oddd pesos,... At the table was another gentleman, who... saide, that they know well ynough that [images of saints] were made but of stockes and stones, and that to them was no worship given, but that there was a certaine veneration due unto them after they were set up in the Church, and that they were set there to a good intent: the one, for that they were books for the simple people, to make them understand the glory of the saints that were in heaven,...&... to be our intercessors unto God for us...

The talke was perceived to be prejudiciall to the Romish doctrine, and therefore it was commanded to be no more entreated of, and all remained unthought upon, had it not been for a villanous Portugal that was in the company, who said, Basta ser Ingleses para saber todo esto y mas...106

Tomson was not the only inglés to live in Mexico City at the time. At least two more fellow countrymen, of whose later fate little is known, sailed to the West Indies with him and set up residence.107 And it was through the intervention of a Scot named Thomas Blake, who had fought alongside Spaniards in the conquest of New Granada (modern Colombia) and had then taken part in Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's attempt to find the legendary Seven cities of Cibola before settling in the capital of New Spain that Tomson first entered into the service of Gonzalo Cerezo. Another acquaintance of his in Mexico City, an Irishman who went by the Spanish name of Rodrigo Ires, had been a member of Charles V's forces in the Tunisian wars of 1535 led by the brother of the first Viceroy of New Spain, and had lived in Mexico since 1539.108 But if Tomson could not boast of being the first Englishman to settle in Mexico, he could still, at a later date, claim the dubious privilege of being the English pioneer in suffering at the hands of Mexican inquisitors.109

It is in the records of his trial that one learns the most about Robert Tomson –as is true, also, of many of the Englishmen who would later sail to New Spain. Even when information might often have been coerced out of them, Tomson and his countrymen revealed more about themselves through their confessions and testimonies than in their self-conscious narratives. It is not the heroic stature of the travellers which shines through inquisitorial records, but rather a sketch of their daily habits and thoughts, their

106 "It takes an Englishman to know this and more." Italics are mine.
107 One of his known companions was a Ralph Sarre, who went into the service of a regidor of Mexico City and was later implicated in the Martín Cortés conspiracy [G.R.G. Conway, An Englishman and the Mexican Inquisition, p. xxiii]; the other, Robert Sweeting, son of the merchant John Sweeting, served as translator for the English sailors who were captured and tried by the Mexican Inquisition [Flores Salinas, p.27].
108 Conway, xxii.
fears and preoccupations, their convictions and true opinions. Students of inquisitorial records must beware of taking prisoners’ testimonies too seriously too soon: many a desperate victim is known to have said anything that would save him from the pain of torture or the possibility of death. However, there is enough evidence in the proceedings against the sixteenth century Englishmen, sometimes complemented by information that the protagonists themselves volunteered in their written accounts, to suggest that their trial records are valid sources.

The Vicar General of the Arch bishopric of Mexico had Tomson arrested, stating that the latter, “an Englishman without fear of the Lord or of the ecclesiastical justice [had] said many things against our holy catholic faith...preached by the accursed Lutheran sect, thus committing a grievous offence of conscience and mind”. The evidence against him consisted of testimonies by witnesses who were present during, or part of, the doctrinal dispute that got him into trouble, accusations of unruly behaviour in church, and allegations that he had removed an image of the Virgin to hang his hat in its stead. Inquisition records are consistently formulaic, starting out by asking the suspect about his family background—in case he be related to converted Moors or Jews—inquiring whether he knows why he has was summoned, demanding that he search his conscience in search of possible offences against the Holy Catholic Church, and then expecting him to respond to specific charges. Tomson provided the biographical information demanded of him but denied having made remarks or committed any acts contrary to Catholic faith, saying that “if he had made any such remarks it would be because he was not in his proper senses at the time”. Our main interest, however, lies in what scant information he gave his accusers regarding his religious education.

Asked if he knew the orations of the Church which are the Pater Noster, Credo, Salve Regina and Ave Maria he said that he knew them whereupon the said Judge Provisor ordered him to recite them either in Latin or in Roman, or Spanish, as he

109 It must be pointed out that although the Tribunal of the Holy Office was not formally established in Mexico until 1574, high ranking clerics had been granted inquisitorial faculties before that date.
110 Conway papers, add. 7226, f. 42.
111 “Asked whether it was true that about two months ago more or less, there being an image hung at the head of the bed of the said Tomson, the latter removed the said image from the place where it was hanging and put it away in a box, hanging his hat on the nail where the image had hung and remarking that this last was in the way in the room as it took up the nail which he needed for his cap, the deponent replied that it might be about that time that he hung up at the head of Tomson's bed an image of Our Lady and on the morning of the following day he saw a cap hanging on the said nail the image having been removed and put away in a chest whereupon the deponent asked the said Tomson why he had removed the image and the latter replied that he had done so because it occupied the nail where he had his cap…” [Testimony of Jorge Manuel, page to Gonzalo Cerezo. Ibid., f.47].
112 Testimony of Robert Tomson, Ibid., f. 52.
speaks the latter language, to which the said Tomson replied that in his own language, English, and in French he knows the said orations, but that in Latin and Roman he [is] not acquainted with them. Asked if he knew how to write in Roman or Castillian, he replied that he did. Asked if he knew how to write in Roman as he says, why he does not know the said orations in Roman or in Latin, he said that when he prays he does so in his own language and has never recited the prayers in Roman. The said Judge Provisor thereupon ordered the said Robert Tomson to write out in his own language the orations above-mentioned on which the latter proceeded at once to write and presently handed over a paper to the judge...  

Tomson showed he knew the prayers, two of which were unequivocally part of the Catholic rituals and had been banned from Protestant liturgy. Even then, the Vicar General required more proof. He ordered: “seeing that the said Robert Tomson is skilled in our Spanish language and knows how to write it, let him translate word for word the aforesaid orations which are in his handwriting into the Spanish language and sign them with his name...” That too did the prisoner manage. We are thus privy to information that might be of some help in the process of sorting out types of travellers. If we take his word for it—and seeing that he was subjected to close scrutiny and to the possibility of having to prove his statements—Tomson spoke, read and wrote the English, French and Spanish languages, and had some knowledge of Latin. He had mastered French “in France, where he had been sent to trade and learn the language by his master, an Englishman”, before moving to Spain. And here, one can safely assume, he picked up whatever knowledge of Spanish he had. It is impossible to ascertain how well, and for what purpose, he had learnt Latin. Taking into account his sense of observation (as revealed in his idiosyncratic description of New Spain), his well-informed doctrinal views and his polyglot skills, one can only make conjectures: the young, staunch Anglican of Andover, Hampshire, was a well educated man. There is no evidence pointing to what he had read—the only book he claimed to own in Mexico City was a copy of the Hours of Our Lord—but one might possibly assume that he was, if not a man of letters, certainly one well acquainted with them. It was, after all, the soundness of his arguments that had stirred up the controversy at Gonzalo Cerezo’s dinner table and led him to his predicament.

After seven months of imprisonment, Tomson and an Italian, also tried for religious heresy, were the subjects of the first unofficial Auto de Fe—a public ceremony where penitents were exposed and allotted their sentence, while unrepentant sinners were occasionally executed—to be held in American territory.

---

113 Ibid., f. 81.
114 Ibid., f. 83.
115 Ibid., f. 51.
116 Ibid., f. 58.
...we were both carried to the high Church of Mexico, to doe open penance upon a high scaffold, made before the high Altar, upon a Sunday, in the presence of a very great number of people, who were at least five or sixe thousand. For there were that came one hundreth mile off, to see the saide Auto (as they call it) for that there were never none before, that had done the like in the said Country, nor could e tell what Lutherans were, nor what it meant: for they never heard of anysuch thing before...

...The common people before they sawe the penitents come into the the Church, were given to understand that wee were heretiques, infidels, and people that did despise God and his workes, and that wee had bene more like devils than men, and thought wee had had the favour of some monsters, or heathen people. And when they saw us come into the Church in our players coates, the women and children beganne to cry out, and made such a noise, that it was strange to see and heare, saying that they never sawe goodlier men in all their lives, and that it was not possible that there could be in us so much evill as was reported of us, and that we were more like Angels among men, than such persons of such evill Religion as by the Priestes and friers wee were reported to be, and that it was a great pitie that wee should bee so used for so small an offence".\textsuperscript{117}

He was condemnded to three years of imprisonment, which he served in Seville and which he reported in a single sentence of his text. Shortly after regaining his liberty, he married the only daughter of a wealthy Spaniard. Such a convenient matrimonial arrangement, we are told by Tomson, "was worth to mee 2500 pounds in barres of gold and silver, besides jewels of great price. This I thought good to speake of, to shew the goodness of God to all of them that put their trust in him, that I being brought out of the Indies, in such great misery and infamy to the world, should be provided at Gods hand in one moment, of more than in all my life before I could attaine unto by my owne labour."\textsuperscript{118} After many misfortunes, having sailed out to the New World in hope and back to the Old one in shackles, the profit he had once sought was finally his to keep.

* * *

A wine merchant from Tavistock by the name of Henry Hawks left perhaps the most detailed description known to English readers of the many "commodities" available in New Spain, and the possible opportunities for trade between England and the Spanish colony. Having lived in New Spain for five years with due Spanish authorisation, and at the request of Richard Hakluyt, Hawks drew up a description of San Juan de Ulúa which was detailed enough to facilitate access to any ship. In near inventorial style, Hawks listed places and goods, he quoted prices and compared them to those in his homeland: wool in Mexico city was worth "4 pounds a barre", taking into account that "the barre is less than our yarde"\textsuperscript{119}; likewise, "a steere that hath an hundred weight of

\textsuperscript{117} Hakluyt, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 583-584.
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 584.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 550.
tallowe" would sell "... for 16 shillings"\(^\text{120}\). His eyes were, more than any other contemporary Englishman's in Mexico, those of the merchant who gauged opportunities for furthering English profit (and his own) in the region through commerce. English wool, he reported, would be a valued commodity among Spaniards and Indians; not so with English lead which might have been used to "cover churches, and other religious houses", since New Spain had a vast supply of this metal. Equally well-informed are Hawks' descriptions of gold, silver and copper mines in the Mexican north, and the profits to be made therein. It was after he had settled down in the vicinity of one of such mines in the region of Zacatecas that the young merchant was found guilty of uttering "ill-sounding words" which seemed "derogatory to God Our Lord and His Blessed Mother and His Saints" to some of the local population and to inquisitors.\(^\text{121}\) In his case, the accusation seems to have sprung from an idle conversation with a Spanish lady lacking any sense of humour. As her testimony reveals...

...some five months ago more or less [she and Hawks, known to the residents as Pero Sánchez] fell into a talk and the conversation turning upon the dead, the witness remarked that children who died without being baptised went to Limbo and that God did a great good to those whom he sent to Purgatory because those so sent would have hopes of going to Heaven, whereupon the said Pero Sanchez said and answered the witness in a joking and laughing manner "So there are three degrees of punishment? Very well, I say that there are not" whereupon witness answered "How canst thou say such a thing: there is a Limbo because I have heard it said by the preachers and I have read it" at which remark the said Pero Sanchez laughed and made a game saying "Your grace has your opinion let other people have theirs" and this witness replied to him and said "I go by the holy Gospel which says that he who does not believe nor has been baptised shall not be saved, wherefore can the moors who are not baptised go to Heaven when they die?" to which the said Pero Sanchez replied that God alone could know if they go or do not go to heaven as neither witness nor anyone else could tell in what frame of mind they died and that a good intention was sufficient to save them...\(^\text{122}\)

A good intention was clearly not enough to save Hawks from trial and imprisonment, especially after prosecutors amassed evidence against him for such unorthodox behaviour as passing wind while someone read a passage about Christ's passion, or roasting himself "half of a small goat" on a day of fast and announcing that he would not be dissuaded from so doing even if "Saint Peter and Saint Paul and all the Apostles and the Pope himself should come".\(^\text{123}\) Unlike his compatriots, who were incarcerated in Mexico City while he roamed the silver mines of the north, Hawks had been

\(^{120}\) Ibid., p. 549.  
\(^{121}\) Conway papers, add. 7228, ff. 1-2.  
\(^{122}\) Testimony of María Pimentel, wife of Antonio de la Madrid, resident of the mines of Santa Bárbara, Ibid., ff. 3-4.  
\(^{123}\) From the testimonies of Bartolomé López and Bartoldino Espíndola, Ibid., ff. 9 & 14.
authorised by the Casa de Contrataciones, in Seville, to trade in the Spanish colonies. Unlike them, as well, he appears to have been a well-off merchant having no business in New Spain other than making a profit through licit means. The list of Hawks' possessions confiscated by inquisitorial officials reveals a large quantity of items of considerable value. Many of the letters found on him at the time of his arrest were from correspondents who addressed Hawks as "Magnificent Sir", "Your Worship", or even "Very Magnificent and Very Reverend". A certain Juan Anton, from Guanajuato, had asked of him: "...if you come here I pray your worship to bring with you a young black woman of good appearance from fifteen to twenty years of age because I have none and am leading a very bad life". Anyone in a position to grant such a request must have been relatively wealthy.

Hawks was tried for heresy and imprisoned, but managed to escape while he was being moved to Seville to serve his sentence. Were it not for Inquisition records none of this would be known since in his written account Hawks altogether omitted any mention of his troubles with the Mexican ecclesiastical authorities. In the mean time, Miles Philips, one of Hawkins' men, made his troubles with the Inquisition a major part of his narrative. Philips too was tried for heresy and apostasy.

If Robert Tomson provided readers with the most acute first-hand descriptions of Catholic rituals in the New World, and if Henry Hawks gave the most meticulously itemised and up-to-date description of the commodities of New Spain available to the English public, Miles Philips turned his ordeal into a veritable novella. His account, written in seven brief chapters, spans the fifteen years separating his departure from Plymouth, in 1567, from his return to Poole in 1582. In between, Philips describes the capture of Negroes on the west coast of Africa, the trip to the West Indies, Hawkins' decision to seek refuge in San Juan de Ulúa, the courteous exchange of pledges followed by the less courteous exchange of cannon-fire; he narrates how he was put ashore near Pánuco with over a hundred fellow seamen, how most of them survived hunger, bothersome mosquitoes (a recurrent theme among English travellers as late as Bullock and Lyon) and attacks from Indians, only to be delivered into the hands of Spanish authorities, and how they ended in the service of Spanish lords or friars. All his contempt is reserved, however, for the Holy Office.

In the yeere of our Lord one thousand five hundred and seventie four, the Inquisition began to be established in the Indies, very much against the mindes of many of the Spaniards themselves: for never untill this time since their first conquering and planting in the Indies, were they subject to that bloody and cruel Inquisition. The chiefe Inquisitor was named Don Pedro Moya de Contreres (sic), and John de Bovilla (sic) his companion, and Jon Sanches the Fischall (sic), and Pedro de los Rios, the Secretary: ... considering with themselves that they must
make an entrance and beginning of that their most detestable Inquisition here in Mexico, to the terror of the whole countrey, thought it best to call us that were Englishmen first in question, and so much the rather, for that they had perfect knowledge and intelligence that many of us were become very rich, ..., and therefore we were a very good booty and pray to the Inquisitors: so that now againe began our sorrowes afresh.  

Indeed, orders calling for the rounding up of all Englishmen in Mexico had been despatched once enough evidence had been gathered about their habits and religious customs on board the ships that had brought the Elizabethan seamen to Mexico. The fact that some had been educated as Catholics under the reign of Mary, and yet had later participated in Lutheran rituals and advocated Lutheran iconoclasm, made them automatic heretics. The persecution that Miles Philips attributed to his wealth was, in the minds of inquisitorial officers, a campaign to rid the land from the likely spread of Protestantism. Juan de Bonilla, one of the chief prosecutors, was unequivocal in his letter to Inquisitorial authorities in Spain:

I denounce and declare that all the English who have remained in this country from the fleet of Juan Haquines ... are annotated in the records of this Holy Office as being and having been Lutheran Heretics, apostates from our Holy Catholic faith; and as having upon the sea as well as upon land, done, held, and believed many things, rites and ceremonies of the Mother Church of Rome, as is shown by the information received... and they all wander scattered throughout this New Spain, with assumed names that they may not be known. And thus if we waited to know the name of each individually before imprisoning him there would be great delay and inconvenience; and there would cease the great service to Our Lord that these do not sow their errors among the natives of this country, so ready to receive any doctrine. Therefore,... I beg you send a general despatch that all shall be taken prisoners in whatever place and locality they may be found.  

At the time the order was finally carried out Miles Philips was living in the Barrio de Santa Catalina, in Mexico City, under the assumed name of Miguel Pérez. He had entered into the apprenticeship of a weaver of the taffetas that had so impressed Henry Hawks during his Mexican sojourn. At the beginning of the year 1574 Philips was arrested and taken into custody of the Holy Office for various offences. Namely,

...that being a baptised Christian, and in such a manner enjoying the graces, privileges and exemptions that such faithful and Catholic Christians are bound to enjoy, and having been instructed in the matters of our Holy Catholic Faith as a man born of Catholic parents at the time when the Catholic Queen Mary ruled and the Kingdom of England remained obedient to the Holy Church of Rome... he has committed heresy and apostasy against [the faith] and has turned to the sect of the

---

124 A discourse written by one Miles Philips Englishman, one of the company put on sore northward of Panuco, in the West Indies by M. John Hawkins 1568...", in Hakluyt, 1589, p. 572. The names reported are those of Pedro Moya de Contreras, Juan de Bonilla, Juan Sánchez, the prosecutor, and Pedro de los Ríos.

125 Conway papers, add. 7229, f. 130-131.
evil heresiarch Luther and his followers, and has in England and on the high seas and in this land of New Spain held and believed and publicised his errors.\footnote{126}

The “errors” he held, believed and publicised were not few. His accusation included 28 specific items or ways in which he had offended the Catholic faith. All of them seemed to be the result of unknowingly flaunting his beliefs in the face of those of his captors. And not even that: many of the offences for which he was being accused were committed before leaving his native land—“in the port of Plimor [Plymouth], being ready to embark for a long period of time, he heard the sermons of a Lutheran minister who preached there to the Navy’s men, and he approved of the doctrine that was so taught, believing it to be a way for his salvation, and harbouring this belief and intent he went forth unto the perils of the sea.”\footnote{127} As for other aspects of his heretical behaviour, they all seemed to be the typical product of a somewhat inane fear of the spread of Protestantism in the New World.

...the main heresy which the said Mails [Miles Philips] began by hearing, holding and believing was that against the power and authority of the Pope and the Holy Mother Church, and he has said, held and believed that only Saint Paul was a Pope and that he left no successor on Earth with the power to forgive sins, so the Pope could have no such power.

...he has denied the power invested in priests to preach and deliver the sacraments, and has said that all Christians are priests and have the same spiritual power...

...he has held and believed... that no priest, by virtue of any words, can turn the consecrated host into the true body of Christ, nor the wine into his precious blood...

...he has held and believed that confession of sins must be made solely unto God in one’s heart, for only He has the power of forgiveness... and so he heard it said, and the aforesaid Mails held and believed it, that clerics are sinners, and that a sinner does not confess before another.

...as a consequence of all this, the mass and services that the said Meils (sic) saw in England consisted, firstly, in the reading of the commandments of God’s law, of which there are those ten that Christian Catholics keep, and another in which it is ordered that no images of saints should be had or adored or prayed to, but only to God in heaven, and then they engaged in litanies in which no mention is made of Our Lady, or of any other saint, but only of God in heaven...

...[Miles Philips] has said that saints contain no mystery, and are owed no more devotion than other things made of stone or wood by the hands of men.\footnote{128}

These rather commonplace accusations are perhaps of less interest than some splinters of evidence regarding life aboard the ships in Hawkins’ fleet. This evidence, no doubt, had been gathered in the course of interrogation of other English sailors, both of the group that was put ashore and of those who were captured at San Juan de Ulúa. From such examinations, inquisitors had concluded that:

\footnote{126} Conway papers, add. 7240, f.70. My translation.
\footnote{127} \textit{Ibid.}, f. 73.
\footnote{128} \textit{Ibid.}, ff. 70-73. My translation.
...during the aforesaid navigation, the conversation held by Mails and the others was all about approval of Luther and there followed altercations regarding the mass and the sacraments, and much wrong was said about the Christian Catholic religion as was said that that which was held in England was the true way to salvation, and so the aforesaid Miles held and believed, as he also believed that Spaniards were on the way to damnation, and he begged of God that he brought them to the right path on which the English were.

If taking part in discussions onboard on the relative merits or drawbacks of Catholicism and Protestantism was not enough to prove Philips' heretical nature, his willing participation in bouts of iconoclasm and saint-savaging after chancing upon Portuguese ships was sure to get him into trouble. The inquisitors seem to have been incensed most, however, by reports that "making fun of the religion, its ceremonies and its observance, the said Mails and the others played a game they called 'reverend friars', giving each [priest, as represented by one of the crewmembers] an ugly and dirty name that denoted some vice".\textsuperscript{129} Evidence of this sort was not hard to come by, as can be seen in the trials of another one of Philips' seafaring companions. Witnesses in the proceedings against Robert Barret, master of Hawkins' flagship, were not shy about their motives for testifying: one admitted to being "not well disposed towards the ... Englishman because he sailed the seas as a rover and freebooter"; another bluntly declared that "he would like to see a bonfire made of all the Englishmen because they are said to be Lutherans and because they rob all those that they can".\textsuperscript{130}

According to Thomas Gage, the ostentatious presence of its many bounties lay at the core of New Spain's moral corruption. If this wealth provided a first argument for Gage's somewhat hypocritical repudiation of Catholicism, he insisted that it was the doctrinal issues that finally tipped the balance. The central error in Catholic belief, he asserted, stemmed from "that synodical definition, that the Pope cannot erre". It was due to it, in fact, that most of the other Catholic superstitions --"those damnable opinions of Purgatory, Transubstantiation, Sacrifice though unbloody (as they term it) of the Mass, Invocation of Saints, ...canonization or installing of Saints into the Kingdom of Heaven, Auricular Confession"\textsuperscript{131}--came to be. The highlight in an endless string of denunciations of "Romish" idolatry comes in an episode that takes places outside of New Spain, while Gage was delivering mass in Portobello. As he prayed in silence during the memento, a mouse climbed onto the altar and ran off with the consecrated host. After a thorough search, the alarmed parishioners found a hole in the wall, and in

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., f. 75.
\textsuperscript{130} Proceedings against Robert Barret, Conway Collection, add. 7229, ff. 86 and 95.
it the remains of the host, “which with great joy they took out, and as if the Arke had been brought again from the Philistines to the Israelites, so they rejoiced for their New found God”. As they paraded the uneaten half of the wafer, Gage observed in it “the marks and signes of the teeth of the mouse, as they are to be seen in a piece of cheese gnawne and eaten by it”. This incident of the “mouse-eaten God”, Gage relates, led him to confirm all his doubts about the mystery of transubstantiation.

...I called to my best memory all Philosophy concerning substance and accidents, and resolved within my selfe that what I saw gnawed was not an accident, but a real substance eaten and devoured by that vermin, which certainly was fed and nourished by what it had eaten, and Philosophy well teacheth... the substance (not the accident) of the food or meat is converted, and turned into the substance of the thing being fed by it an alimented; Now here I knew that this mouse had fed upon some substance, or else how could the markes of the teeth so plainly appeare? But no Papist will be willing to answer that it fed on the substance of Christ's body, ergo by good consequence it followes that it fed upon the substance of bread; and so Transubstantiation here in my judgement was confuted by a mouse; which meane and base creature God chose to convince mee of my former errours, and made me now resolve upon what many yeeres before I had doubted, that certainly the point of Transubstantiation taught by the Church of Rome is most damnable and erroneous...¹³²

Further evidence of the superstitious nature of Catholic rituals was later provided for Gage after leaving the New World upon a visit to the shrine of the Virgin of Loreto, in Italy. In his own words:

I had heard much of a picture of Our Lady of Loretto, and read in a book of Miracles or lies concerning the same that whatsoever prayed before that picture in the state of mortal sin, the picture would discover the sin in the soul by blushing, and by sweating. Now I framed this argument to myself, that it was a great sin, the sin of unbelief, or to waver and stagger in points of faith; but in me (according to the tenets of Rome) was this sin, for I could not believe the point of transubstantiation, and many others; therefore (if the miracles which were printed of the aforesaid Lady of Loretto were true, and not lies) certainly she would blush and sweat when such an unbeliever as I prayed before her. To make this trial I went purposely to Loretto, and kneeling down before God, ..., I prayed earnestly to the true searcher of all hearts that in his Son Jesus Christ he would mercifully look upon me a wretched sinner,..., for the good and salvation of my soul. In my prayer I had fixed and settled eye upon the lady's picture, but could not perceive that she did either sweat or blush, wherewith I arose up from my knees much comforted and encouraged in my resolution to renounce and abandon Popery, and saying within myself as I went out of the church, surely if my Lady neither sweat or blush, all is well with me, and I am in a good way for salvation, and the miracles written of her are but lies.¹³³

¹³¹ Gage, p. 1.
¹³² Ibid., p. 197.
¹³³ Gage, 1929, pp. 396-397.
Putting aside the fact that Gage’s twisted logic manages to dismiss the miraculous power of the image while using it to prove that “all is well” with him (in the same sentence), a reader might be struck by his coarse approach to such complex doctrinal matters. It is indeed surprising that a man trained by Jesuits and Dominicans to discern the finer subtleties of religious doctrine should debase the issues at hand by dissecting them in such grossly literal terms.

This almost unwholesome fascination with the outer expressions of the Catholic faith lingered on among nineteenth century travellers. But rabid denunciation was now far from their minds, having been supplanted by curiosity or mild amusement. Rather than a call for the conversion of a misguided people, as had been the case with seventeenth century texts, writers now took the cultural difference for granted and simply tried to explain its peculiarities to their audiences at home. In some cases, like that of the first known female to write about her travels in Mexico, Fanny Calderón de la Barca, later a Catholic herself, the religious issue seems to disappear altogether.

Basil Hall went to great lengths to show respectful consideration of his hosts’ beliefs. A passage in his published journal evinces more empathy—or perhaps more diplomatic skills—than had been seen ever before. While in the port town of San Blas, waiting for his ship to be loaded with Mexican silver to buy British merchandise, the Humbolditian Hall decided to erect an observatory.

It being necessary, in the first instance, to erect a mark in a conspicuous situation, in the meridian, on which a light was to be placed at night, we fixed upon the parapet of a friend’s house, on the further side of the market-place. No particular directions had been given as to the form of this mark, which was nailed up late on Saturday evening; nor was it until after it had been exposed for some hours next morning, that I discovered it to be in the form of a crucifix. We had learned, by many circumstances, that the inhabitants of San Blas were above all things jealous of any interference with, or any disrespect for their religious customs; and we had, in consequence, taken great care to avoid every conceivable cause of offence on such subjects. I was horror-struck, therefore, to see the sacred symbol built up as part of my profane apparatus, and immediately repaired to my friend the commandant to consult with him what was best to be done on this alarming occasion. “It is a great pity,” said he, “and I hope it may not produce a popular commotion; although I think the chances are, the people will take it rather as a compliment than otherwise, at all events let it stand now, and, in the meantime, come down to mass along with me.” Accordingly, as the third bell was just ringing, we set off for the church. On reaching the market-place, we observed a great crowd gaping at my cross; but we walked on boldly, and I must own I was not a little relieved by the good humour they appeared to be in, and by the unusually civil manner in which they made for us to pass. They were delighted, in fact, with the circumstance; and I heard no more of the matter, except that the inhabitants were much pleased with the pious regularity with which we lighted up the cross every night, the moment it was dark. It also had the effect of inspiring them with hopes of our conversion; for the question, as to whether or not we were Catholics, was more frequently put than before. They were never displeased with our replying in the
negative; and always considered our regular attendance at mass, and other
attentions, as marks of civility and good-will. They hoped, they said, that, in time,
we would see our error, and yield to the true faith. 134

Another telling example of Hall's detached but respectful observation of religious rituals
is offered upon being invited to a wedding, Hall remarks that:

The ceremony did not differ essentially from our own: there was, however, much
crossing with holy water, consecrated with great ceremony in our presence: the
prayers were read in so rapid and mumbling a style, that I could not, for a long
time, discover whether they were in Spanish or in Latin.
There was, as usual, abundance of wine and cakes, and it was truly exhilarating
to mark the relish with which the good fathers drained their glasses.
The Novios, as the bride and groom are called, were silent and attentive, but I
was the only other person in the room who was so during the whole ceremony,
every one else being employed in laughing or whispering to his neighbour; even
the officiating priest was scarcely serious; and at the conclusion, when he shut the
book, and the ceremony was considered as over, he said something ludicrous and
appropriate to the circumstances, but in the same tone he had used in reading the
service. This, notwithstanding its scandalous impropriety, was almost irresistibly
comic, and I had the utmost difficulty to repress a laugh. I was restrained by an
idea, that, whatever liberties these people might themselves choose to take on
such an occasion, they must have been displeased at a heretic's presuming to join
in the jest. 135

His restraint, he tells us, gained him the favour of an "old gentleman", who approached
Hall saying "he wished to express how much pleased he was to observe that all
Englishmen did not ridicule the Roman Catholic Sacraments, and he hoped [Hall]
would accept a copy of Don Quixote, of which he had an old and valuable edition, in
testimony of his satisfaction".

A less joyous occasion allowed the Captain of the Royal Navy to witness
another typical ritual. Again while in San Blas, Hall -"Medecin malgré moi" 136— was
asked to perform the duties of a medic. His charge, a young girl of three years of age,
died nonetheless. To his surprise, the funeral turned out to be "a sort of merry-making;
it being considered a source of rejoicing that an innocent soul has been added to the
number of angels". The effect, he confesses, was altogether "very distressing; the
respect I felt for the family, and the curiosity I had to see the ceremony, were barely
sufficient motives to induce me to accompany the procession, where fiddles, drums,
and fifes, played merry tunes round the bier; while the priests chaunted hymns of
rejoicing at the accession which had been made to the host of little angesles. 137

134 Hall, pp. 304-306.
135 Ibid. p. 211.
136 Ibid. p. 301.
137 Ibid., pp. 298-9.
Often consulted by villagers along his journey for medical advice, too, George Francis Lyon includes a very similar account of a child's funeral in his book.  

[In Tula] I found a crowd of people with a young woman who was bearing on her head a little dead child, dressed in coloured papers so arranged as to represent a robe, and tied to a board by a white handkerchief. Round the body were stuck a profusion of artificial flowers; the face was uncovered, and the little hands tied together as if in prayer. A fiddler and man playing on a guitar accompanied the crowd to the church-door; and the mother having entered for a few minutes again appeared with her child, and walked off, accompanied by her friends, to the burying place.

The father followed with another man, who assisted him with a lighted piece of wood in throwing up hand-rockets, of which he bore a large bundle under his arm. The whole ceremony was one of cheerfulness and gaiety, since all children who die young are supposed to escape purgatory and to become "Angelitos" [little angels] at once. I was informed that the burial would be followed by a fandango, in token of rejoicing that the babe had been taken from this world. —It is doubtless the duty of Christians to be resigned to their afflictions; but I am sure that few English women could carry their first and only infant to its grave, with smiling countenances; and I equally can answer for the inability of men to throw up rejoicing rockets when their first born is taken from them.

While commenting on the iconography of Mexican Catholic culture, Lyon is less sympathetic. Some of his book's most amusing moments stem from his discussions about the artwork found in churches. In the coastal town of Pánuco he came face to face with an image of Christ "as large as life, ill-proportioned, of a ghastly yellow colour and having the indications of veins painted black. An apron of red damask, garnished with gold tinsel roses and tawdry ornaments, was tied around the waist, and a wig of immensely long hair covered the shoulders. The whole figure reminded me forcibly of the horrid creation of Frankenstein." At a church in San Vicente he encountered "at least a hundred of the most horrid figures I ever saw, painted in gaudy colours, and varying in size from very small dolls to that of a half-grown person. One figure of our Saviour with a large brown wig was seated on a child's toy horse, exactly the kind which our English children play with, having straight legs, and the head and curved neck cut out of a flat board". This was not, he later tells us, the most horrid figure in the collection, but he decides not to dwell too much on the "disgusting appearance of the monsters that met [his] eye; such, in fact, that had a strange people visited this church, they would not have hesitated to consider the worshipers as idolaters". He finally declares that never had he seen "an original or a picture of the Mexican deities at the

139 Ibid., pp. 144-5.
140 Ibid., p. 12.
time of the Conquest, more abhorrent or absurd than the idols in the Romish church of San Vicente. \(^{141}\)

Despite his misgivings about the ornamental aspect of Catholicism, Lyon seemed profoundly moved by popular faith and resisted the temptation to disregard public exhibitions of devotion as mere Popish superstition, in the way that so many in previous centuries had done. In the same town where he witnessed a child’s funeral, he entered a church. It was neat, he wrote, “and, according to custom, crowded with images: before one of these a sallow wretched man was kneeling, with his arms extended for so long a time that it became painful to look upon him”. He left the man to carry on with his “agonizing penance ungazed upon by the eye of curiosity; since whatever may be the errors of the creed which imposes bodily suffering as an atonement for sin, his was a act of fervent piety, and, as such, was sacred.” \(^{142}\)

When the disparities of belief were outlined by British travellers, the cult of images of Virgins seems to have been one of the major points of interest. Although such early visitors as Miles Philips hardly noticed the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and Robert Tomson fatally declared that a nail in the wall was more suited to hang a hat than to keep an image of Our Lady on the wall, few nineteenth century observers could fail to acknowledge the centrality of particular Virgin figures in Mexican Catholic rituals. “The Virgin, in fact, is introduced in Mexico into every painting... to the total exclusion of that homage which is due to God alone”, Lyon quipped. \(^{143}\)

The cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe, although generally acknowledged as being central to Mexican catholicism, does not seem to have attracted too much attention even from knowledgeable British visitors. Lyon paid the chapel where the image is kept a visit, but was unimpressed:

I took advantage of a little ladder placed near the altar, to obtain a closer view of this wonderful production, which is coarsely painted on a closely-grained canvass previously primed with a white ground. It represents the Virgin with clasped hands, and clothed in a blue cloak covered with gilt stars. Her petticoat is painted in red and gold; and she stands on a large crescent, which is supported by a very ugly little cherub. This picture is peculiar, as having the rays diverging from the figure in all directions; and although the colours are faded, and the gold very dull from age and dust, the eyes of the faithful do not fail to see a dazzling and unearthly splendour in dress and features. \(^{144}\)

Fanny Calderón de la Barca could not be asked to visit the enshrined image. “This being the anniversary of the miraculous apparition of our Lady of Guadalupe,” she

\(^{141}\) Ibid., pp. 80-1.
\(^{142}\) Ibid., p.15.
\(^{143}\) Ibid., p.185.
wrote home, “the cathedral and village will be crowded with Indians from all parts of the country. A--- and Mr. B--- have driven over here; but from all accounts, the crowd will be so great, that we are not tempted to accompany them.”

Perhaps for anecdotal reasons, the cult of Our Lady of Los Remedios seems to have captured the imagination of British travellers more than that of the Guadalupana. Once again it is Lyon who brings her story to his readers’ attention.

This saint is one of the most important of the idols in the very prolific Mexican calendar: the image, which is very small, and—with reverence be it spoken—noseless, was brought over at the time of the Conquest by one of Cortez’s soldiers, and on various occasions worked the most extraordinary miracles in favour of the invaders, which of course obtained for it high veneration. This afterwards gave place to a deeper feeling, and it was adored after having been seen at Otumba to hover over the Spaniards while engaged with multitudes of Indians, and to assist them in gaining victory by "throwing sand" in the eyes of the savages! A chapel was now erected to the honour of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios; forms of prayer were established, and priests appointed; and the worship of Our Lady of the Remedies was added to that of other idols of the Spaniards; until, having taken some disgust at its votaries, the image suddenly vanished, and years elapsed without any tidings of the offended saint. At length a blessed Indian, in chopping away the leaves of a maguey to prepare it for pulque, discovered the lost lady seated in the centre of a plant. She now suffered herself to be restored to her worshipers, to whom she has ever since vouchsafed her presence. Happy indeed is the city of Mexico in the reconciliation; for without the aid of the idol, all the population would have expired of thirst, she possessing sovereign authority over the rains. ...I have told a long story about Our Lady of the Remedies; but it may not be generally known that she once was of great prejudice to the interests of England, when Admiral Blake, having in the time of the tyrant Cromwell blockaded the treasure-ships destined for Havannah, was in consequence of national offerings and great humiliation of the Viceroy and court of Mexico, for many days and nights before the altar of the Saint, visited with a gale of wind which blew him from the shore, and the galleons happily reached their destination. For this miracle, a splendid diamond ornament was presented to the image; and the whole story, with various others, is told in one of the most extraordinary books I ever saw, and which I have in my possession.

Whether Henry George Ward, the first official representative of His Majesty’s government in independent Mexico, was aware of this anecdote linking England and his host country is unclear. We know from the gossip-mongering account of Joel Robert Poinsett, first diplomatic envoy of the United States to Mexico, that among the troubles Ward went through to ingratiate himself with Mexican authorities was allowing his own carriage to be used to move the venerated image of Our Lady of Los Remedios from some temporary shelter back to her own shrine. Curiously enough, not a word of this is to be found in Ward’s personal narrative.

---

Britannia Abroad

In one of his many letters written from England, the nineteenth century Portuguese novelist Eça de Queiros, at the time his country’s consul, wrote about the English:

They are everywhere, these English! No matter how unknown the village one enters, no matter how lost one is in some obscure corner of the Universe… one always finds an Englishman, a remnant of Englishmen!… Always English! As wholly English as when they left England, impermeable to foreign civilisation, travelling through different religions, habits, arts, types of food, without their British prototype being altered in any single point, a single pleat, a single line… wanting to find everywhere what they left behind in Regent Street, hoping for pale ale and roast-beef in the desert of Petra; wearing a black overcoat on Sundays up in the mountains, in respect for the Protestant church, and scandalised that natives do not do the same; receiving their *Times* or their *Standard* at the ends of the world, and forming their opinion not based on what they see and hear around them, but on the article written in London; their souls constantly looking back, towards their home; abominating all that isn’t English, and believing that other races can only be happy if they possess the institutions, habits and manners that make them happy in their northern isle!\(^{147}\)

What might appear to be almost a caricature of the ubiquity and impenetrability of the English character proves, when read alongside some actual accounts of travel, to be an adequate sketch of the English whose business led them to travel through, or set up residence in, Mexico. Notice the immense pleasure experienced by George Alexander Thompson who, in 1825, after eighteen months in Mexico as secretary to His Majesty’s Mexican Commission,\(^ {148}\) was sent to report on the state of the Central American republics:

It was about five o’clock in the evening when we landed at Belize; … We were shown to the only inn in the place, kept by Mrs. Ebrington, a fine English woman, fat, fair, and forty, and the widow of an English officer: the apartments bore also the peculiar characteristics of English comfort. The side-board was covered with drinking glasses of every shape and figure, from the champaigner with its dandified waist down to the broad-bottomed rummer; spruce looking mahogany tables with attendant chairs were arranged in symmetrical order, inviting the guests to their snug, exclusive, repasts: I sat down at one of them, and took up a newspaper; it was ‘The Times’, and with a feeling of satisfaction which I cannot express, began to fancy myself already in England.\(^ {149}\)

The comforts and trappings of British life were certainly not easy to come upon in the war-stricken country at that time. Nor were they easier to procure as civil strife raged through the next few decades of the nineteenth century. The inns were poor, the food unpalatable, travelling conditions appalling. “How did I meditate upon the roast-beef and comfortable inns of England, where the travellers may find a shelter, a cheering

\(^{147}\) Quoted by Freyre, p. 13.
\(^{148}\) About Thompson’s role as part of the Mexican mission, of which he says nothing in his own book, see McKenzie Johnston, 1992, pp. 49-50.
\(^{149}\) Thompson, p. 406.
fire, a comfortable supper, and a soft bed at any hour of the night!” despaired Lieutenant Hardy in his book of 1829. Over half a century later, Mrs. Annie Sampson Poole complained bitterly about the roast beef that was to be served as the third course of every dinner, but in reality “was a small bit of hard, tough and often black meat about six inches square, which was put to stew in lard about one o’clock, and kept stewing until our dinner hour at seven. It was no wonder that it was not tough at times, for if we did not take great care the beef came from the bulls which had been killed in the bullring.”\footnote{Sampson Poole, p. 29.} Where a proper roast was available, other things were found to be missing: “In taking care that the important items of roast beef, plum-pudding, and mince-pies shall not be absent from their dinner table, the English in Mexico observe Christmas-day as religiously as we do at home. But English church service there is none.”\footnote{Hall Bullock, p.116}

The presence or absence of that most indispensable of British commodities — tea— was considered a tangible indicator of civilization. “Friendly tea and evenings will be sought for in vain out of England”, complained the anonymous author of \textit{A sketch of the customs and society of Mexico} in 1828.\footnote{Anonymous, \textit{A Sketch...} p.85.} Twenty years later Alexander Forbes recorded that “tea and coffee [were] being introduced only into Anglicised houses”, although “in most houses, now, one sees tea a L’Anglais during the evening.”\footnote{[Forbes, Alexander C.] 1851, p. 43} While in Mexico, W. Hall Bullock referred to his tea and teapot as inseparable travel companions. He needn’t have worried. As he noted himself, “[p]ersons who think of Mexico as of an altogether wild and uncivilized country, would be surprised at the amount of tea drinking which goes on there in a quiet way —chiefly among the English, of whom there is a considerable sprinkling all over the country.”\footnote{Hall Bullock, p. 100}

The larger cities were expected to provide the comforts required by British civility, and indeed they often did\footnote{The same appears to be true of other great cities in Europe, “adapting themselves to the needs of the English visitors” [Burke, 2000, p. 184].}. By the 1880’s, “every Englishman” in the capital was expected to pay an early visit to the restaurant owned by a certain Mr. Naylor, from Manchester, who served “only beef, potatoes, apple tart and plum pudding”, and who “pride[d] himself that these viands cannot be surpassed in excellence anywhere in the world.”\footnote{Brocklehurst, p.55} The countryside and the smaller provincial towns, however, were almost always found quite lacking in the indispensable traces of Britannia. It is no wonder that the distressed wife of an English commissioner at the silver mint in Guanajuato —“the
fire, a comfortable supper, and a soft bed at any hour of the night!” despaired Lieutenant Hardy in his book of 1829. Over half a century later, Mrs. Annie Sampson Poole complained bitterly about the roast beef that was to be served as the third course of every dinner, but in reality “was a small bit of hard, tough and often black meat about six inches square, which was put to stew in lard about one o’clock, and kept stewing until our dinner hour at seven. It was no wonder that it was not tough at times, for if we did not take great care the beef came from the bulls which had been killed in the bullring.”150 Where a proper roast was available, other things were found to be missing: “In taking care that the important items of roast beef, plum-pudding, and mince-pies shall not be absent from their dinner table, the English in Mexico observe Christmas-day as religiously as we do at home. But English church service there is none.”151

The presence or absence of that most indispensable of British commodities—tea—was considered a tangible indicator of civilization. “Friendly tea and evenings will be sought for in vain out of England”, complained the anonymous author of A sketch of the customs and society of Mexico in 1828.152 Twenty years later Alexander Forbes recorded that “tea and coffee [were] being introduced only into Anglicised houses”, although “in most houses, now, one sees tea a L’Anglais during the evening.” 153 While in Mexico, W. Hall Bullock referred to his tea and teapot as inseparable travel companions. He needn’t have worried. As he noted himself, “[p]ersons who think of Mexico as of an altogether wild and uncivilized country, would be surprised at the amount of tea drinking which goes on there in a quiet way—chiefly among the English, of whom there is a considerable sprinkling all over the country.”154

The larger cities were expected to provide the comforts required by British civility, and indeed they often did.155 By the 1880’s, “every Englishman” in the capital was expected to pay an early visit to the restaurant owned by a certain Mr. Naylor, from Manchester, who served “only beef, potatoes, apple tart and plum pudding”, and who “pride[d] himself that these viands cannot be surpassed in excellence anywhere in the world.”156 The countryside and the smaller provincial towns, however, were almost always found quite lacking in the indispensable traces of Britannia. It is no wonder that the distressed wife of an English commissioner at the silver mint in Guanajuato—“the

---

150 Sampson Poole, p. 29.
151 Hall Bullock, p.116
152 Anonymous, A Sketch... p.85.
153 [Forbes, Alexander C.] 1851, p. 43
154 Hall Bullock, p. 100
155 The same appears to be true of other great cities in Europe, “adapting themselves to the needs of the English visitors” [Burke, 2000, p. 184].
156 Brocklehurst, p.55

56
only English lady in this city of about 30,000 inhabitants—should have been so amused when offered a familiar cure for her sick baby while travelling towards Mexico City. "I could not help being much diverted", she explains, "at... a gentleman, rushing in with a bottle of Mrs. Winslow's soothing syrup... Who would have thought of meeting with Mrs. Winslow here! Surely I am finding out, at the end of my sojourn, that Mexico is not so far behind after all."  

Other commodities, although originally Mexican, had over time been anglicised in such a way that visitors longed for them when away from England. Chocolate had been one of the mundane delights that had so delighted Thomas Gage during his time in New Spain. In the eighteenth century, at the height of the popularity of London's chocolate-houses, a French visitor remarked on how a celebrated London physician offered his guests "chocolate made after the Mexico fashion". And yet two archaeologists arriving in Mexico in 1909 felt compelled to bring the English version with them. Their passage through customs at Veracruz was uneventful; "[o]ur only difficulty lay in explaining in execrable Spanish to Señor el Aduanero... that with a long tour in primeval forests and cruises amid archipelagos of islets before us, 20 lb. weight of Cadbury's solid chocolate and two dozen tins of their cocoa essence were moderate estimates of our personal needs."

If the emphasis on small differences is a form of narcissism, so is the banishment of difference, the overwhelming assurance that "home is here too". It is inevitable for all but a few travel-writers in possession of the most extraordinary skills to rely on comparison when trying to describe foreign places, peoples and customs. These often blunt associations, while rarely helpful in creating an accurate image of the described object, provide some insight into common topoi to which writers could make allusion in the knowledge that their readers would find the reference familiar. Perhaps it was of little real use for readers to learn that Chapultepec was the Mexican Hyde Park, and the castle atop its famous hill the equivalent of Stirling, except to invoke a sense of regal grandeur. But there was perhaps no better way of giving British readers a sense of place than direct analogy. And so it was that Mexico City's alameda came to be described as the "Kensington Gardens of Mexico" and Guadalajara's main

---

157 Sampson Poole, p. 23
158 Ibid., p. 136.
161 Ibid., 25.
162 Poole, p. 11.
163 Hall Bullock, p. 106.
promenade became this city’s Rotten Row. The stately homes in Tacubaya—one owned by a distinguished English family and "pronounced to be in perfect taste"—were equalled to Chatsworth and Eaton Hall; the gardens of San Cosme were twinned with Richmond and Greenwich, and the city of León was either deemed the Mexican Sheffield or its Manchester due to its fame as producer of cutlery. Images of Derby-day at Epsom Downs were conjured up by Hall Bullock when witnessing the throng of worshippers at the church of Our Lady of Guadalupe; instead, Brocklehurst was reminded of Derby-day while attending a more mundane corrida de toros or bullfight.

Few projections of Britannia abroad can be as stereotypically British as the novelist Henry Rider Haggard describing a mountain chain as "a kind of corduroy of little ridges", or his spotting "a very curious 'mackintosh' in use among the Chiapas indians".

Somewhat less likely, perhaps, were Lyon's reminiscences of the Thames while cruising the Tamasinchate river near Tampico in a dug-out canoe, or Geiger's transposition of "the neat hedge rows of England" onto a landscape of tropical mangroves. Indeed, some attempts to familiarise the foreign produced strangely incongruent results—such as Hall Bullock's explanation of "frijoles...which come at the conclusion of every meal—like "God save the Queen" at the end of a concert." Hall Bullock was better than any other writer at illustrating Mexico by alluding to England, as shown by fragments such as his depiction of an evidently run-down area of Mexico City: "Conceive a portion of Shoreditch with two stories taken off the houses, and the remainder left roofless and painted blue, pea-green, or white-washed, all the drains opened and exposed to view with a tropical sun perpetually pouring down upon them, and you will have some faint notion of what New Mexico is like."

It is interesting to note that the growing range of British experience abroad seems to have given late nineteenth century travellers a wider vocabulary to make sense of what they saw in Mexico. Was it not the language of the European Grand Tour that was being used when referring to léperos—the vagrants and impoverished

---

166 Elton, p. 32.
167 Hardy, p.497; Brocklehurst, p. 100.
169 Rider Haggard, pp. 64, 67.
170 Would such comparison be in any way related to the current name of the river that runs through Tampico, the Tamesi—this being also the Spanish name for the Thames?
171 Geiger, p. 25.
172 Hall Bullock, p. 236
173 Ibid., p. 111
street idlers—as *lazzaroni*.\textsuperscript{174} The often unbearably verbose attempts to describe Mexican food were aided by familiarity with the culture of India: *mole* was now simply described as “a Mexican curry”, and the ever-present *tortillas* were more easily referred to as a sort of *chupaty*.\textsuperscript{175} Among the myriad riches it provided, Empire had given the British a new language.

The British must be credited with improving travelling conditions in Mexico throughout the century. William Bullock could never have guessed, upon noting that the pier at Veracruz was paved with English pigs of iron, that by the end of the century another Englishman, Weetman Pearson—later Lord Cowdray—would be charged with the construction of the new docks in that most important seaport. In 1909, with Mexico already inching its way towards civil war, Arnold and Frost were able to report *in situ* on the progress of Pearson’s “marinopolis” at Veracruz.\textsuperscript{176}

In a book of 1863 relating his alleged *Travels in Mexico, South America, etc., etc.*, G.T. Vigne—who almost certainly did not actually travel through Mexico, visiting only Veracruz and its surroundings before continuing his travels in South America quotes as commonplace knowledge the idea that “in a new country the French run up a theatre at once, the English make a road, and the Spanish erect a church”.\textsuperscript{177} Alexander Forbes, a barrister who travelled to Mexico in 1849 to tend to English business on the Pacific coast, could in fact confirm that near the town of Tepic “you get upon a good road—the best, I take it, in the republic—and no wonder, seeing it was made and is owned by an Englishman.”\textsuperscript{178} But it was trains that made up the most important British contribution to travel through Mexico. When travellers like Hall, Bullock, Lyon or Hardy visited the country in the years following its independence, modes of travel from the coast to the capital, and onwards to the mines, were very much as they had been during the colonial period—passengers and merchandise had to be transported over impossible roads on horses or mules, or on mule-drawn litters

\textsuperscript{174} A Sketch, p. 121; see also Geiger: “The leperos of the city of Mexico are that peculiar nondescript class which in Europe is only to be found in the lazzaroni of Naples”, p. 294. The term is used liberally by Fanny Calderón de la Barca.

\textsuperscript{175} For Elton, who had been posted in India at the time of the mutiny, the similarity between Mexico and India seemed quite apparent: glimpses of Mexican cities conjured visions of Delhi and Jumma Musjid, he was reminded of sepoys during the Mutiny by his encounter with Mexican criminals, and he referred to his morning meal as *chota-hazri* [pp. 89, 149]. He had also been in China, as shown by his matching of Mexican and Chinese towns [p. 117].

\textsuperscript{176} Arnold & Frost, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{177} Vigne, p. 29. It is very likely that his descriptions of Mexico City and other inland places were taken from contemporary travel accounts such as Hall Bullock’s and Forbes’.

\textsuperscript{178} Forbes, p. 146; Tepic was the site for a number of English business ventures, especially cotton mills.
and carriages if they could be afforded.\textsuperscript{179} It took the first mission of His Britannic Majesty's government —of which Ward was second commissioner— 14 days to reach Mexico City in 1824.\textsuperscript{180} By the time of Alexander Forbes' visit in 1849, a system of coaches —the infamous diligencias—was well established on the main routes, though severely limited by rampant banditry. One traveller at the time of Mexico's Habsburg Imperial experiment, just over a decade later, observed that the landscape was scarred here and there by the levelling operations needed for the construction of the railway that would finally join Veracruz and the capital.\textsuperscript{181} A contemporary of his, volunteering among French troops, recalls: "we had passed, every now and then, the works of the railroad company. Certainly, when completed, this will be one of the most marvellous lines of the century."\textsuperscript{182} Once the construction of the line was finished, the 300 miles could be covered overnight. "This line," wrote a proud Mrs. Tweedie at the turn of the century, "although the first built in Mexico, remains the finest bit of engineering to-day, and the honour of Construction belongs to Englishmen!"\textsuperscript{183}

\*

It was Laurence Sterne's peripatetic alter ego, Mr. Yorick, who announced that "an English man does not travel to see English men."\textsuperscript{184} Although this might have been true of other English folk on their tours of Europe\textsuperscript{185}, Britons in Mexico must have been grateful at the prospect of encountering fellow countrymen. By the nineteenth century, in fact, they were able to find them wherever they went. The consummation of Mexican independence meant, among other things, that a growing number of diplomats, prospectors, merchants and fortune seekers were in a better position to venture forth into the new republic. The ups and downs in diplomatic relations —officially established in 1824, broken off in 1867 and again continued in 1884— seem not to have greatly

\textsuperscript{179} And yet, there were some who at that time were already suggesting that "the advancements and improvements are very striking and surprising, and it is flattering to us Englishmen, who may claim the credit of it, in great measure". \textit{A sketch...} p. 207.
\textsuperscript{180} Admittedly, a three-day pause at Jalapa and the need to avoid the city of Puebla made the journey longer than usual, but a week was the approximate minimum time. A few later references exist to a British legation's courier who was able to travel the distance from Mexico City to Veracruz in the extraordinary time of 36 to 48 hours.
\textsuperscript{181} Hall Bullock.
\textsuperscript{182} Elton, p. 15
\textsuperscript{183} Tweedie, p.407.
\textsuperscript{184} \textit{A Sentimental Journey}
\textsuperscript{185} "Predetermined to lay aside my John Bull prejudices, I carefully avoided, while travelling on the continent, the society of my own countrymen, whose pleasure, nine times out of ten, is to find fault with everything they see, and who return home as ignorant of foreign languages and manners as when they set out." [Thomas Brown, \textit{Reminiscences of an Old Traveller Through Different Parts of Europe}, London: John Anderson, 1840] See also Mary Wollstonecraft's invective: "Travellers who require that every nation should resemble their native country, had better stayed home." [\textit{Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark}, London: J. Johnson, 1796]
affected the interests of an ever growing community of British miners, merchants, factory owners and expatriates.

Accounts by sixteenth-century visitors to New Spain such as Robert Tomson confirm that there were a few other Britons living in the land—and that the term inglese almost appears to have been a term of abuse among local Spanish elites. Very little is known about Britons resident in New Spain in the course of the following two centuries, with the intriguing exception of the Irishman William Lamport, from Wexford, who in 1742 had the audacity of rising against the Spanish overlords, banning slavery and proclaiming himself King of the Americas and Emperor of the Mexicans. But early nineteenth century accounts indicate that a number of British citizens were present even before the consummation of Mexican independence.

In 1822 Captain Basil Hall was informed by local authorities that the ship he commanded, the Conway, was the first of His Majesty’s vessels to sail into the harbour of Acapulco. Neither had any English man-of-war, to all his knowledge, ever before anchored at his next port of call, San Blas, and yet he reported that in the nearby town of Tepic and the city of Guadalajara a number of English merchants were well established. Only two years later, the author of A sketch of the Customs and Society of Mexico was pointing out that San Blas was in fact the place “where most of the East India business has been done of late years.” In Guadalajara, this same correspondent reported, the silver mint was under the direction of “a Scotchman, Senor Murray, who was captured and thrown into slavery thirty years ago by the Algerines. He made his escape to Spain, and from thence has arrived to directorship of the Casa de Moneda here, after a long list of adventures. He has very nearly forgotten his native language.” Conspicuously anchored at the islet of Sacrificios off the coast from Veracruz—the same place on which William Bullock had reported earlier as being strewn with the bones of Englishmen—the author noticed “two British merchantmen and two of His Majesty’s ships.” At the port of Alvarado, he was the guest of “My friend, Mr. W., who has been established here two years, and in that time made a handsome fortune”. But not all the British in Mexico were prospering at the time, according to Lieutenant Hardy.

We had scarcely alighted from our jaded beasts before we received a visit from an old Englishman, half naked. He told us that, many years ago, he had been made a prisoner by the Spaniards, and was long confined in prison; but being

---

186 Basil Hall, pp. 169, 183.
187 A Sketch, p. 150.
188 Ibid., p. 151.
189 Ibid., p. 17
liberated when Iturbide became Emperor, he had, since that time, taken up his residence here. He is a drunken old fellow, and his principal object in calling upon us was to obtain a few rials, to gratify his passion for liquor. He says that he is now too old to leave his present residence, which, I should think, was wretched enough; but as he is seldom sober, he occupies himself little with unpleasant reflections.  

Bullock, too, found a fair amount of his compatriots scurrying about the country. He sailed to Mexico with an alleged physician, Dr. Mackie, unofficial envoy of the British Foreign Office sent to explore the possibilities of a diplomatic and commercial treaty between the two countries. Bullock soon became acquainted with a “Mr. Hall, an English resident of Vera Cruz” — without a doubt the same John Hall who had been writing letters to Canning on behalf of the self-proclaimed emperor Agustín de Iturbide, trying to encourage British recognition of Mexican independence.  

And of course traveller/authors like Bullock were often coming into contact with their peers: Bullock mentions neither one, but both Ward and Lyon wrote (unsympathetically) about their encounters with him. The author of the Sketch found Bullock, to whom he was apparently already acquainted, “employed in bringing up [mining] machinery from the coast.” Lyon lunched with Ward in Mexico City, and so did Hardy, whose (ultimately fruitless) travails as commissioner for an English-owned pearl-fishery were commended in the chargé d’affaires’ book.  

So many “English” travellers traipsed through the new-born republic that Mexicans had already developed their own stereotypes regarding His Majesty’s subjects. In the picaresque novel by the Mexican satirist Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, El periquillo sarniento, the reader is treated to the following character sketch: “The other foreigner was an Englishman... he spoke a diabolically bad Castillian and, besides that, had the imprudence to praise all things from his own country over those produced in the country in which he was”. In Tepic, in 1822, Captain Basil Hall was playfully encouraged to join a wedding dinner with the argument that “the English are always inquiring into the customs of the natives.”  

It appears to have been a well accepted fact, for instance, that these visitors would invariably end up publishing their experiences — giving some credence to Eça de Queiros’ dictum about the English going abroad for the purpose of writing books. Bullock claims to have been “accosted” by “a distinguished officer” who offered to

---

191 Hardy.
192 William Bullock, p. 57
194 A Sketch, p. 239.
195 “El otro extranjero era inglés... hablaba un castellano de los diablos y a más de eso tenía la imprudencia de alabar todo lo de su tierra con preferencia a las producciones del país en que estaba...” [Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, 1816]
escort him to the next city along his route. “After expressing my thanks for his kindness, I acquainted him that our setting out so early would be impracticable, as my companion had not yet completed his preparations. He jocosely observed, ‘I suppose when you return you will publish an account of us —if so, do not forget the offer I make you.”197 Near Zacatecas, Captain Lyon too was “several times accosted by a noisy fellow, with ‘I say, John English —ha ha! My boy!’” which, he regretted, “unfortunately for further conversation, was my friend’s whole stock of English.”198 Of course some accounts of travel prove stereotypes to be just that, as is the case with the otherwise very stereotypical British visitor, Hall Bullock. He must have disappointed his host, the administrator of a cotton mill near Guadalajara.

Presently, wine, brandy, lemons, hot water and sugar were produced, the latter articles at the especial request of Don Domingo, who conceived that nothing could be so grateful to an Englishman, under any circumstances, as to be furnished with the materials for concocting a glass of grog. His astonishment was unfeigned when, neglecting the opportunity of indulging the national passion for hot and strong drinks, I addressed myself to the wine, which was of Californian growth.199

Stereotypes were not always so benign. In 1832, an anonymous pamphleteer rabidly editorialised against the type of foreigners who had come to Mexico in the guise of merchants, “but are only debauched escapees of Justice in their own country. They are poison for society: they corrupt its morals, infesting those who are good, and living off the country, hoarding riches through deceit, and are the readiest for revolution.”200 Opinion was divided. That same year, another anonymous pamphlet urged readers to recall how England had benefited from the immigration of French textile workers after the Edict of Nantes, and speculated whether Mexico might not profit in a similar fashion from British labourers and capitalists. 201

By mid century, travellers were able to report their encounters with fellow countrymen almost wherever they went. Needless to say, the mines of Pachuca and Zacatecas were the places where the largest groupings of British nationals could be met with —mostly Cornish mine-workers, but also engineers, technicians, tradesmen, managers and even Anglican priests. But a lucrative business in cotton mills was also flourishing near the Pacific coast, mostly in the hands of British owners, aided by the growth of San Blas as a trading port through which Mexican produce —including

196 Hall, p. 217.
197 Bullock, p. 29.
199 Hall Bullock, p. 272.
200 Anon., “Conozcan los Mexicanos a los Malos Extranjeros”, 1832.
201 Anon., “Los Extranjeros y los Aventureros”, 1832.
Mexican silver and Californian gold—could be shipped the long way to Southampton or Liverpool without the restrictions imposed by the government at Veracruz. Hall Bullock wrote about one cotton planter from Stockport, who “from the mere fact of being an Englishman, and possessed of an ordinary amount of industry and enterprise, Mr. Joshua Mellor was looked upon by the limp and indolent natives in the light of a demigod.”

A handful of English subjects were exploiting salt deposits on the shores of the Chapala and Tezoco lakes, some having become central figures in the local community. Again we owe the depiction of Mr. Hay, resident of twelve years and owner of a salt factory at Tezoco, to Hall Bullock.

Mr. Hay devotes himself to works of benevolence, and... a society has been formed at Tezucu, having the double object on the one hand of assisting the municipality in carrying out public improvements, and on the other of relieving sick and necessitous persons. Of the latter branch, Mr. Hay was unanimously elected president, and I had the unexpected pleasure of assisting at a séance, where various projects of poor-relief were discussed with considerable animation. The meeting was chiefly attended by ladies, and was concluded by a ceremony which I take the liberty of recommending to the notice of the secretary of the Social Science Association. At the conclusion of the debate, the president sent for a fiddle, and deliberately waltzed around the room with the lady who had taken the most active part in the proceedings. If it could be announced in the advertisements of the Social Science Association that Lord Brougham would at the close of the séance dance a polka, or waltz, with Miss Emily Faithful or Miss Bessie Parke, I have little doubt that there would be a tremendous rush for tickets.

This colourful character could not have been unfamiliar to the Mr. Bowring, owner of the “evaporating-works” at the edge of the same lake, whom the ethnographer Edward B. Tylor had met only a couple of years earlier.

If the sort of resident Britons to be found in the early part of the century were prospecting for mineral wealth, and the ones at mid-century were mostly merchants, at the century’s close —unsurprisingly, as this was the period presided by the country’s outward looking moderniser Porfirio Diaz— accounts of travel speak mainly of bankers. Merchants in the 1880’s were mostly German —but, according to one observer, two thirds of the goods they imported into Mexico were still English manufactures and knick-knacks. The same traveller noticed that a new group of English professionals had of late been inclined to take up residence in Mexico: circus performers with “well known English names” such as Mr. Henry Cook, a clown whose “effort in making a

202 Ibid., p. 318.
203 Hall Bullock, pp.162-3.
204 Tylor, p. 129.
205 Geiger, p. 63.
comic speech in Spanish every evening was received with deafening applause". When compared to London, Mexico City was—for the first time in the entire century—considered to have some advantages—safer, according to Brocklehurst; not as sleepy, in the words of Mrs. Tweedie. Conditions were such in turn of the century Mexico—with its British visitors and residents, its Anglophile elites with their anglicised tastes and necessities—that in 1901 the latter could confidently declare that, although not yet the right place “to which an ordinary English labourer should emigrate with his family”, it was “a good field for the accomplished artisan”, where “English coachmen and butlers [and] English nursery maids find employment readily at good wages”.

It can be said without a doubt that British travellers in Mexico were happiest when they felt most at home. This, more often than not, happened among the upper classes or “people of reason”—gente de razón was the phrase they used to describe themselves. Near San Juan del Río, the author of A sketch... could hardly hide his excitement when he wrote to his unknown addressee:

21st [December 1824] We left at sunrise and stopped to dine at the hacienda de Coyotes. On entering the farm we were met by the proprietor of the estate, remarkably well dressed... He was a faithful representation of some of our country squires and gentleman farmers... The house further forcibly reminded me of a superior farm-house at home: —cleanly white-washed walls, hung with old fashioned pictures —white scoured floor—the old table and chairs of hard black wood, highly polished —the plates on the shelf were of silver, instead of pewter, shining like so many mirrors. How little soever you may be interested with my description, it afforded me more pleasure than any thing else I recollect having seen in this country.

No less satisfying was it for William Hall Bullock, forty years on, to find himself at last in the “right sort” of environment:

The first aspect of Tepic is not promising, but no sooner do you find yourself within the hospitable precincts of the Casa de Barron than you perceive that you have got to the right sort of place at last. Everything is well-appointed around you, and you are aware of having passed from slipshod-dom to the domain of neatness and order. Had I not known it to be so, I should have at once guessed that the place was tenanted by and English family...

...Of all the enjoyment incident to travel I know of none to compare with that of finding yourself suddenly transported from the extreme of discomfort to

---

206 Brocklehurst, p. 208.
207 Tweedie, p. 229.
208 A Sketch, pp. 2041.
209 Mr. Eustace Barron was H.M.British Consul in the town of Tepic; the name is later associated to the trading house of Barron, Forbes & Co. [Humphreys, pp. 335-342]
the delightfulness of a house, which combines English comfort and cleanliness with the ease and sunniness of a residence in a southern clime. 210

Few registered registered the “shock of the familiar” with such glee and deliberation as Hall Bullock. The following passage from his Across Mexico in 1864-5 deserves to be reproduced in its entire length:

Had one been asked to name the thing, with which there was the least chance of a meeting in a country like Mexico, one might very well have fixed on a game of croquet. Yet at Tacubaya you now find the inevitable hoops arranged on at least one lawn and I believe I had the honour of taking part on the first game of croquet that was ever played in the land of Montezuma.

While croquet goes on at Tacubaya, the neighbouring village of Napoles is the head-quarters of cricket...

During the voyage out from England I had heard that cricket was played in the country, but supposed it would turn out to be cricket of that degenerate sort one finds occasionally played by the English residents in different parts of Europe. So that when I got to the ground, and found an excellent pavilion, a scoring-box, visitors’ tent, the field marked out with flags, with the well known letters M.C.C. (Mexico, not Marylebone, cricket Club) marked upon them, and some eighteen or twenty players in flannels and cricket shoes, I was not a little astonished, and soon found out that I had to do with a very different sort of cricket to what I had expected.

Perhaps the most surprising part of the performance was that the best player on the ground was a Mexican, whose bowling and batting did infinite credit to the training which he received at Bruce Castle school.

Among the English players were several gentlemen close upon sixty years of age, who all expressed to me their conviction that they owed much of the health and energy which they still possessed, in spite of a forty years’ residence in Mexico, to having stuck, through thick and thin, to their Sunday cricket. They assured me they had never allowed political events to interfere with their game, which they had pursued unconcernedly, more than once, in view of the fighting going on in the hills around them. 211

The Mexico Cricket Club had been set up in the capital as early as 1827 by British mine owners and businessmen. In the 1860s the game’s popularity was given a boost among Europeanised elites when the Emperor Maximilian took personal interest in it, and matches were held on the lawns of Chapultepec castle. A picture taken in 1865 shows him posing on the lawn, flannel-clad and holding a willow bat, in the company of the British ambassador, Sir Charles Wykes. Sunday morning cricket matches were a regular feature of Mexico City’s sporting life from November to March—the dry season—until the 1880s, when Cornish miners from Pachuca introduced another sport that would prove more popular: soccer. 212

Of course there was more to cricket than the game, as any old hand will admit, and even in Mexico there was plenty of supporting evidence for Sydney Smith’s

210 Hall Bullock, pp 179ff. Italics mine.
211 Ibid., pp. 143ff.
aphorism according to which Beer and Britannia were unseparable. “Being fully alive to the fact that cricket is nothing without beer,” informed Hall Bullock, “there is always a liberal supply on the ground, of a very excellent quality, supplied by the firm of Blackmore—a name revered, beyond all others, by Englishmen in Mexico.”

His contemporary Edward B. Tylor had written that “bitter beer... thanks to a suitable climate and an English brewer, is very well understood in Mexico, and is even accepted as a great institution by the Mexicans themselves.” Only two decades later, however, another visitor complained: “the only English beer procurable was Tennant’s, which is imported in the cask and bottled in the country; we were glad to pay seventy-five cents., or three shillings, a pint bottle for it. How is it Mr. Bass has not tried this market? We made many inquiries for his brew, and would gladly have paid a dollar, or four shillings, a pint for it. Mexico was the only place in my journey round the world where Bass’ beer was not to be had.”

It might be claimed that the history of English influence on Mexican drinking habits goes back as far as Drake, whose men “are said to have introduced to the natives whom they plundered, the method of making grog, which name having ... been too difficult to remember, has been supplanted by that of Drak, in memory of our English admiral.” Food proved less adequate matter for transculturation. But while Captain Shelvoke’s hasty pudding was unlikely to find its place among Californian natives’ diet in the eighteenth century, Cornish pasties, a nineteenth-century import, are even today produced and known to Mexicans as pastes.

Other cultural affinities are harder to gauge, but there are sundry indicators of British influence —although, admittedly, the very idea of influence is as slippery as the trails of cultural overlapping that it helps us to explore. It is not difficult to guess why the wall of a Mexican house in the 1860s might still be decorated with images of an English ship being overtaken by a Spanish man-of-war. But why the hacienda of Tepenacasco, in the state of Hidalgo, should have “two large fresco paintings, one representing St. James’s Palace with the guards in the dress of George the Third”, and the other “easily recognised as the garden front of old Eaton Hall, Cheshire” remains uncertain —more so considering that the Mexican tenants appeared not to know a word.

---

212 Caistor, pp. 83-89.
213 Hall Bullock, p. 144.
214 Tylor, p. 133.
215 Tylor, p. 56.
216 Lyon, vol I, p.110. He includes a disclaimer: “The memory of this visit has been preserved in a singular way, although I have but little confidence in the authenticity of the story.” It remains unauthenticated.
217 “People in Mexico, to whom I mentioned this remarkable historical event, assured me that there are still to be seen pictures of the destruction of the English fleet by the French and Spaniards in the Bay of Trafalgar!” [Tylor, p. 175]
of English before the arrival of Mr. Brocklehurst, the traveller who described it.\footnote{218} It speaks a good deal of the visitor that he nonchalantly mentioned the painting without noting the cultural displacement.

As far as we can take his word for it, William Bullock provides a first hand account of a small episode of acculturation for which he claims some responsibility. On the way from Veracruz to Mexico City in 1823 he stopped at Jalapa, where he was able to show off his "specimens of English ingenuity" to the fairer sex. "Nothing gave them more pleasure than a volume of the plates of Ackerman's Fashions, which I had carried out; it was in prodigious request, and they looked with astonishment at some prints of the public buildings of London."\footnote{219} On the homebound leg of his trip he found a different scene altogether.

...I was immediately struck with the alteration that had taken place in the appearance of many of the ladies during the short time of my absence. Instead of their universally appearing in black, as formerly, many were now to be seen in the last fashions of England, in white muslins, printed calicos, and other manufactures of Manchester and Glasgow; and the public promenade on the evening of a Sunday or holyday presented an appearance of gaiety hitherto unknown. On inquiring the cause of this change, I was informed that it principally arose from the volumes of Ackermann's fashions which I brought with me from England, and the arrival of an English lady, whose newly imported wardrobe had made a hasty tour through most of the respectable houses in the city, and from which the belles had taken their new costumes.

Some credence is given to this anecdote by the passing observation made by the author of \textit{A Sketch of the customs and society of Mexico} who, as far as fashion was regarded, held the ladies of Jalapa in some esteem.

The society here is universally allowed to be the choicest in Mexico. Among the females, there is more refinement of manners and accomplishments, more sterling education, more virtue and beauty than in any other town in the republic, not excepting even the capital. This superiority, however, I imagine will not long continue, for the conflux of foreigners, to which the Xalapenas and Veracruzanías have owed their advantage over their countrywomen, has been hitherto confined to the coast and its environs, but is now rapidly removing to Mexico.\footnote{220}

Some influences are harder to explain without recourse to the common idea of "anglophilia". Reading habits, as always, tend to be annoyingly inscrutable, but fragments such as the following passage from Hall Bullock disclose rare information

\footnote{218} Brocklehurst, p. 149. This episode takes place not far from the mining district of Pachuca and Real del Monte. Were the previous tenants of the Tepenacasco \textit{hacienda} home-sick mine owners? What role, if any, did Mr. Brocklehurst's hosts --the Tejiras [?]?-- play in the English-run mining business?
\footnote{219} Bullock, p. 54.
\footnote{220} \textit{A Sketch}, p. 34.
both about the reader and the conditions under which such reading material was produced and consumed.

…I espied a book-shelf at the farther end of the shop. Having by this time exhausted my meagre stock of literature, which originally consisted of a Mexican Itinerary, a “Life of General Santa Anna” (presented by himself) and an old number of the Saturday Review, I sought eagerly at the hope of finding there some mental food, but the titles of the first half dozen books, which I took up, were not encouraging. In Mexico, there is very little demand for secular literature, and I was contemplating the purchase of “Meditations for Lent”, “Prayers for every day of the year”, or the “Life of San Isidro” — works which would at any rate have improved my Spanish — when I caught sight of a little volume, bound in whole calf, with “El Vicario de Wakefield” printed in Golden letters outside. Fearing it might turn out a cheat, I opened it eagerly, and was overjoyed to find the very Vicar of Wakefield turned into good Castiliano. Here was portability, entertainment and the means of improving my Spanish all in one, price one dollar. With this treasure I went on my way rejoicing.221

In fact by the century’s end, the most socially prominent of urban Mexican families were comfortably familiarised with most things British. Fanny Calderón de la Barca had made a note, back in 1842, of how it was “the English... headed by their Minister” who were preparing “to give a ball in the [palace of] Minería, to celebrate the marriage of Queen Victoria”.222 When Victoria died in 1901, the roving journalist Mrs. Tweedie — who received the news of the royal death while deep inside the caves of Cacahuamilpa — commented instead on the effect this news had on Mexicans, some of whom she saw sporting black bands on their arms.223 Regarding education, Mme. Calderón de la Barca had informed readers before mid century that “it is a universal source of complaint among the most distinguished persons in Mexico, that in order to give their sons a thorough education, it is necessary to send them abroad.”224 This had been the case even at the time of Agustín de Iturbide’s exile in England in 1824 — whose eldest son went to Ampthor, while his two youngest boys attended a preparatory school near Hampstead, his two eldest daughters were put up in a convent at Taunton, and the two youngest girls went to Spetisbury house, near Blanford225 — and remained truer than ever at the height of the rule of Porfirio Díaz.

The sons of most of the best families have been educated in England — they have been to Stoneyhurst or Belmont between the ages of twelve and eighteen; some have even been to our Universities. Consequently the sympathy is strong; indeed several men looked, dressed, and spoke so much in accordance with

221 Hall Bullock, p. 227
222 Calderón de la Barca, p. 149.
223 Tweedie, pp. 333, 338
224 Calderón de la Barca, p. 237.
225 Quinn.
English ideas that it seemed impossible to believe that they were Spanish Mexicans.

The love acquired by the men in their youth for England appears constantly; for instance, the children are often under the care of an English governess, while the small boys are dressed in Jack Tar suits. Then again, many of the men get their clothes from London, as their wives do from Paris. The former are beginning to ride on English saddles, to adopt corduroy breeches and high boots, and apparently the death-knell of the native saddle and dress is already tolling.226

This affinity remained mostly a male one—if the sons of Mexico were shipped off to schools in England, its daughters were thought to be better off, if anywhere else, in the haven of convents in France. In this too Mme. Calderón had been prescient: it was more than half a century since she had advised the English husbands of Mexican ladies to try to settle in Mexico, “for it is very rare that a Mexicaine can live out of her country”227

In England especially, they are completely out of their element. A language nearly impossible for them to acquire, a religion which they consider heretical, outward coldness covering inward warmth, a perpetual war between sun and fog, etiquette carried to excess, an insupportable stiffness and order in the article of the toilet; rebosos unknown, cigaritos considered barbarous... They feel like exiles from Paradise, and live but in hopes of a speedy return.227

The traveller interested in finding points of convergence between Britain and Mexico did not have to go as far as tracing the elites’ educational exiles in England. Given Hall Bullock’s obstinate determination to find Britannia abroad, it was enough to snoop around Mexico City’s own educational establishments.

For the benefit of any one who may be curious to know where the candidates for degrees come from, I may add that they are chiefly supplied by the secular college of San Ildefonso and the religious seminary of San Camillo. The first of these is a huge building, and is in this respect particularly interesting to an Englishman, inasmuch as the students have rooms in college as at Oxford and Cambridge. About the furnishing of the rooms, there was enough to remind one of our English universities, though everything was on a far more frugal scale. I was amused to find the habit of hanging photographs of their sisters on their walls, for the benefit of their friends, as common among Mexicans as among English students.228

At the end of the century, another obvious institutional import was hailed as one of the most significant improvements ever made in the rundown Mexican penitentiary system: Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon was glorified in the construction of the massive Lecumberri prison.

226 Tweedie, p. 146.
227 Calderón de la Barca, p. 236.
228 Hall Bullock, p. 95.
The unguarded observer, busy with his or her own descriptions of the foreign, will unwillingly disclose information about personal and collective preoccupations, attitudes and prejudices. Thus, stereotypes become the inevitable currency of travel literature—they are a way for the foreigner to make sense of freshly acquired information, providing a framework onto which new facts can be attached. They are, in essence, a rudimentary system of categorisation applied to knowledge before—and even after—experience. Interestingly for the cultural historian, stereotypes in travel literature are not limited to the more obvious depictions of the visited place or the host culture. If British travellers had preconceived or stereotyped views of Mexicans, their impressions of other nationalities seemed even more coloured by prejudice. Take for instance the brief remark about an Italian cook in Jalapa, “a man of science from Naples, who keeps up the character of his countrymen in his assiduity to serve the English, who pay well.”

There seemed to be much in Mexico that inspired banter about the Irish: a room so dirty it was unfit even for an Irishman to put his pig in, or a house’s thatch so deteriorated it reminded another traveller of an Irishman’s coat. Hall Bullock could not be asked to share his lodgings with fellow travellers, the main reason being that they happened to be Americans—“I resolved sooner to sleep upon the beach than share a room with three strangers, and Yankees into the bargain.” His experience with a disoriented party on a Mexican road had earlier led the correspondent behind the Sketch to declare that “Frenchmen are certainly bad travellers”– a thought echoed in Thomas Cook’s later deposition that “the French are not a travelling people.”

Whatever appeared novel to British eyes abroad can teach us something about what was assumed to be commonplace at home. Deeply held values regarding the segregation of classes and social groups shine through in a number of travellers’ commentaries on social organisation in Mexico. The place of service was a recurrent issue. Basil Hall had already expressed some benevolent surprise at the “degree of familiarity... allowed” between masters and servants. “I have never seen in any part of the world”, claimed the well-travelled captain, “a more amiable, or more considerate and kindly feeling of superiors towards their dependants, than exists in all parts of South America and Mexico which I have visited.” Only a few years later, the surprise mingled with faint disapproval. “I must inform you”, warned the author of A Sketch in

229 A Sketch, p. 34.
230 Hall Bullock, pp. 296f
231 A Sketch, p. 235.
232 The Excursionist, 20 October 1879.
233 Hall, p. 217.
one of his letters, "that servants are treated with the same courtesy and deference which is due to equals; they walk by the side of their mistresses, chatting and smoking together, mutually furnishing each other with cigars or fire, and their tastes and opinions are mutually consulted and accommodated in the purchases they make." He continues later: "I have frequently seen an old domestic, with a broad Indian accent, bad language, and rude manners, allowed to take her seat in the midst of the party: this, I think, is misplaced". But, he hastens to add, "I should rejoice to see a greater degree of this friendship and familiarity introduced into our cold parties in England, where fashion and applause are the moving springs." George Lyon's own opinion on the matter went in a similar direction, although his view was somewhat less compromising:

The great familiarity of manners amongst the Mexicans may appear to strangers as the effects of the recent changes and assumption of a republican form of government; while in fact it is adopted from the Custom of Old Spain, where the domestics, bred up from generation to generation in the same house, inherit all the privileges of familiar intercourse. With this foundation, society in New Spain is far more debased than in the mother country, owing to the cruel state of ignorance in which it has been the policy of Spain to keep its Transatlantic subjects. It may be plainly perceived, therefore, that the equality of education, breeding, and knowledge of the world, have brought the beggar and the noble on joking terms together. Things must now rapidly improve: and when women are allowed their proper station in society; when the female children are restrained from playing in the streets, or with the dirty persons who act in the capacity of cooks; and when stays and ablutions are introduced, and cigars forsaken by the softer sex, the manners of the men will be materially changed.

These stern observations are related to broader anxieties regarding what was deemed to be a static and desirable social structure. None of the itinerant authors who spent time in Mexico belonged to the moneyed echelons of their own society, and yet they all appear concerned by what must have seemed to them a travesty of the natural social order. Here is Alexander Forbes' opinion of society in Tepic at mid century:

From the small number of respectable people, all are upon an equality; and it is at first rather puzzling to an [sic] European to buy a pair of gloves of a man in the morning, at his shop in the portales, and in the afternoon to find himself sitting next to him at dinner. These small matters, however, one soon gets accustomed to; and those who are to live permanently in such a country as Mexico, must throw such minor prejudices overboard altogether.

234 A Sketch, pp. 62f
235 Ibid., pp. 86f
236 See Hall Bullock, for instance: "The consummation of beggars riding seems to be already realized in Mexico." [p. 265]
237 Lyon, pp. 29f.
238 Forbes, 152.
In his novel *Vanity Fair*, William Thackeray had ironically, but precisely, revealed prevailing attitudes towards tradepeople: “the selling of goods by retail is a shameful and infamous practice, meriting the contempt and scorn of real gentlemen”. Although hardly gentlemen themselves, to the mining speculators and textile merchants who crisscrossed Mexico in the nineteenth-century’s first half, shop-keepers remained well below their station. The fact that the latter partook of politer company in Mexico was strong evidence of the country’s backwardness. “In provincial towns in Mexico”, informed Hall Bullock, “a shopkeeper naturally enough enjoys a much higher position socially than in highly-civilized countries like England and France. ... The Mexicans are not yet sufficiently advanced in civilization to attach any kind of social disability to the calling of a tradesman”.

The shock of seeing men of high standing stoop to the piddling tasks of tradesmen was best expressed by J.F. Elton after making the acquaintance of a certain military officer. “Generals and colonels are very common articles throughout Mexico, and it is not always prudent to inquire too curiously into their antecedents, for you may fall upon them in different walks of life; for instance, the commanding officer in Orizaba, in January 1864, was not above keeping a tienda, in addition to looking after his military duties, and was perfectly ready to serve any customer who wanted a dram of aguardiente, with his own hands!” The baseness associated with the trade among the English is laid bare in Eça de Queiros’ remarkably acute description of Winter in 1870’s London, that time of year when no “self-respecting gentleman who wishes to keep his good social name would dare confess that he was in London...: he would risk being thought a shop-keeper”.

We are told that the concept of “class” as a category of social differentiation was not clearly articulated until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The idea of a “middle class”, although in use at least since 1815, became a byword for the middling sort of men, bound by economic interests, who were perceived to make up the majority of public opinion during the political turbulence of the 1830s. It must have been well ingrained in the minds of British travellers when, in 1866, Hall Bullock used the term to describe “middle-class holiday-makers” picnicking at the sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

---

239 Taken from Sampson Pool, p. 383.
240 Hall Bullock, pp. 220f.
243 Briggs, pp. 10 ff.; Cannadine.
244 Hall Bullock, p. 138.
The composition of families, too, seems to have been of some interest—notably among women writers. On more than one opportunity Mrs. Tweedie brings up the subject of the typical Mexican extended family:

Mexican families are most amiable and united. The better classes own houses which are perfect palaces. In one of them dwells Señor So-and-so with his wife and children; but Madame’s mother and sister joined the establishment on the death of Madame’s father, and in addition Señor So-and-so has a mother and brother who make their home with him. This is not the exception, but the rule. I honestly believe that in Mexico City there is no large house which shelters “Papa, Mamma and Baby” alone. There are always some relations on one side, if not on both, included in the family ménage. ...Once a bachelor marries and starts a home of his own, it is quickly filled by his relations.²⁴⁵

In short, the enterprising author remarked, “Mexican families—even of the highest rank—live together in a manner that is perfectly incomprehensible to English ideas.”²⁴⁶

Once again, the comparison with what Eça de Queiros described as “typical” family life in Victorian England will allow some understanding of why such Mexican ménages might have appeared so culturally distant and “perfectly incomprehensible” to observers.²⁴⁷

This issue is not unrelated to another typical feature of English “gazes” or “peeks” at Mexico. Privacy, a well-known English journalist recently rhapsodised, “informs the entire organization of [England], from the assumptions on which laws are based, to the buildings in which the English live.” And that which others would label misanthropy is, to an Englishman, nothing but a clamour for his own privacy—“one of the defining characteristics of the English; foreign visitors are forever complaining at

²⁴⁵ Tweedie, p. 149.
²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 252.
²⁴⁷ The extract is taken from the “letter” allegedly written by Eça’s English pug to his English cat, thus the first person when referring to the English: “There’s the gentleman, pipe between his teeth, morosely reading his newspaper, a glass of cognac beside him; the lady of the house, also with a glass of cognac, cap on and gold brooch pinned to her bosom, reads her magazine. From time to time they put down their journal and rail about something they’ve read; if they live in some form of cobbled-together harmony, they let the paper fall and go to sleep. Their children, if small, live a distant life upstairs in the nursery, with the nanny; papa only has a vague idea of their existence, based on the fact that they are still consuming copious amounts of bread and butter. If the children are grown up, they are either in the colonies or they live in the neighbouring area, but never with their parents, having no contact, either physical or by letter, with their childhood home. ...If the children remain at home they look upon their father simply as a hotel proprietor, and don’t even call him ‘father’; rather, he’s called ‘governor’. As for their mother, she’s good for seeing their washing, and is known as ‘the old woman’. Usually these people gather around the teapot just to be disagreeable to each other... And what’s the gentleman reading in his newspaper, or that lady in her magazine? Simple! That only in England is there any domestic harmony, and that only in England is the home sweet and united! Actually the only thing we are united about is complaining!” [2000, pp.136-137] One must not forget that Eça’s many letters and newspaper articles were most certainly informed by the same sense of strangeness and cultural distance that the people he described felt when abroad.
It was this most essential of requirements which the British often found wanting when travelling abroad—the point is illustrated through literature in the cases of Italy and India. Mexico was no exception. The newly arrived author of A sketch... found it hard to understand the spatial arrangements of houses in Veracruz: "... the floors are of brick or tiles, being cool and suitable to the climate; the same reason is alleged for all the bed-rooms opening into each other; yet an English family would rather dispense with the little ventilation thus procured, or contrive it some other way, that they might have their apartments private." We owe it again to Hall Bullock to catch a glimpse of an Englishman forced to share his quarters with his host's family at one of the mines. Even when the latter were of the respectable—although not well-off—kind, he was horrified.

Now, considering that the whole house consisted of but a single apartment, in which the Don lived night and day... I felt the necessity of overcoming my bashfulness, and changing [my dripping clothes] at once in the presence of the assembled family... This operation I was enabled to effect without shocking anybody's sense of decency, for when I had divested myself of my upper garments, I had still as much clothing on as my host or any of his friends, whose light and airy costume consisted of a pair of calico drawers, a shirt of the same material, a straw hat, and a pair of sandals. It was perhaps less a matter of privacy than of Victorian prudence that led Mrs. Tweedie to remark on the inappropriateness of public baths in which a whole family could bathe at once—"That they should bathe together seems only natural to them"—and advocate the establishment of separate facilities for men and women to perform their toilets.

Recording of others' behaviour is, again, telling about the travellers' own. Both Basil Hall and George Lyon evinced surprise at the fact that dancing, drinking and merrymaking did not inevitably end in a brawl. "At first I thought this must needs end in blows," Hall relates, "and stood prepared to avoid the bottles and glasses which were likely to be flying about. But after a little while, it was easy to discover more sounds of mirth than of anger; and the ladies, who must have been accustomed to such scenes, sat very composedly." Attending a similar festive occasion, Lyon "could not but remark... the very striking difference between this and our English festivals, where all is

---

248 Paxman, pp. 117f.
249 Burke, p. 187.
250 A Sketch, p. 18.
251 Hall Bullock, p. 385.
252 Tweedie, p. 262.
253 Hall, p. 203.
bustle, noise and activity, though mingled, it must be confessed, with a few broken heads and black eyes.254

National vices were reviewed thoroughly. British travellers in nineteenth century Mexico seem to have been transfixed by the Mexican passion for gambling. From the impromptu rounds of "monte" among léperos to the extravagant stakes in Mexico City's Jockey Club, this cursed weakness was described and denounced by all—and even indulged by some. A strange habit for the English to fix their attention on, perhaps, considering that foreign visitors to England had also been remarking about the English obsession with gambling.255 It appears that the only difference between the "English obsession with betting" and the Mexican one might have been the English government's acquiescence through the organisation of state lotteries, which in Mexico did not happen until quite late in the nineteenth century.256 Smoking among Mexican women, too, was a matter of invariable interest. It was not merely their habit of smoking, but rather of doing it in public, which caught travellers' attention. And, most disturbing of all, that these smoking women, permanently attached to their cigars or cigarettes, should allow themselves to laugh out loud in the company of polite society.257 The chasm in smoking etiquette is marvelously described by Thompson in pages that were sadly extricated from the final version of his book, and which will be discussed in the third chapter.

One more aspect of the British "gaze" at Mexico begs for attention: an unwholesome fascination with the matter of public executions. Along with the bent for visiting prisons and workhouses, the Victorian fondness for the spectacle of hangings at Newgate or Tyburn was not wasted on those who had travelled further afield. William Bullock's chapter-long account of a public execution of two robbers would have been familiar and pleasing to Dickens and Thackeray.258 Bullock recorded the crowds, the gallows and the procedure of garroting and hanging with an unusual relish for detail.259 Two decades later, the fashion of hanging criminals had been supplanted by the more expedient one of shooting them. Alexander Forbes attempted to disguise his curiosity so as to not be offensive to the fairer readers:

I myself saw one man shot who had committed seven murders... The culprit... was brought down to the common by the river, and a square being formed of

254 Lyon, pp. 105f
255 Cf. De Saussure.
256 Paxman, p. 255.
257 Cf. Bullock; Lyon; A Sketch; Fanny; Sampson Poole.
258 Both eminent Victorians could have been spotted on the morning of 6 July 1840 at the execution of Benjamin Courvoisier, where they were most surely carrying out research for future work [Ackroyd, pp. 301]
259 Bullock, pp. 236 ff.
mounted national guards, he was fastened in a sitting position to a cross placed against an adobe wall, and shot by a party of national guards. They fired within ten paces, and the man died at the first discharge, though they kept on firing as long as the least motion was perceptible. Comparatively very few people were present at this spectacle, and I saw one carriage containing ladies, which I thought would have been better away. Probably the lady reader may think, I should have staid away too. If it is any consolation to her, I arrived late and did not see the unfortunate man until unbound from the cross quite dead.260

The execution by firing squad of "4 brigands" was witnessed by Hall Bullock, who reported that the prisoners had required an extra shot, administered by the French Zouaves at close quarters. "The whole ceremony occupied less than ten minutes, and appeared to excite no kind of emotion among the spectators." 261 Later on that same day, he came across a fellow traveller, "a Yorkshireman, and by trade a mechanic" whose "present business was to repair some machinery in a factory in the village on the [Tezcoco] lake, for which he was bound." When it came to talking about the many robbers on the Mexican roads, and the executions the author had recently been witness to, "he seemed a good deal put out at having missed the spectacle, for he added with a grin, at the same time rubbing his hands, 'I like to see the fellows rubbed off.'262 The street theatre of these judiciary killings was open to all and quite obviously enjoyed by most. Even the curiosity of ladies, whose modesty forced them to avert their eyes or stay away from the proceedings, was spurred by these "happenings". "I had a very strange invitation last night", confides Mrs. Annie Sampson Poole. "C____263, knowing that I am particularly fond of the robbers, asked if I should like to go and see one shot. I need not say that I declined his polite invitation."264 The modern historian cannot help but bemoan her ladylike discretion.

260 Forbes, p. 159
261 Hall Bullock, pp. 150f
262 Hall Bullock, pp. 154f
263 Charles Poole, her husband.
264 Sampson Poole, p. 61.
II. TRADING AND READING LITERATURE OF TRAVEL

Many typologies of travellers have been offered before. Laurence Sterne’s satirical take on the English penchant for travel included idle travellers, pensive travellers, inquisitive travellers, splenetic travellers, felonious travellers, innocent travellers and travellers who lie. Michel Butor’s possible categorisations are based on the objectives, the limits, the direction (one way vs. return) and even the means of travel. Another scholar has more recently suggested ten ideal types – tourists, impressionist travellers, those who profit from otherness, assimilated and assimilating travellers, exotics, allegorists, philosophical and disenchanted travellers. It would be of some use to draw up a classification of travel writers rather than of travellers – one more concerned with their condition as authors than with their condition as voyagers. Such a typology, if one decided to indulge in it, might be based on questions such as: did these writers publish their accounts or not, were they novice or experienced authors, had they read similar accounts, were their texts read by contemporaries, what physical characteristics did their published work present, did they bring their author or publisher a profit? This line of inquiry inevitably leads away from the study of travel, even of the texts in which travel is reported, and forces us to address issues surrounding the figures of the author, the publisher and the reader, with which the following chapter will engage.

The traveller as author

But even such apparently straightforward concepts are not without their problems. The earliest known tales of English travel to Mexico present us with the question of what exactly we mean when we use the concepts of ‘author’ and ‘authorship’. In the first edition of his famous Principall Navigations, Richard Hakluyt included the accounts of seven Englishmen who gave first hand accounts of the land of Nova Hispania. Despite a ban on Protestant passengers aboard ships to the Indies, the transit of English merchants, sailors and privateers during the sixteenth century was greater than is usually believed. At least six of them were available for Hakluyt to summon for his first edition (another, the celebrated John Hawkins, had already published his account), and to offer a report of their time in the Spanish colony. That these men existed, and travelled to Mexico, is verified by records of the Mexican Inquisition, where most were

265 1768, p.27.  
266 1974, p.2.  
267 Todorov, p. 376.
tried for heresy. Individual names can thus be confidently attributed to particular narratives. What is less clear is the process through which these texts actually came into existence. Were these accounts actually written by those under whose names they appear, or were they composed, at least in part, by the man who compiled them?

Some doubts remain about Hakluyt's *modus operandi*. Did he ask for written texts, or did he (or someone else) write down what was transmitted orally? Evidence from the texts about New Spain points to both methods. One of the unfortunate travellers begins by stating that Hakluyt asked him to draw up his written account. David Ingram's, by contrast, seems to have been reported rather than copied into the *Principall Navigations*, and one can only assume that Ingram told his story to Hakluyt (or someone working for him), who then wrote it down for publication. Whoever it was that transcribed Ingram's tale, they were careful to attribute it to him: "in which time (as the said Ingram thinketh)", or "There are in these parts (saith he)", or "being asked in what manner they take their execucion, he saith"—a sign, surely, that even as he printed it, Hakluyt had some doubts about the tale's veracity.

The bibliographer Anthony Payne has argued that Hakluyt must be seen as more than a simple editor, and that his "authorship is manifest in the structuring of the material published in the *Principal Navigations*". This contention is qualified later on when Payne concedes that "in considering sixteenth-century scholarship it may be best for the modern reader to think in terms of 'adaptation', rather than of 'authorship' with its implication of originality, and to recognise that the gathering and ordering of material was itself a creative endeavour". How well does such an assertion stand as far as the accounts of English travails in New Spain are concerned?

Two of the descriptions of New Spain had already appeared in print before they were included in the first and second editions of the *Principall Navigations*. John Hawkins' account of the "Troublesome voyage" to the West Indies and Veracruz (1567-1568), published in 1569, was included in Hakluyt's first edition. Job Hortop's "Travailes", printed in 1591, was too late for the first edition but was incorporated into the third volume of the second edition in 1600. In the first instance, both were privately printed as pamphlets. But while Hakluyt took very little editorial license with Hawkins' already famous account, reprinting it almost verbatim—even the font and margin notes were kept as in the original—he took a more active role in the case of Job Hortop. The text's appearance was significantly modified to better fit in with the rest of the compiled

---


269 David Ingram's "A true discourse of the adventures & travailes of David Ingram being set on shore with 100 more of his fellowes by Captaine Hawkins in the heathen countries in 8° 1583" is listed in Humphrey Dyson's seventeenth-century library catalogue, although no copies are known to exist. For Ingram's account, Hakluyt remains the only source. [Payne, 1999, 21]
material: the font changed from roman to gothic, marginalia were added and paragraph breaks incorporated to make it more readable. Hakluyt modernised and corrected the original’s spelling: “whome” became “whom”, “knowe” was substituted by “know”, “Gomero” by “Gomera” to name the island, “carvill” by “caravel” to describe a boat, “Surroloen” was corrected as “Sierra Leona”, “Reogrande” as “Rio Grande”. Numbers expressed in words were converted into numerals, no doubt to save space, so that “seven hundred negroes” became simply “700 negroes”. Even the author’s almost anonymous denotation, “I.H.”, was spelled out for readers who were given the author’s full name — “Iob Hortop”. More significantly, Hakluyt excluded sections of verse that Hortop had put in. One of such sections displayed the comical ditty composed by Hawkins’ men upon their arrival at Placencia, in modern Colombia. Another was Hortop’s closing statement: “Thus having truly set downe unto you my travels, misery & dangers, endured the space of 23 yeres, I say: Let patience nowe the standard beare,/ And forgivenes give the charge/ of obleege, and eke the anchor teare/ of spightfull mallice barge;/ Expect the ende of prisoned race,/ And hope of future happe;/ That each good gift of fortunes grace/ May fall within our lappe./ Extremities cannot always last;/ Each thing doth bowe and bend;/ In time both joy and woe doth wast;/ And all things have an end.” Mercifully for his readers, Hakluyt rendered this obscure conclusion simply as “Thus having truly set down unto you my travels, misery and dangers, endured the space of 23 yeres, I end”.

There are other instances that raise the question of where authorship of these texts lies. The record of Robert Tomson’s time in New Spain, which appears in both editions, starts off as a third person narrative — presumably with Hakluyt as narrator. Not long into the text, the first person voice takes over in mid-sentence, and the story now appears to be told by Tomson himself: “So that in the moneth of February in An. 1555 the sayde Robert Tomson... and his companie, shipped themselves out of the town of S. Lucar in a carvel of the citie of Cadiz, and within 6 dayes they arrived at the port of the Grand Canaria, where at our coming the ships that rode in the said port began to cry out of all measures with loud voyces, in so much that the castle which stood fast began to shoot at us”.270 The change in narrative voice, and the variation in spelling between the two segments, suggests that there was more than one author for this narrative. But is it Hakluyt’s hand we can appreciate in Tomson’s account, or was it someone else’s? The fact that the Principall Navigations was a compilation of material from various sorts of sources — letters, printed and manuscript texts, transcribed oral

270 Italics mine.
accounts—makes it difficult to determine whether Hakluyt incorporated a text as readers found it published, or whether he tinkered with it, and to what degree.

With the exception of Hawkins—whose account was already well known, and whose reputation had grown even further during his intervention in the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588—and Hortop—who had been unable to publish his tale before 1591 because he was still rowing in a Spanish galley—the initiative for the publication of the narratives seems to have come from Hakluyt rather than the assumed authors. A few of these nominal authors were, as John Chilton was, recounting their impressions of the distant land shortly after having returned to England. Others, like Robert Tomson, were recalling events that happened at least twenty-five years before. Given this time lag, the coincidence in names, places and other basic facts appears to be more the work of Hakluyt than of the men who gave their accounts. So very much in the same way that most of these sailors and merchants were “accidental tourists” in New Spain, so too did they become “accidental authors” at Hakluyt’s request.

There was nothing accidental about Thomas Gage’s authorship of *The English-American*. Published in 1648, eleven years after his return from New Spain, Gage’s feverish denunciation of Catholic practices and beliefs as experienced first hand during his twelve years in the Spanish colony was designed to attract as much attention as possible to its author. It was meant to be nothing short of a public confirmation of Gage’s recantation of Catholicism as performed in his sermon on August 28, 1642—the printed version of which was circulated among booksellers at St. Paul’s churchyard in October of that year. It was also designed to flatter men of state—Gage’s book was dedicated to Lord Fairfax, Captain General of the Parliament’s Army under Cromwell—and attract their patronage by encouraging a course of action that appeared to be in the government’s interest. That Gage succeeded in encouraging Cromwell and Fairfax to embark on a course of direct action in the Americas was confirmed when they asked Gage to draw up a report on the feasibility of an invasion of the Spanish Indies.

It has been suggested that the author, as the figure to whom a particular text can be legally and intellectually attributed, did not emerge until the eighteenth century, when the lapsing of England’s Licensing Act (1694) encouraged individual authorship while creating a market that would allow writers to abandon patronage and profit from their work.271 New laws, such as the Statute of 1709, were put into place to break the London booksellers’s monopoly by giving authors the right to claim proprietorship of their texts, thus propelling the author to the centre of the book-making process. Roger
Chartier has suggested an earlier birth of the author by reminding us that, in fact, the emergence of what Michel Foucault has called the “author-function” was clearly related to the needs of attribution for the purposes of censorship and persecution.

Cases like that of the recusant Gage are a testimony to the appearance of the author-function some time before the age Dr. Johnson, for both the economic and legal reasons given by scholars as indispensable to its appearance. In the same way that clerical or lay authorities might be interested in ascertaining the authorship of a damning text, authors like Gage were trying to redeem themselves in the eyes of these hierarchies by appearing in print. It was crucial that Gage’s remonstrance was published, lest his sermon not be considered a suitable enough sign of contrition. In the same fashion, it was indispensable for him to call attention to his authorship of The English-American. This was especially important given the fact that, to avoid certain death, Gage was conveniently taking sides in a civil war that had religion at its core. To be effective, it was necessary that Gage’s text should whet readers’ appetite for the wonders and riches of New Spain while convincingly showing the author’s abhorrence for the customs and vices he was witness to. “Never before in English history”, we are told by Nigel Smith, “had written and printed literature played such a predominant role in public affairs, and never before had it been felt by contemporaries to be of such importance”. 272 Fully aware of this, Gage did more than deliver a sermon of repentance. He went to the printers. At a time of great religious and political controversy the market for such publications was ripe. It helped that the author had taken the right side—the side of the winners—in the disputes, and that his book could be circulated freely. Gage’s book fed easily into the anti-Catholic sentiment that pervaded official discourse at the moment, and for a long time to come. At a time when it appears the price of books was stable, it could only have been demand for his book that doubled the price of the original edition between 1678 and 1726. 273

Even before the troublesome years of the English civil wars there were signs that a text’s attribution mattered. In 1635, Nathaniel Crouch composed The English Empire in America... to which is prefixed a Relation of the first Discovery of the New World Called America...by the Spaniards, and of the Remarkable Voyages of Several Englishmen to divers places therein. An exercise in Protestant propaganda that owed a lot to the compilations of Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas, the book revelled in English triumphs such as Cavendish’s successful attack on the Manila Galleon in 1586. But Crouch signed the book with someone else’s name –Robert Burton. Burton, of course,

271 Cf. Burke, 2001; Chartier, p. 38.  
272 Quoted by Burke, 2001, p. 91.  
273 Steele, p. 151.
was the celebrated author whose *Anatomy of Melancholy* was printed in 1621. This was clearly one of those cases in which a minor writer used the name of a more prominent author to attract readers to his own work—using someone else’s authority but ironically cancelling himself out as author for the sake of profit. It is hard to say whether the public at the time would have seen through this peculiar form of plagiarism. At least one gullible modern student has already mistaken the author of *The English Empire in America* for the author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy.* The mistake is not difficult to make if it is noted that the real Robert Burton had a significant interest in travel accounts, as seen throughout the text of his *Anatomy*—Burton recommended travel as a remedy for melancholy—and in the New World, as is revealed by his ownership of books by Bernal Díaz and Bartolomé de las Casas alongside the expected volumes of Hakluyt and Purchas.

* 

Pondering the question of the rise of the "author-function", Michel Foucault provocatively suggested that it appeared at different moments in the two separate fields of scientific and literary writing. Whereas in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, he contends, scientific discourse was based on a canon of authorities, the personal provenance of literary discourse was irrelevant; in the eighteenth century, however, this was reversed, and the value of empirical knowledge was measured by its insertion in an anonymous network of information, while literary work gained weight according to who its author was. Chartier has added some nuance to the proposition by reminding us that the legitimacy of early modern scientific texts depended, too, on who was behind it, while in literature one could just as easily find a canon going as far back as Greek antiquity. The importance of a "name" in scientific publishing during the seventeenth century, allowing a reader to "readily judge the credibility of the 'matters of fact'" contained in a text, has also been discussed. Any of these two positions is problematic for the student of travel literature because, from its inception, it has always been astride of both the literary and the scientific fields.

Even at its birth, writing about travel was central to literary experiences—as in Homer's *Odyssey*, an oral epic poem—as well as to empirical knowledge—as in Herodotus' *Histories*. From the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* through to Conrad, voyages—journeys of pilgrimage, of initiation, of discovery—have always been an

274 Burke, 2001, 56.
275 I fell for the trick while writing my M.Phil. dissertation, "English travellers in Early Colonial Mexico" (Cambridge, 1998), which led to some quite incredible assertions about Robert Burton.
276 Kießling, pp. 122, 284, 74, 141, 144.
277 I.ife, p. 175.
irresistible literary device, exploited by Dante, Cervantes, Rabelais and Bunyan, among many canonical authors, with much success. As a source for empirical knowledge travel has had a no less distinguished history. Early Sceptics, such as Sextus Empiricus (c.A.D.160-210) quoted travel accounts to prove their argument about the impossibility of knowing anything with any degree of certainty.276 This line of reasoning was no less popular among the sceptics of the Enlightenment who, like Montaigne and Pierre Bayle gave much credence to the alleged experiences of those who had travelled afar. In England, Francis Bacon in the sixteenth century and John Locke in the seventeenth strongly advocated the perusal of “far-fetched facts”. It has been offered that in the century between 1680 and 1780 (roughly in between the travels of William Dampier and the travels of Captain Cook) “science and literature were as close in their ultimate aims as they have ever been”.279 While it may be true that men of letters and men of science seemed to be using the similar discourses –descriptions of journeys relied on tried narrative conventions and were often spiced up for the benefit of readers (sometimes despite the authors’ intentions), while novelists cloaked their fiction in the language of scientific discovery— their aims were hardly convergent. And yet, in both types of discourse the writer’s authority, as one who has been in a position to see what others haven’t—one who has benefited from autopsy—was essential.

What makes travel writing such an appealing genre is the fact that it provides instruction and entertainment not by contriving fictions but by relating real experiences. An anonymous reviewer wrote in 1750 that accounts of voyages “usually afford matter for much entertainment... as the events they contain are generally looked upon as truth; which, however simple, however ordinary the facts, has a much stronger claim to the reader’s attention, than the most striking incidents in a novel or romance.”380 Great weight was thus placed on the truthfulness of the account. The idea that travellers could “lie by authority” was an ancient as the genre itself, a traveller being, to Classical authors like Strabo or Lucian, a synonym for a liar. The Encyclopédie described a “Voyageur” as someone “who undertakes travels for varying reasons, & who, sometimes writes about them. But it is there that voyageurs commonly use little truth. Almost always they add to the things they have seen things that they may have seen; & to avoid leaving their travel accounts incomplete, they use what they have read in other authors, because just as they had been deceived to begin with, so they will immediately try to deceive their readers too.”381 One can be sure that a particular

276 Rennie, pp. 32-3.
279 Loc. cit.
281 Vol. 17, “Voyageur”.

84
cultural trend has caught on when it starts being satirised. In eighteenth century England the account of travel was thus mocked by John Gay:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The man who with undaunted toils} \\
\text{Sails unknown seas to unknown soils,} \\
\text{With various wonders feasts his sight:} \\
\text{What stranger wonders does he write!} \\
\text{We read, and in description view} \\
\text{Creatures which } \textit{Adam} \text{ never knew;} \\
\text{For when we risque no contradiction,} \\
\text{It prompts the tongue to deal in fiction.}\footnote{282}
\end{align*}
\]

The knowledge that travellers could be “travel liars” led to intense preoccupation with the text’s reliability. Even writers using the stereotypes of travel for satirical purposes, as Swift or Defoe famously did, knew that the success of their satire depended entirely on being able to produce a convincing traveller-narrator, one who could “lie by authority”. More than in any other work of fiction, authorial trustworthiness was of the essence. It can be argued, then, that the author-function was, from the very beginning, central to a genre that depended so obviously on individual credibility.

During the Restoration period, the Royal Society found itself in the somewhat paradoxical position of arguing in favour of direct, empirical experience —\textit{Nullius in verba} was its motto—whilst embracing the growing number of accounts of travel as sources for learned debate. It was partly to solve this conundrum that members like Robert Boyle or Cowley began issuing “Instructions for travellers”, guidelines for those who went abroad so that they could report the novelties more systematically for the benefit of those who remained at home.\footnote{283} If academicians and scholars depended on observations made by others, then it would be best to offer those envoys a few simple rules to aid them in their observations and reports. More than ever before the traveller’s credibility was called into question, and a straightforward report of journeys became the trademark of credible authors. So, even while “in communicating his experiences the traveller became a literary man, or at least a man important in literature”\footnote{284}, it was important that he was not seen as harbouring literary pretensions. A review of Heath’s \textit{A Natural and Historical Account of the Islands of Scilly} congratulated the author because his work “breathes an air of veracity all through it; and his directions to sailors for avoiding the dangers of the Scillys may be of infinite service. He seems to be extremely accurate in his history and descriptions; and as to the plainness of his stile,
and the want of those embellishments of language which works of other kinds are susceptible of, he needs no apology on this account”. 285

This emphasis was no doubt the reason why William Dampier, Fellow of the Royal Society, insisted in the preface to his New Voyage Around the World (1697) that “'tis not to divert the Reader... but for method's sake, and for the Reader's satisfaction” that he wrote about his exploits abroad—including his stint as log-cutter and buccaneer in the Mexican bay of Campeche. “I have not so much the vanity of a Traveller,” he wrote, “as to be fond of telling stories... Yet dare I avow, according to my narrow sphere and poor abilities, a hearty Zeal for the promoting of useful knowledge.” This apologetic tone set the trend for further accounts, and was echoed by Cook himself when he assured readers that his Voyage towards the South Pole and Round the World was “a work for information and not for amusement”.

The only English sightings of New Spain in the eighteenth century were by mariners who, like Dampier, claimed they were not aiming to amuse. In the preface to the first edition of his New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America (1699), Lionel Wafer explained: “I have been as careful as I could; and tho' there are some Matters of Fact that will seem strange, yet I have been more especially careful in these, to say nothing but what, according to the best of my knowledge, is the very Truth” (it is worth noting that the second edition of Wafer's book, published in 1704, was dedicated to the Royal Society, presided by Isaac Newton). Woodes Rogers, author of A Cruising voyage around the world (1708), assured his readers it had not been his intention to publish. “Therefore I make it my request to the Candid Readers, that they would be favourable in their censures when they peruse this journal, which is not calculated to amuse them, but barely to relate the Truth.” George Shelvocke, who had performed A Voyage Round the World by the way of the Great South Sea...in the yeares 1719, 1720, 1721, 1722 (1726) described the inhabitants of the Californian peninsula by using categories almost identical to the “headings” prescribed by the Royal Society: “Account of the inhabitants”, “Their manner and Disposition”, “Their language”, “Their manner of living”, “Their arms”, “Their government”. And a few years later, the author of An Authentic Journal of the Late Expedition Under the Command of Commodore Anson (1744) confessed that the text might have been “adulterated by feigned stories of the marvellous events, that never happened” or embellished with chimeras, “but men of sense would have been disgusted; and the editor was most ambitious of their approbation”. There is much evidence to support Charles Batten, Jr.'s contention that concept of the “Scientific Hero” was central to most eighteenth century accounts of

travel. That the august language of science was appropriated also for satire —indeed, that it was the very object of satire—is best appreciated in Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*:

Thus gentle, reader, I have given thee a faithful history of my travels for sixteen years, and above seven months, wherein I have not been so studious of ornament as of truth. I could perhaps like others have astonished thee with a strange improbable tales; but I rather chose to relate plain matter of fact in the simplest manner and style, because my principal design was to inform, and not to amuse thee.  

Ultimately, whether the travellers intended to amuse or to instruct, their authority depended entirely on the fact that they had been eyewitnesses to something their readers had not. This confidence in autopsy—in seeing with one’s own eyes—was alive and well in the mid-nineteenth century, as proved by Fanny Calderón’s lapidary remark on the traveller’s virtual immunity from accusations of falsehood: “my authority is beyond impeachment.”

*Swift begins Lemuel Gulliver’s *Travels into Several Remote Parts of the World* with a complaint: in a letter to his editor and cousin, the alleged author of the journal laments the editorial license taken with his “loose and uncorrect account”—a thinly disguised criticism, in fact, of the first publisher to whom Swift sent his manuscript. Richard Sympson, who supposedly edited Gulliver’s text, was accused of inserting new passages (in praise of Queen Anne), excising others (criticisms of the Chief Minister of State) and allowing the printers to be “so careless as to confound the times, and mistake the date of [his] several voyages and returns”. Meddling by editors, publishers or booksellers—the terms were almost synonymous until the later part of the eighteenth century—appears to have been common, both during and after a text had been written. Woodes Rogers admitted that “tis generally expected, that when far different voyages are printed, they should contain new and wonderful discoveries, with surprizing accounts of people and animals”, but his voyage “being only designed for cruising on the enemy, it is not reasonable to expect such accounts here as are to be met with in travels, relating to history, geography, &c.” He had accepted to include some of those elements, however, “to oblige the booksellers, who have persuaded me that this would make it more grateful to some sort of readers.”*

286 Batten Jr., p. 133.
287 Swift, p. 340. Swift’s and Defoe’s debt to Dampier and other contemporary travellers has been amply discussed by, among others, Rennie.
288 Calderón, p. 176.
289 Italics mine.
It has always been the task of an editor (or publisher, depending on the period) to advise an author on what sort of text might be "grateful to some sort of readers." But the author's capacity of intervention in the production process has changed noticeably over time. Chartier has given this measure of "control exercised by the writer over the form of publication of the text" great primacy in identifying the rise of the author.\textsuperscript{290} It is tempting to assume that the trend progresses from a lack of authorial control, as in early accounts of travel, to a significant role played by the author in the final presentation of his book in the nineteenth century, but there are many counterexamples. We have seen how John Hawkins' already famous account was reprinted by Hakluyt with no meaningful alterations to the original; but in the nineteenth century, as we shall see in the next chapter, John Murray had no problem in excising seven chapters from a book on Mexico—even when it was already at the printing stage (whether or not with the author's consent is difficult to ascertain).\textsuperscript{291} It might even be argued that control over a text was inversely related to the demise of patronage: the less an author depended exclusively on it, and the more he or she relied on readers (or at least on sales), the more likely it is that editorial control would be concentrated in the hands of the publisher, to whom all authors save a few rare exceptions were a financial risk. This would appear to conflict with the view that the end of patronage meant the rise of the author. The matter deserves a closer look.

Some idea of how Hakluyt wrested control of a text from his sources comes from comparing, as above, the original edition of Job Hortop's account of his time in New Spain with Hakluyt's version of the same, adapted for the purposes of his compilation. But real authors became even less relevant in future collections of travel writing, as the first hand accounts were simply glossed over by the compilers. If Hakluyt the compiler can be thought of as a peculiar kind of author, this is even more so with the great collectors of the seventeenth century, Purchas and Harris.

Sadly, for documentary evidence of the transactions between authors and editors one must often look as recently as the nineteenth century. But doing so is not unrewarded. For here one finds the correspondence of an author and his Edinburgh publisher arguing over the type of book each expected. The author was hoping that his Extracts from a Journey on the Coasts of Mexico, Chili and Peru (1821) would make a single "unpretending" volume, but the editor would have none of it. So two octavo

\textsuperscript{290} Chartier, p. 53.

\textsuperscript{291} One might even bring the analysis further up to date, and suggest that the modern corporate system dominated by large publishing companies allows the majority of its authors less control than ever over the finished product. Most of the control, as revealed in a recent newspaper article, lies in the hands of marketing and design departments over which an author has little say. [Oliver Burkeman, "The Price Wars", The Guardian, Review, 18 Aug. 2001, p. 9.]
volumes it was.\textsuperscript{292} One finds, too, the correspondence of a London West End publisher with some of his authors regarding the form that some of their books were to take. The case of Thomas Brocklehurst, author of \textit{Mexico To-day} (1883), displays a significant degree of authorial interference in the production process. He wrote to Robert Cooke, John Murray’s cousin and business partner, regarding the cover for his book. “What think you of the enclosed sketch for the cover? It is the national badge of arms of Mexico and is on all the dollars… I have not a Mexican dollar except on a silver jug or I would have sent it to you. I can send you the jug if necessary…”\textsuperscript{293} He wished to modify the legend to be printed under the emblem: “‘Equidad en la justicia’ is the Mexican ‘Honi soit qui mal y pense’, and might be put in place of ‘1881’ if you prefer it.”\textsuperscript{293} He had something to say about the paper used for prints; “I like the engraving on the darkest paper much best. It is the $G$ shade. I have not many of [the] colour prints here. If you have any, please consider if even a darker or richer shade than $G$ could not be still better when the two are placed in juxtaposition or with one page of letter press between them as the two of them will come when placed in the book, and even where there are several pages of letter press between…”\textsuperscript{294} Still more comments were forthcoming when Brocklehurst was presented with a dummy: “The title page is very nice. I propose that the page that follows it has the words ‘In Memoriam Meorum’ on it. These being the words over the entrance to a convalescent home I have built to the memory of my father and mother.” But he was not completely satisfied: “Strange to say there are 2 or 3 little errors in the finished pages of the book. Such as lonely for lovely, the omission of an ‘of’ and a comma in the wrong place. And the errors are not in the proof…; they should be noticed in a ‘corrigenda’”.\textsuperscript{295} At a later stage, Brocklehurst feared that “there are too many pictures”,\textsuperscript{296} and complained that the attribution of some plates based on his own sketches had not been made clearly enough.\textsuperscript{297} Upon receipt of the final product —“Thank you for the book. It is larger & thicker than I expected”\textsuperscript{298}, “The railway map is excellent, in fact I am pleased with the book & the cover and I hope Mr. Murray and yourself are satisfied for I have given you much trouble about it”\textsuperscript{299}— Brocklehurst even made suggestions on how to advertise the book.

\textsuperscript{292} Cf. Chap. III.
\textsuperscript{293} Brocklehurst to Cooke, JMA, 28 Dec. 1882.
\textsuperscript{294} Brocklehurst to Cooke, JMA, 29 Dec. 1882.
\textsuperscript{295} Brocklehurst to Cooke, JMA, 26 Jan. 1883.
\textsuperscript{296} Brocklehurst to Cooke, JMA, 2 Feb. 1883.
\textsuperscript{297} Brocklehurst to Cooke, JMA, 23 Feb. 1883(i).
\textsuperscript{298} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{299} Brocklehurst to Cooke, JMA, 23 Feb. 1883(ii).
Advertising was a topic that worried nineteenth century authors a great deal. William Hall Bullock, author of MacMillan & Co.'s *Across Mexico in 1864-5*, was adamant that more should be done to publicise—or puff, as advertising was disrespectfully dubbed in the trade—his book, and was successfully exerting pressure on his publishers. “I will see the advertising of your book in the way you wish” wrote Alexander MacMillan to appease his author.\(^{300}\) This sort of incidence seems to have been possible only when authors and publishers were involved in a profit-sharing scheme, and had a joint financial interest in the success of the project. When an author had sold the copyright to his publisher, he had little more than his literary reputation to gain from meddling in the process of the book’s production. On the other hand, when a publisher was dealing with a book on commission—as in the case Tylor’s *Anahuac*—authorial control was almost absolute. The result of this sort of commissioned books tends to have been financial calamity for the author or his patrons.

Unhappiness with the price of books—often higher than the author expected—reveals one of the very real limits to authors’ influence on the trade, mostly because they were no longer dealing only with a book’s production process but with the entire markets for books. Brocklehurst’s letters to his editor at John Murray’s are especially concerned with the circulation his book might have if offered at a lower price. “I am so chaffed about the book,” he gushed in one of his letters, “that I wish it were out and done with. Mr. Murray must try to [conform] himself to the idea that 10s. will be enough for it. I want to buy a number of copies myself, and cannot afford more, whatever the production may cost.”\(^{301}\) It was unlikely—unthinkable, almost—that such a lavish edition as Brocklehurst’s would have cost ten shillings. The average price for a less handsome edition in single volume was 13 to 16 shillings. *Mexico Today* was, in fact, sold to the public for a guinea. Brocklehurst insisted on special concessions. “The price I leave entirely in Mr. Murray’s hands so that it sells & does not [backfire]. My numerous poor friends here who all want the book will certainly not be able to give more than 1.1.0. for it. Is it possible that two small book sellers in Macclesfield may have the special privilege of selling single copies to my Macclesfield friends at 10s. say for a limited time, and no advertisement to be made of the price?”\(^{302}\) Unlike his specific demands about the book’s format and presentation, all of which were accepted by John Murray, there was little Brocklehurst’s pleas for a lower retail price could do. It is unlikely that Cooke replied in the positive to his request for the “special privilege”, as John Murray was among the prominent publishers trying to rid the trade of the practice of

\(^{301}\) Brocklehurst to Cooke, 28 Dec. 1882.
\(^{302}\) Brocklehursts to Cooke, 23 Feb. 1883(i)
underselling (whereby booksellers retailed their wares at unauthorised discount prices, undercutting the publishers’ profits) and trying to reaffirm publishers’ right to set prices.  

It would be fruitless to suggest that a writer’s control over price might be related to the proper emergence of the author –indeed it would be naïve to think that this sort of control was ever within the individual author’s reach. By the nineteenth century, however, the writer’s authority was not just legally established but accepted as an inescapable convention too. The “sensation” caused by the anonymity of a book like *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, published in 1844, proves that by the Victorian period the “author-function” was deeply and irreversibly embedded in the very idea of a book.

The truth in assertions such as this one will inevitably lie in how exactly authorship is defined –in terms of control over the published text, over the finished book, over the right to print, the right to be prosecuted. And yet, even in a period when authorship (however it is defined) had come of age, there were still some obstacles separating a writer from a published author. Not the least of them seems to have been a residual resistance to appear in print among prospective authors. We are told that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, “men (and still more, women) of high status were often unhappy with the idea of publishing books, on the grounds that the books would be sold to the general public and so make the authors look like tradespeople.”

Similar reluctance was still evident in the nineteenth century among people of certain trades, notably naval officers and diplomats.

A reviewer of Basil Hall’s *Excerpts from a Journal* bemoaned the great loss of “pleasing narratives and striking histories” due to “the dread which nautical men too often entertain of becoming authors, and appearing before the public with hands washed clear of tar and besmeared with ink.” This dread was apparent in Hall’s correspondence with Archibald Constable, his publisher as far back as the time of publication of his first book of travels. It was also visible in the letters of George Francis Lyon, who had some doubts about the propriety of publishing his book about Mexico. Both were prominent members of the “silent service”, and duty-bound to keep quiet about their travels. Few things seemed as demeaning to an officer’s position as giving the appearance of a “book-maker” –someone who published to draw attention or, even worse, to draw a profit. Neither Hall nor Lyon were novice authors, but their Mexican

---

303 Cf. Barnes.
304 Secord.
305 Briggs & Burke, 44.
307 For a closer study of Lyon and Basil Hall, see chapter III.
books were a departure from previous publications, which were more official in tone and decidedly less personal in intention. Both, it must also be said, were at the end of their naval careers—Hall retired on half-pay shortly after the book's publication, while Lyon had been unceremoniously demoted even before he went to Mexico—when social restrictions on the propriety of a naval officer publishing his accounts were less stringent. A similar case was Henry George Ward, who was encouraged to publish an account of his time in Mexico only after his career in the Foreign Office had been thwarted by squabbles with George Canning. Alexander Thompson published his book on Mexico and Guatemala after it was made clear that his services were no longer required. Had Ward and Thompson remained active members of the Foreign Service, it is likely that, in the fashion of their contemporary James Justinian Morier (who had a longer life in the Foreign Service) they would have kept their journals to themselves.

It might be of some use in understanding the condition of authorship to consider the motives behind publication—not the reasons why people travelled, but the reasons why they, or someone else, thought it worthwhile to produce a text about their experience. Lyon, Ward and Thompson may have been prompted to publish their accounts of Mexico to make a name for themselves at a moment when they felt their profession had forsaken them. Sometimes the motivation for authorship came from elsewhere. At least the first of the three was counting on the money that might be earned: "Your proposal of bill at 6 & 9 months" he pleaded with his publisher, "would at any other time be of little importance, but I should much wish, if you could make it convenient that you should let me have some portion of the money now, as I have some heavy bills to pay, & hoped to have liquidated them by the sale of my book. If therefore you could let me have 100 [pounds] now, and the same sum in a 30 day bill, it would be conferring a great favour on me & prevent my leaving England in debt to tradesmen."\footnote{308 Lyon to Murray, JMA, 12 April 1827.}

Sometimes the encouragement to publish came from elsewhere. Such was the case of Woodes Rogers. "I was not fond to appear in print", he wrote, "but the Solicitations of my friends who had read my journal, and the mistaken reports that were spread abroad of our voyage, prevail'd with me at last to publish it." Fanny Calderón de la Barca, a century later, was urged to make public the letters written to friends and family in the course of her time as wife to the first Spanish minister in independent Mexico. The principal instigator was her friend, the New England historian William Hickling Prescott. It was Prescott himself who recommended the book to Charles Dickens, an author with close links to the publishers Chapman & Hall. "I hope you will
not say on receiving this letter ‘here are some of the precious fruits of a visit to those troublesome Yankees’, Prescott had written to Dickens; “But I am going to ask a favour. A friend of mine, Madame Calderón de la Barca, is about publishing an account of the two years’ residence in Mexico and Cuba, and in a series of letters addressed to different friends... She is a woman of much talent and that picturesque country and society are so spirited, and she had such numerous opportunities for observation, that I urged her to collect her scattered letters and print them.”

Dickens, who was not in the habit of recommending books to his publishers, wrote to them: “I think it probable that a book of which he speaks so highly, is likely to be a creditable work. What do you say to it?”

Chapman & Hall had good reasons to accept: they were courting Prescott so that they might have the first refusal of his latest book, The History of the Conquest of Mexico. Dickens replied: “My publishers, Messrs. Chapman and Hall, will be happy to republish that book of which you speak: requiring no better commendation of it, than your description of its merits.”

Through Prescott’s intercessions, then, a diplomat’s wife became known in London as a travel authoress.

Survival and patronage were foremost on Thomas Gage’s mind when The English-American was printed at St. Paul’s Yard in 1648. In less partisan and troubled times, his staunchly Protestant attack on all things Catholic might not have appeared so necessary. External circumstances, of course, are of the essence. It is hard to overlook the fact that over a period of 300 years the number of publications related to Mexico—both original accounts and translations of the work of authors like Bartolomé de Las Casas—peaked whenever Spain or its colonies were of utmost interest to England and its readers. These happened to be either periods of war between England and Spain or periods when England might have access to the country’s wealth. New Spain continued to be newsworthy for most of the two hundred years after the publication of Hakluyt because it was a Spanish colony. In the early nineteenth century Mexico was noteworthy because it had ceased to be one.

Whether religious propaganda or publicity stunts, a call to arms or a collection of correspondence, all British accounts of travel to Mexico until the late nineteenth century (with the exception of William Hall-Bullock’s) were written by people whose main occupation was not authorship. It is a body of literature produced by travellers who happened to write, rather than writers who happened to travel—the latter being clearly a twentieth century type.

---

310 Loc. Cit.
311 Dickens to Prescott, Ibid. p. 347.
“The forgotten middlemen of literature”

It would be unfair to say that publishers have been neglected as subjects of study in connection to nineteenth century history —voluminous monographs on Richard Bentley, John Murray, and the houses of Longman, Chapman & Hall or Smith, Elder are testimony to the opposite.\textsuperscript{312} If, as Robert Darnton complained, these middlemen of literature have been forgotten in the early modern period it is arguably because the publisher’s role was not as clearly defined then as it would be later.\textsuperscript{313} Until the end of the eighteenth century, in fact, it often compounded the roles of printer and bookseller as well as today’s more circumscribed definition of the publisher as editor.

As with many other histories of travel writing, the publishing history of British accounts of Mexico can be traced back to Hakluyt. And as with the history of authorship, this particular history of publishing is not without its problems. We have seen already how Hakluyt’s editorial intervention might be considered a form of authorship. Other clues tell us more about Hakluyt as editor. Consider, for example, his meaningful omission from the second edition of The Principal Navigations of an account that was included in the first edition.

David Ingram was one of the 114 sailors left behind on a beach of the Gulf of Mexico after John Hawkins’ disastrous battle at Veracruz. A year later he managed to make his way home on a French vessel. Twelve years after the events took place, when asked by Hakluyt to relate his adventures, he claimed he had travelled 2,000 miles by foot—from the town of Tampico on the Gulf Coast and up to Cape Breton, in modern Canada—and survived his encounter with natives and with nature. There were “in those parts”, he informed, “very many kings... who are at continual wars together.” Some of them wore “great precious stones, which commonly are rubies, being six inches long and two inches broad; and if the same be taken from them, either by force or sleight, they are presently deprived of their kingdoms.” These kings, he reported, were carried about “in a sumptuous chair of silver or crystal, garnished about with sundry sorts of precious stones.” When they marched into battle, they were preceded by men blowing on trumpets made from the horns of elephants. Pearls were abundant, and could be found in every house. People were “naturally very courteous”, and “professed enemies to the Cannibals or man eaters.” Ingram discovered “in every house, scoops, buckets, and divers other vessels of massy silver...wherewith they do throw out water and dust”. He came across great rivers in which he and his companions found “sundry pieces of gold, some as big as a man’s fist”. He described these peoples’ religion, and their fear of a certain kind of devil —the horrifying

\textsuperscript{312} Cf. Gettman, Chandler, Smiles, Paston.
\textsuperscript{313} Darnton, 1990, pp. 136-153
"Collochio"—which Ingram and his travel-mates claimed to have seen in the flesh. He spotted a bird, "thrice as big as an eagle, very beautiful to behold", with feathers "more orient than a peacock's feathers" and eyes the size of a man's. Ingram even claimed to have discovered Welsh-speaking people—a peculiar foreshadowing of Robert Southey's epic poem of 1804, "Madoc".314

Ingram's account was colourful enough to merit its inclusion in the 1589 edition of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*. It did not pass Hakluyt's own requirements for his second, extended edition of 1598-1600. In his *Pilgrimes* (1625), Samuel Purchas stated: "As for David Ingram's perambulation to the north parts, Master Hakluyt, in his first edition, published the same; but it seemeth some incredibilities in his reports caused him to leave him out in the next impression; the reward of lying being, not to be believed in truths".315 Hakluyt did not shirk from the publication of mythical voyages—the opening section of his collections are dedicated to heroic voyages of Arthurian legend—but a myth was different to a lie. And David Ingram had, quite frankly, fibbed. He had gone beyond merely blurring his recollection of events, and on to giving an eyewitness description of things (not unlike those sought out in vain by the hapless Spaniard Francisco Vázquez de Coronado) which were clearly a fabrication. There can be little doubt that in between his return and his interview with Hakluyt (who often refers to Ingram as "the Examine") Ingram had access to some of the fabulous descriptions of the northern frontiers of New Spain. In between the two editions of Hakluyt, too, much more geographical knowledge had been acquired—a fact that can be ascertained simply by observing how one volume was turned into three. By the time the third volume of the second edition was being prepared, uncertain or unfalsifiable accounts used in 1589 could more readily be compared to new sources of information. Even if Ingram had been on the coast of New Spain, and had travelled 2000 miles until he was rescued by a French pirate, he had lost all authority by lying beyond belief. It was inconsistent with Hakluyt's project of collecting the true voyages of the English nation to keep such a text. Hakluyt did his job as editor of his own work.

A more subtle trace of Hakluyt's hand can be seen in other accounts of trials and tribulations in the Spanish colony. It is worth noticing, for instance, that the original name of one account, designed to attract attention to Spanish cruelty—"The Discourse of Miles Philips, one of syr John Hawkins companie, set on shore in the Bay of Mexico, concerning the bloodie and most tyrannous cruelties of the Spaniards, used against him and his fellowe Englishmene at Mexico"—changed to "The voyage of Miles Philips,  

314 Or had Southey read Ingram's tale? A version of the travels of Madoc, the Welsh prince, was published in the 1589 edition of Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*. There seems to have been no shortage of legends to nourish Ingram's imagination.
one of the Company put on shore by sir John Hawkins, in 1568, a little to the north of Panuco; from whence he travelled to Mexico, and afterward to sundry other places, hauing remained in the countrey 15 or 16 yeeres together, and noted many things worthy of observation" for the edition of 1600.316 A number of events had taken place which might have led Hakluyt to adopt a less combative tone in his new publication – notably the defeat of the Spanish Armada, in 1589, and the death of Philip II of Spain, in 1598. No doubt this sort of nuanced editing can be observed in sections of Hakluyt's book related to many other places, a matter sadly out of the scope of this research.

Almost two and a half centuries later, when information was more readily available, it was harder for an author to fib as outrageously as David Ingram. Even though authors like William Bullock might be accused of twisting the truth, they couldn't as easily be accused of completely fabricating it. Publishers, by then a well-established trade, distinct from, say, that of printer, had other reasons for excising text. They were more aware than ever of the business of books, and a text's credibility was perhaps less important than its capacity to sell itself. A particularly striking case is that of John Murray III's last-minute decision to discard seven chapters of text from Alexander Thompson's book on Mexico and Guatemala. The book that was published as Thompson's Narrative of a Mission from Mexico to Guatemala had already gone through the normal editing process, and was at proof stage, when the decision was made to eliminate the first half of it—the section pertaining to Mexico. What appears to have been at stake in the decision, which will be discussed more thoroughly later on, was not any particular trait in the text itself—it's veracity, style or lack thereof—but the account's appeal to a wide reading audience. At a moment when at least two other new books about Mexico were on offer, it was Guatemala rather than Mexico that was chosen to become the book's selling point. Judging from sales records, it was not a very good one.

The price of books has always been set by a combination of three elements: publishers' and booksellers' desire for profit, the purchasers' willingness to spend their money on a certain book, and external regulatory bodies that occasionally intervene and set prices. One of such regulatory bodies in early modern England was the Stationers' Company, through which most of the retailing of books was carried out at the time. In January 1598, it issued an ordinance meant to curb the inordinately high price of books: "Forasmuch as divers abuses have been of late committed by sundry

315 Purchas, 1625, vol. iv, p. 179.
316 De Lta, p. 157 n.

96
persons in enhancing the prices of books and selling the same at too high and excessive rates and prices.\textsuperscript{317} To stop the overpricing of books, the Company set the upper limit for the price of normal books—that is new copies without prints. Books composed in pica or longer type could cost no more than half a penny per page, while those composed in smaller types could not exceed two thirds of a penny per sheet. An exception was made for books that carried many illustrations, which usually sold for up to twice as much. Hakluyt's 1589 edition of The Principall Navigations was priced at 11s.11d., bound, and 9s. unbound—almost precisely a halfpenny per sheet, keeping it within the limits considered adequate by the Stationers. The Principall Navigations only had a couple of copper-plate maps, and these, possibly late attachments to the text, were not included in all copies.\textsuperscript{318} Thus, even though the cost of binding and its sheer volume would have made a first edition of Hakluyt's book expensive, it was not, all things considered, as prohibitive as more lavishly illustrated books—the three heavily illustrated volumes of Purchas' Pilgrimes cost 68s 6d. bound, and 54s 6p unbound, that is, an above-average 0.62d per sheet.\textsuperscript{319}

In the mid eighteenth century, most travel-related monographs cost less than 15s., and only a few cost one pound or more.\textsuperscript{320} These books—Dampier, Wafer, Anson and the other seafarers—had less in common, however, with Hakluyt and Purchas than did the great eighteenth century collections of travel accounts—Churchill, Harris, Osborne and others, all published by subscription. The price of books is a central one to this history. The Stationers Company complaint about their price in the sixteenth century was still alive three centuries later, when the relative price of books reached its highest level ever. It had been steadily climbing since the 1780's, only to be made even dearer by European wars. Altick has given accounts of the rise of a new class of book-buyers who had profited from the Napoleonic wars, and who were now busy lining entire libraries with "books appropriate to their class"—books as symbols of respectability, to be displayed rather than read.\textsuperscript{321} It seems that London's publishers were not unhappy with the idea of satisfying the need for this "vanity trade" which had the effect of further raising the price of books. Publishers often quoted the growing ubiquity of circulating libraries—whereby more than one reader could peruse a book for a much lower price—as another reason for keeping the price of books high.

\textsuperscript{317} Johnson, p.108.
\textsuperscript{318} Cf. Payne, 1997. This proves, among other things, that the expansion of print did not imply the fixity of knowledge.
\textsuperscript{319} Johnson, 108.
\textsuperscript{320} Haglund.
\textsuperscript{321} Cf. Altick, 1957.
Other factors contributed to the high prices: typesetting —until the invention of the linotype and stereotype, the same labour-intensive process as had been used in the last three hundred years was still in place; precious paper —throughout the nineteenth century its price was diminishing, but heavy paper duty was abolished until the twentieth century; advertising, which took up a larger cut of publisher's budgets; and wages for the infamous in-house readers. Travel accounts often had the considerable added cost of illustrations, copper and woodblock prints, maps, later photographs. Small print runs at a high price were the norm. Although very few of the books reached the outrageous price of 31s.6d. —the expected price for one of Colburn & Bentley's famous "triple-deckers"—the prices were high. Clearly books were a luxury item, and their price was at its highest about 1830. An article published in the Times is a good indicator of one aspect of the problem:

On Saturday Evening last, at a meeting of the managers of the City of London Literary and Scientific Institution, ..., the Secretary... read a letter from their bookseller, which... announced that, in consequence of a general resolution entered into by "the trade", he could now only allow a discount of 15 per cent. from the publishing price of the works he supplied.322 ...

One of the managers stated [that] It was an attempt on the part of these tradesmen to sustain the old and indolent system of trade, or large profits on small sales, against the new system of trade, or small profits on large sale, with better payments. The attempts could only end in proving to the public the folly and ignorance of the body by whom it is made. It could by possibility only to the extent of causing books to be sold clandestinely, at the same moderate an reasonable prices at which they are now beginning to be sold openly... Thirty percent (he believed the booksellers got more) was a retail profit far greater than ought, as compared with other trades, to be demanded; but be that as it might, it was a greater profit than the public would continue to pay. The days of the booksellers' favourites, the costly quartos, were gone; it was impossible that the trade could recall them; and the reward of the general support of all classes to the recent publications in cheap, convenient and elegant forms, might have shown the necessity of conforming to the new direction of the public taste and will... Anything... which tended to keep up the prices of books, and render knowledge less accessible, and literary pursuit more expensive, ought to be especially reprehended and repressed.323

As foreseen by the Secretary of the Literary and Scientific Institution, a consequence of high prices was a growing market for cheaper reprints, second-hand copies and remainders, subscriptions to libraries, and the growth of pirate editions of best-sellers across the channel and in the United States. Another was the common practice of underselling. A commission convened in 1852 to decide on the lawfulness of the practice of underselling concluded it was unacceptable, and —against the opinion of those who favoured free trade of books—extended the gentleman publishers'

---

322 The normal discount was 25%.
323 Jan. 5, 1830.
monopoly of the market by allowing them to set prices and forcing booksellers to comply.

Among other things, the conflict between booksellers and scientific associations in 1830 which led to the 1852 commission is revealing of the roles of publishers and booksellers in the nineteenth century as opposed to the early modern period: whereas up to the late eighteenth century publishers were mostly booksellers with shares in a particular title, publishers in the 1800s were those who retailed only their own books—“the firm which organises the production of a book, and then sells it direct to retailers... but which does not buy books from other publishers to resell to the trade.”\footnote{Pollard, p. 34.} So while in the early modern period the interests of publishing and retailing books were identical, by the nineteenth century they were at odds with each other because retailers trying to outdo competitors would lower prices putting pressure on others to do so, which in turn generated pressure on publishers to cut their profits so that they could more easily peddle their products to “the trade”.

Revision of title pages and subscription lists makes it possible to identify a handful of publishers/retailers in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with a vested interest in the literature of travel—often the same men behind the publication of most texts related in one way or another to New Spain. James Knapton has been credited with setting the fashion for the literature of travel in the late seventeenth century after a relative slump following the publication of Purchas’ Pilgrimes.\footnote{Hallam Bonner, p. 50.} There appear to be at least three reasons for the perceived decrease in the output of travel-related material, part of a decrease in the general output: the first was England’s civil war; the second, not unrelated to the first, was the enactment of the 1662 Press Act, following which the number of printing houses in London was almost halved, only to rise above the original number when it lapsed almost thirty years later\footnote{Johns, 72.}; a third was the fact that most of the printing establishments in London suffered severe, if not total, losses in the conflagration of 1666.

The publication by Knapton of Dampier’s New Voyage Round the World (1697) marks the beginning of what some have dubbed the “Silver Age of Travel” —the “Golden Age” being the time of Hakluyt, Drake and their Elizabethan contemporaries. “A very accomplished person,” wrote John Dunton, a contemporary bookseller, about Knapton; “not that sort of animal that flutters from Tavern to play house, and back again, all his life made up with Wig and Cravat, without one dram of thought in his composition; but a person made up with sound worth, brave, and generous; and shews
by his purchasing of Dampier’s Voyages he knowes how to value a good copy.”327 The success of Dampier’s book —it had gone through seven editions by 1729,328 its author’s name was appropriated for another book329, and it was satirised by Defoe330— shows Knapton’s keen business sense, and indicates unequivocally an avid readership. Knapton, whose role as bookseller had him sharing rights of some of the period’s best-sellers such as Stanhope’s version of Kemps’ Imitation of Christ, was also an editor as defined by Robert Illife, that is, someone whose “roles and functions...were connected by virtue of their true ability to make ‘names’ for their authors and construct public ‘identities’ for them. They were supposed to be trustworthy managers of the transit of private and personal material into the public sphere.”331 Illife has also suggested that “the manifestation of the ‘editor’ was intimately bound up with the appearance of the ‘author’, and should be taken into account in the history of the latter.”332 Dampier the author owed much to Knapton the editor. And Knapton owed a good deal of his success to Dampier. In fact, after Dampier’s first edition Knapton seems to have specialised in travel-related literature. In 1699 alone he published Wafer’s A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America, William Hacke’s Collection of Original Voyages and Robert’s Voyages and Cruising. In the wake of successive reprints of Dampier, new editions of Wafer were released. Knapton was responsible for the publication of Bosman’s New and Accurate Description... of Guinea (1705) and even Funnell’s New Voyage Round the World (1709)—which he incorporated into Dampier’s collected works. In 1708, Knapton and the members of the conger or syndicate to which he belonged began the publication of a travel serial —A New Collection of Voyages and Travels with Historical Accounts of the Discoveries and Conquests in all Parts of the World—that ran until 1710, republished in two volumes in 1711 as Steven’s Voyages in honour of John Stevens, translator of many of the accounts.333 Many more volumes of geographical and travel-related knowledge bear Knapton’s imprint, including some of the works of Herman Moll, whose world map had illustrated Dampier, Wafer, George Shelvocke and Woodes Rogers’ books.334

327 Dunton, 295, q. by Hallam Bonner, 55.
329 William Funnell’s A Voyage Round the World, Containing an Account of Captain Dampier’s Expedition...By William Funnell, Mate to Captain Dampier, appeared in 1707.
330 A New Voyage Round the World by a Course Never Sailed Before, 1724.
331 Illife, p. 168.
332 Ibid., p. 167.
333 Stevens had also translated Cervantes’ Quixote into English in 1700.
334 The publishers of George Shelvocke’s Voyage round the world... (1726) —John Sennex, W. and J. Innys, J. Osborn and T. Longman—belonged to the same conger as Knapton, as did at some point Andrew Bell and Bernard Lintot, who published Woodes Rogers’ Cruising Voyage Round the World (1718). It is not surprising, then, that their publications all used exactly the same copper-plate print by Herman Moll.
Knapton also subscribed to others’ publications. When in 1702 a group of London booksellers commissioned Dr. John Harris to compile a collection of voyages, mostly from abridged versions of texts in Hakluyt and Purchas, Knapton was recorded as having signed for seven copies. Harris, a clergyman, topographer, fellow and later Secretary of the Royal Society, was at the time preparing his Lexicon Technicum, the first encyclopedia in the English language, published in 1704. A year later, he produced A Compleat Collection of Voyages and Travels. Other subscribers to Harris’ collection were John and Awnsham Churchill, publishers of the best-known eighteenth century compilation of travel accounts. The Churchills’ four-volume folio Collection of Voyages and Travels... (1704) is relevant to the study of English knowledge of Mexico as it included the first English translation of the Italian Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri’s voyage through New Spain.

The booksellers who encouraged Harris to compile his Navigantium atque Itinerantium Bibliotheca were, themselves, publishers of other travel collections. John Nicholson, who sold his books at the King’s Arms in Little Britain, London, was known to have “a taste for geographical works”. He was involved in the compilation of another collection of travels and republished, in 1699, Thomas Gage’s New Survey of the West Indies. “His talent lies at projection” wrote Dunton of him, “though I am thinking his Voyages and Travels will be a little posthumous”. Daniel Midwinter, one of the largest booksellers of the day, held shares in “most of the chief undertakings” at the time, including both of Harris’ works. A certain Richard Wilkin, London bookseller, was a subscriber to Harris’ two books and also to the other significant volume of geographical information: John Sennex’s A New General Atlas of All the World (Senex himself, in the meantime, had subscribed to Harris’ Lexicon Technicum), published in 1721. Significantly for our purposes, Wilkin was also a subscriber to Thomas Townsend’s translation of Antonio de Solis’ History of the Conquest of Mexico (1724). Known chiefly as a publisher of theological books, Wilkin, who retailed at the King’s Head in St. Paul’s Churchyard between 1693 and 1720, was held to be “a bookseller of good reputation”, but little else is known about him.

---

335 Thomas Bennet, John Nicholson and Daniel Midwinter. [Crone & Skelton, 89]
337 Navigantium atque Itinerantium Bibliotheca, or A Compleat Collection of Voyages and Travels, 1705.
338 It has been suggested by Crone & Skelton that Harris prepared his Compleat Collection to compete with the Churchills’ Collection of Voyages, although the fact that the Churchill’s were subscribing to Harris’ book, and that their collection had already appeared, makes it unlikely.
339 Plomer, 1922, “John Nicholson”.
340 Crone & Skelton, p. 89.
341 Plomer, 1922, “Daniel Midwinter”.

101
Regarding the publication of geographical and travel related books, two names are conspicuous in the list of subscription publications later on in the century. Alexander Hogg was one of the early publishers of the "Paternoster Row numbers"—cheap, serialized, weekly installments of classic texts, predating the more famous attempts at production of cheap literature in the nineteenth century. John Cooke was Hogg's partner. It could be said, using modern terms, that Cooke and Hogg were clearly retailers in best-sellers. Titles such as the New and Authentic History of England (1768), a New and Complete History of the Bible (1769), the New and Complete History of London (1770) or the inflammatory England's Bloody Tribunal, or Popery Displayed (1770), all bearing Cooke's imprint, went through several editions. So did Wright's The Complete British Family Bible (1782), Thornton's New, Complete and Universal History of London & Westminster (1784), and another Wright book, the New and Complete Book of Martyrs (1784), all printed for and sold by Alexander Hogg. It is meaningful, then, to see that besides their apparent interest in "useful knowledge", Cooke and Hogg were behind many of the most significant travel related publications from the 1760s until the 1780s. Cooke was responsible for titles such as Edward Drake's A New Universal Collection of Authentic Voyages and Travels (1768), Charles Middleton's New and Complete System of Geography (1777) and Charles Burlington's Modern Universal Traveller (1779). Hogg was not just the author of A New British Traveller, announced in the subtitle as a "new and extensive tour" of the British isles (1784), but was the leading influence behind the publication of A New Authentic Collection of Voyages Round the World by a certain John Hogg (1785), as well as George Henry Millar's New and Universal System of Geography. It is interesting to note that in a catalogue of the books he had in stock in 1782, Hogg advertised the folio edition of Captain Cook's Voyages... round the world and, immediately after, Hogg's celebrated Octavo edition of Cook's Voyages... round the world—the price of either being 1.2s.8d.

As the century came to an end, another name was prominent among publishers and retailers of books of geographical interest. John Sewell, London bookseller, published George Mortimer's Observations during a Voyage [to] Teneriffe, Amsterdam...[and] Canton (1791), military medic William Lempriere's account of A Tour from Gibraltar to Tangier (1794), John Churchama's Magnetic Atlas of the Whole

342 John Sennex also shared the ownership of Shelvocke's Voyage (1726) with W. and J. Inny, J. Osborn and T. Longman.
343 In 1772 Cooke had the New Royal & Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences published; in 1788, George Selby Howard's New Royal Cyclopaedia... and Dictionary of Arts and Sciences was published by Hogg.
344 Hogg.
Terraqueous Globe (1794), and a Universal World Atlas by Thomas Stockhouse (1798). It has been written about Sewell that his shop, was the resort of “the first mercantile characters in the city, particularly those trading to the East Indies”\footnote{\citet{plomer1932johansewell}.}. Of some relevance to the present study is his publication, in 1789, of a Bibliotheca Americana: or a chronological catalogue of books on the New World, by Arthur Homer.

A quick look at the items in this Bibliotheca Americana will confirm that, in the midst of an explosion of travel-related material, the eighteenth century had not, in fact, been the best period for the publication of books on New Spain. With the exception of the accounts of seafarers touching on Mexican beaches in the course of a circumnavigation or a cruising voyage, there had been little new information on the land of the Mexicans that seemed to be print-worthy. There can be no doubt that the decline in interest was due to the attraction of the South Sea—the eighteenth century’s New World—and to a perceived decline in the ascendancy of Spain in foreign affairs, counterbalanced by an increasing British preoccupation with France’s role. For a dramatic rekindling of publishing interest in the New World in general, and in Mexico specifically, Britain would have to wait until the early nineteenth century—the period of Latin American independence, and of the great gentlemen publishers.

Among them, the Murrays of Albermarle Street were conspicuous in their commitment to the publishing of travel writing. But the house of John Murray was not the only one with its hands on the genre. The gentlemen of Smith, Elder had vested interests in the it—being, as they were, agents and book-dealers for the East India Company; Archibald Constable, Edinburgh associate of John Murray and a close friend of Walter Scott favoured writers of travel accounts; there was the house of Chapman & Hall, early publishers of Dickens, with strong connections to American authors; and of course Longman, who had been publishing accounts of travel since the eighteenth century. In fact, the market was cornered by a handful of gentlemen publishers. The history of publication and readership in the nineteenth century can be construed as the history of how these upmarket, publishing giants adapted or succumbed to a growing reading public, to swings in popular taste and the steady pressure for the decrease in the price of book production.

**Imagined communities: readers.**

The processes of writing and publishing can only be culturally meaningful because there are readers. Perhaps we need not be reminded again that reading, too, has its history.\footnote{\citet{darnton1979}.} But the many theoretical and empirical difficulties in the study of “readers”
and “readership” must also be considered. A recent study of Jane Austen’s readership sums up some of the problems in trying to find the elusive historical reader:

It is, of course, impossible to trace all the readers of Austen’s novels; indeed, only a very few can be named with any degree of certainty, and those few are almost certainly not a representative sample... Many readers leave no trace of their reading; no record of their engagement (or otherwise) with the text, and those who do are those on who the text has made an impression of some kind, not the many readers for whom the reading of one [book] is no more remarkable than their reading of any other piece of writing. Historical readers do not necessarily have the convenient abilities and attributes of the implied readers.347

So in attempting to track down the reader of literature of travel, the historian must deal with the twin difficulties of finding evidence of readership, and, more crucially, determining what this evidence tells us about the act of reading. For even when evidence about surviving copies or supposed print runs is available, it is harder to account for the varying uses of texts. Ownership of a book, for example, does not imply that it will be read, neither does it disqualify many others from using the same copy. Although a record of borrowing from a library, book club or reading society does indicate intent to read a book, it still tells us nothing about the ways in which it was made sense of. A further complication arises because the availability of data regarding the usage of travel literature throughout the early modern period and up to the nineteenth century is very unequal: while for the sixteenth century one must often rely on a speculative comparison between existing sources, the seventeenth century is conspicuous for its lack of them; the eighteenth provides various alternative but limited ones; the beginning of the nineteenth century ushers in such a profusion of information that a historian’s task becomes hellishly complicated. Still, by putting together some of the evidence provided even by such disparate sources, a sketch might be made of the networks by which travel writing was both produced and consumed in Britain from the early modern to the nineteenth century.

New Spain and its treasures were unveiled to English readers in Richard Eden’s The Decades of the New Worlde, or West India (1555), which included the translation and abridgement of the first four of ten “decades” or letters published by the Milanese scholar Pietro Martire, as well as excerpts from the chronicles of Fernández de Oviedo and López de Gómara. Eden’s work was the first of its kind in many ways: never before had America been presented to the English reader, and no one before Eden had

347 Halsey, p. 33.
advocated the establishment of an English colony in North America. Such was the first utterance of a distinct voice that, under Hakluyt, was soon to proclaim the naval supremacy of the English nation. As with most early modern publications, the number of published copies of Eden's *Decades* is uncertain. One scholar has unhelpfully suggested that "the considerable number extant today and the fact that the edition was handled by four publishers instead of one suggests that it was large." But how many copies do remain today, and what can we possibly mean by saying a certain edition was large? The answer to the first question lies, for now, outside the scope of this dissertation. To answer the latter, one must look at other projects and publications. A good place to start is the most famous of all travel compilations during that period.

It is the surviving copies themselves that provide most of the scant information we can put together about the readers of Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*. We cannot even be sure how many copies of the first (1589) and second (1598-1600) editions were printed. Anthony Payne has managed to track down approximately 200 surviving copies of the 1589 edition. He has suggested comparing Hakluyt's first edition to another contemporary publication—Shakespeare's first folio edition, of which we know that 750 copies were made and 250 survive. If this indicator is of any use, one can assume that the print run of Hakluyt's book might have been around 600 copies.

The ones that survive today offer some insight into who their readers were: a copy in Christ Church College, Oxford, was passed on to Robert Burton—author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*—in 1622. Other known contemporary readers were John Selden, the Lord Chancellor Thomas Egerton, Sir Edward Coke, John Dee (whose library was often visited by Hakluyt), Prince Henry and Sir Robert Cecil. We know about later readers, too. A copy, currently in the Whitehall library of the Ministry of Defence, bears this late 18th century inscription wrongly attributed to Samuel Johnson: "Such is the expense of time and money for my Dicty! After marking much of this volume, behold there is a later edition of this with 2 more vols." Samuel Pepys and John Locke were two other well-known owners.

We know that, over time, copies of the first edition travelled as far as Helsinki or St. Petersburg, but we are not any nearer to knowing how Hakluyt's book was used by contemporary readers. One must consider its physical characteristics: a bulky demi-folio edition, with a couple of copper-plate engravings, more fit to be presented as a gift or displayed in a library than to be carried around. We can be certain that the accounts

---

348 McCann, p. 136.
350 Payne, 1997, p. 34.
by Job Hortop and John Hawkins had a different readership when they were first published as pamphlets than when included in Hakluyt’s voluminous tome.

And yet, we are told by Purchas that a copy was available aboard one of the ships of the East India Company—of which Hakluyt was a founding member—on its third voyage. The crew was allegedly saved from certain death by the timely perusal of the geographical descriptions of the east coast of Africa contained in the book. Purchas also reported that the Governor of the East India Company, Sir Thomas Smith, had told him that Hakluyt’s book had saved the company up to £20,000, “which they had bin endamaged if they had returned home, which necessitie had constrayned, if that book had not given light”.352

A lament regarding books at later periods rings true when studying the time of Hakluyt and Purchas: that although travel-related books were not exceptionally expensive in comparison to other books, books in general—and especially of the illustrated and bound variety—were a luxury item. Although, as we have seen, Hakluyt’s first edition was not unusually expensive after printing, the mere cost of binding it might be enough to narrow its potential buyers. The sheer volume of the expanded edition made it impossible to reprint until 1809. And while Hakluyt was almost invariably quoted in successive collections of travel accounts before and after then, the appearance of a portable-sized and popular-priced edition of his work had to wait until the creation of the Everyman series in the early twentieth century.

To future compilers of English travel narratives, Samuel Purchas was as indispensable a reference as Hakluyt. Again it is anecdotal evidence that informs our knowledge of Purchas’ readership. We know, for instance, that by the end of the 17th century a copy of Purchas’ *Pilgrimes* was available to the Mexican scholar Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, who was able to find in it printed reproductions of the Mendoza Codex unavailable elsewhere, and who called Purchas a “great lover of our patria.”353 On the brink between the 18th and the 19th centuries, a passage from Purchas’ book describing how the Chinese emperor Kublai Khan ordered the construction of a magnificent palace allegedly inspired Samuel Taylor Coleridge to write one of his most famous poems.354

---

352 Quoted by Payne, 1999, p. 21.
353 Brading, p. 366.
What about the lesser-known readers? One can guess at a potential readership of certain types of travel books by taking a closer look at how much they would have cost, and who might have afforded them. In the mid-eighteenth century, for instance, most books of travel commented on in the Monthly Review—and, according to the editors’ ambition, these would have been most, if not all, of the books published in London—were priced under 15s, with only a handful (27 in the period running from 1750-1758) costing over one pound. At the time, the average wage of a shopman was 8s. a week, plus board; fishermen and seamen could earn around 7s. a week; a London journeyman might be expected to make from 15 to 16s. per week; clerks made wages in the territory of a pound a week, and naval officers could make as much as £1.2s. a week. An average priced book, then, might cost a middling tradesman a week’s wage. Concurrent to the publication of 15s. books was the preponderance of 6d. and 1s. pamphlets, which, according to Elizabeth Hagglund, “indicates the interest in travel from all strata of society”.

In the nineteenth century, too, book prices remained high. Again, not high in comparison to similar books, perhaps, but outrageously high when contrasted with other goods. In the 1830’s, when a single volume of a travel-related book cost between 13 and 16s., 5s would buy one pound of butter, or ten pounds of meat; 7s. could provide a family of five good table beer for a month. A skilled London worker had a weekly wage of 33s., so even cheap editions, when they were available (for about 5s.) meant that a book would cost him a day’s earnings. A blunt price conversion of William Bullock’s Six Months’ Residence in Mexico (1824, 16s.) to modern value would have it costing £45—the average price of an academic press publication.

Of course, even before the 1820s people were already doing what many of today’s students and even teachers do when they are in need of a £45 book—borrowing it from a library. When trying to corner historical readers, records of library borrowings are a more useful tool than speculation based on book-prices. First, because through a system of circulating libraries books were effectively made accessible to people who might not be able to, or might not want to, purchase them. Secondly, because borrowing a book is a deliberate act that shows a greater intention of reading it—unlike buying it, or even subscribing to it—even if only because, as Jane Austen pointed out in her novel Mansfield Park, “people are more ready to borrow and


355 Hagglund, p. 1.
356 Ibid., p. 6.
357 Altick, 1957.
praise, than to buy.” Many booksellers complained about how the ubiquity of circulating libraries in the 1840s was actually putting them out of business. In fact, at the peak of their prominence, libraries like Mudie’s Select Library, at Upper King Street, Bloomsbury, were practically able to dictate the fashion in reading habits—especially in fiction—and thus a publisher’s choices—such as his preference for the monstrous three-volume novel format. At a time when these sorts of publications were excessively expensive for the average reader, circulating libraries—any publisher’s most reliable clients, to many an author’s despair—could make or break a name in the world of letters.358

Library borrowing records, where they exist, can be quite telling. From Paul Kaufman’s pioneering surveys of available eighteenth century borrowing records we can deduct a few noteworthy observations about the centrality of travel related literature in people’s taste. It is worth noticing that “travel” was hardly ever classified on its own within a category, but either grouped with astronomy and geography (as in the London Library Society) or subsumed within broader categories such as “History, Antiquity and Geography” (as in the Bristol Library Society). In the case of the latter—admittedly an exceptional case due to Bristol’s conspicuous links with maritime trade and exploration—it was this category of “History, Antiquity and Geography” that took precedence in the number of borrowings in the late eighteenth century. Within the broad category, the borrowed books devoted to geography (meaning travel) were the largest group. The two most borrowed books over the reviewed period were Hawkesworth’s edition of Cook’s Voyages (201 borrowings) and Brydone’s Tour through Sicily (192), closely followed by Goldsmith’s History of the Earth (150) and Robertson’s biography of Charles V (131).359 One could, of course, point out that Bristol was not a typical English city, and its sea merchants would probably show a larger interest in recent maritime expeditions more than in London. For the sake of comparison, let us look at the London Library Society, also studied by Kaufman. A catalogue of its holdings in 1785 shows that out of 490 titles, amounting to 1188 volumes, only 43 belonged in the category of “Astronomy, Geography, Voyages and Travels”. This category was, in fact, the smallest in the collection (natural sciences being the largest).360 We must not forget, however, that library holding or borrowing records are only useful to a certain degree: a cross section of library users does not amount to a cross section of a more general readership. Kaufman has warned—and this any frequent user of a library will acknowledge—that “we are never [...] sure what

358 Cf. Griest.
359 Kaufman, pp. 28-35.
360 Ibid., pp. 17-27.
a record of borrowing means as a criterion of interest and/or actual study". Furthermore, exclusive consideration of library records leaves out many readers like members of book clubs or subscribers to commercial publications.

Kaufman has pointed us in the direction of book clubs, too. These book clubs or reading societies, whose membership was typically male, upper-middle class —clergy, schoolmasters, physicians, apothecaries, attorneys, gentry, shop owners— were also an 18th century novelty. A general survey of the titles lent out and discussed by these clubs reveals that travel and geographical descriptions were second only to contemporary political issues. It is interesting for the purposes of this research to point out that Bernal Díaz del Castillo's chronicle of the conquest of Mexico was a favourite among the members of the Ludlow Reading Society.361

Regarding the remaining records from cathedral library borrowings, it will come as no surprise that ecclesiastical history, bibles (including translations and commentaries), Ancient history and, finally, Greek and Latin texts compose the four leading categories in terms of individual borrowings. They are immediately followed by the category of travel accounts. Natural philosophy, in these records, occupies the lowest rank. According to the records, there were 67 copies of the Awnsham and John Churchill's collection of Voyages distributed between the libraries of Canterbury, Carlisle, Durham, Exeter, Gloucester, St. Paul, Winchester and York—only 30 copies short of that other great bestseller of the age, Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.362

According to records of the contents of London parish libraries in the late 1830s, the category of "Voyages, Travels, History and Biography" (136 titles) was only slightly less subscribed to than the best-selling class of "Novels by Walter Scott, and Novels in imitation of him" (166) —proving the pervasive interest attracted by the genre's over time.363 That was, it seems, the high point for the publication and readership of literature of travel. Figures taken from the Bibliotheca Londinensis confirm Altick's assertion about the gradual prevalence of fiction over non-fiction throughout the nineteenth century: while in the period between 1814 and 1846 books on "Geography, Travel, History and Biography" (17%) were second in number only to "Religion" (20%), they had gone down to 12% of the total output, behind religion (16%) and, noticeably, "Fiction and juvenile" literature (23%) during 1870-79. The trend was confirmed in the periods 1880-89 —fiction added up to 26%, while religion and the category including

361 Ibid., pp. 36-64.
362 Ibid., pp. 76-89.
363 Altick, p. 217. Both categories were surpassed by the impossibly broad groups of "Fashionable novels" (439) and, not surprisingly, "Novels of the lowest character, being chiefly imitations of fashionable novels" (1008).
travel made up 15% and 13% respectively—and 1890-99—while travel, geography and history accounted for 12%, and religion declined to only 10%, fiction soared to 30% of all printed books.\textsuperscript{364}

This sort of analysis, while useful in suggesting trends, hardly addresses the problem of how a particular genre was approached by the elusive individual reader. In the particular case of English travel literature about Mexico it can only help to infer the potential interest that a publication might have generated. Evidence on an individual volume published in the 1890s, for instance, proves how fiction might have displaced travel literature as a source of information: with 25,000 volumes sold (more than the total of all other nineteenth century travel accounts of Mexico put together), Henry Rider Haggard’s historical romance, \textit{Montezuma’s Daughter}, was probably the place where most readers got their impressions of ancient Mexico.\textsuperscript{365} Until we can assemble information about similar or related cases, we are far from understanding what was at the bottom of Coleridge’s assertion that his was “the present much-reading but not very hard-reading age”\textsuperscript{366}—except that it confirms historical accounts which place his present time at the end of a process that led from intensive reading of few books in the Middle Ages to an extensive perusal of many titles by the end of the early modern period. Publishers’ production ledgers, and their hints of a book’s economic success or failure (see chart) are useful in describing a book’s possible circulation\textsuperscript{367}, but again tell us little about the individual approximation to the written word.

It is interesting, then, to note whom the authors, publishers and reviewers \textit{believed} their readers to be. All writers make some assumption about their audience. But whereas the earliest texts considered in this dissertation seemed concerned with making their point clear to an audience of a selected few rich and influential patrons—usually the book’s dedicatees, rulers and their ministers\textsuperscript{368}—eighteenth century prologues of travel books evinced a well articulated awareness of a reading public beyond court circles. Reviewers of the \textit{Monthly Magazine} had some clear ideas about the sort of people who might show an interest in the books they reviewed. According to their own reviews, the audience for accounts of travel printed in the 1750’s was made up of readers who were “discerning”, “curious”, not antiquarian or specialist themselves. They were assumed to

\textsuperscript{365} Macmillan Archive, production ledgers.
\textsuperscript{367} One must consider, too, the fact that “the exact size of most editions before the nineteenth century remains unknown”. [Raven, p. 6]
be English, as seen in a comment about an author who had "executed [a book] in such a manner, as may very well content a Dutch or a German reader... but too drily to afford much entertainment of English readers". The august readers of the Review—and, it was thought, the natural readers of the reviewed books—were not interested in pornography or the cheap titillation peddled by a few authors who hardly deserved any mention. A disparaging comment on books meant "only for the footman or serving maid" indicates that the readers were expected to be, in the very least, of the middling sort. Finally, all readers were assumed to be Protestant, even anti-Catholic, especially when it came to books about continental Europe.369

Anecdotal evidence tells us that whoever readers of eighteenth century travel literature were, they were less concerned with the matter of truthfulness than with veracity, and Gulliver was to many as real a figure as Dampier. There is the story told by Arbuthnot, "who lent the book to an old Gentleman, who went immediately to his Map to search for Lilly putt"370, or even of the Victorian explorer Richard Burton asked by his landlady if he had ever, in the course of his travels, come across Captain Gulliver.371

By the mid nineteenth century, the author Wilkie Collins had distinguished four different types of reading audiences: "the religious public... the public which read for information...the public which reads for amusement, and patronizes circulating libraries and the railway bookstalls...[and] the public which reads nothing but newspapers".372 Readership for books of travel was made up mostly of the second category. Those in the publishing trade, too, had their own views on who constituted a particular book's readership. In establishing this "assumed readership", it is useful to consider the peculiar figure of the publisher's reader. These curmudgeons were employed by nineteenth century publishers for the purpose of advising them on the desirability of publishing or withholding a particular text. One of such readers in the house of John Murray was Henry Milton. Reviewing the list of manuscripts that he had to get through to make a living, one modern scholar has noted that "simply to read the titles in Milton's list may induce a feeling of torpor: in particular, almost every visitor to a foreign part seems to have felt compelled to set down his or her thoughts on paper in those days, and probably the end-product held all the enduring appeal of an amateur's holiday

368 Chartier has drawn attention to the crucial relationship between author, dedicatee and printer, that dominated literary activity until the mid-eighteenth century [p. 44].
369 Hagglund, p. 8.
370 Rennie, p. 78.
371 Q. by Phillipps, p. 81.
372 Quoted by Altick, 1989, p. 152.
video today." 373 About one writer who had been to India, for instance, Milton wrote: "He appears to have written, as indeed is the case with nine Tour journalists out of ten, for his own information; or at most for the information of the friends to whom he intended to communicate his journal." 374 There are no known records of readers’ reports for the early part of the century, which is why we have no evidence of advisers’ opinions for some of the more interesting Mexican books. In 1847, another reader advised in favour of the publication of Ruxton’s Adventures in Mexico — his report, sadly, does not exist, but we know from ledgers that he was paid £1.15s for the 7 hours it took him to read the manuscript (a rough average of 5s. per hour). These in-house readers, the trade’s best kept secret, the skeletons in the publishers’ closet, were painfully aware that although a book might be “little better than drivel” — Darwin’s Descent of Man — or “a display of fake learning and gratuitous cruelty” — Flaubert’s Salambó — there was, perhaps, a profit to be made from acknowledging the existence of a suitable audience for a particular book. Readers’ reports for other firms are peppered with questions like “who will read it?” or comments about the “popular interest in the subject” or “demand for such a book”. To speak of a market for a type of literature, then, appears to be appropriate.

Semi-professional travel writers such as Basil Hall were very conscious of conventions and ideal types of travel writing, as they were aware of a certain type of reader — one who shared his or her own tastes and interests. 375 “Authors are readers themselves”, Robert Darnton reminds us. “By reading and associating with other readers and writers, they form notions of genre and style and a general sense of the literary enterprise, which affects their texts.” 376 And so, not unlike modern day academic or literary communities of peers reading and reviewing each other, authors of books of travel made up a community of readers, bent over the same books, with their own conditions of membership. 377 It was, to use Benedict Anderson’s term, an imagined community — what others might call an “interpretive community” 378, based on a shared interest in the genre and, more specifically, in particular geographical areas. This equation of author and reader can only take us back to the texts themselves in an effort to discover how travellers read other travellers’ accounts.

We know close to nothing about the specific readership of English accounts of New Spain as presented in Hakluyt and Purchas, although it is not hard to imagine that

373 Fraser, p. 24.
374 Ibid., p.41.
375 About this, see following chapter.
376 Darnton, 1990.
378 Cf. Fish.
video today".373 About one writer who had been to India, for instance, Milton wrote: “He appears to have written, as indeed is the case with nine Tour journalists out of ten, for his own information; or at most for the information of the friends to whom he intended to communicate his journal".374 There are no known records of readers’ reports for the early part of the century, which is why we have no evidence of advisers’ opinions for some of the more interesting Mexican books. In 1847, another reader advised in favour of the publication of Ruxton’s Adventures in Mexico —his report, sadly, does not exist, but we know from ledgers that he was paid £1.15s for the 7 hours it took him to read the manuscript (a rough average of 5s. per hour). These in-house readers, the trade’s best kept secret, the skeletons in the publishers’ closet, were painfully aware that although a book might be “little better than drivel” —Darwin’s Descent of man— or “a display of fake learning and gratuitous cruelty” —Flaubert’s Salambô—there was, perhaps, a profit to be made from acknowledging the existence of a suitable audience for a particular book. Readers’ reports for other firms are peppered with questions like “who will read it?” or comments about the “popular interest in the subject” or “demand for such a book”. To speak of a market for a type of literature, then, appears to be appropriate.

Semi-professional travel writers such as Basil Hall were very conscious of conventions and ideal types of travel writing, as they were aware of a certain type of reader —one who shared his or her own tastes and interests.375 “Authors are readers themselves”, Robert Darnton reminds us. “By reading and associating with other readers and writers, they form notions of genre and style and a general sense of the literary enterprise, which affects their texts”376 And so, not unlike modern day academic or literary communities of peers reading and reviewing each other, authors of books of travel made up a community of readers, bent over the same books, with their own conditions of membership.377 It was, to use Benedict Anderson’s term, an imagined community —what others might call an “interpretive community”378, based on a shared interest in the genre and, more specifically, in particular geographical areas. This equation of author and reader can only take us back to the texts themselves in an effort to discover how travellers read other travellers’ accounts.

We know close to nothing about the specific readership of English accounts of New Spain as presented in Hakluyt and Purchas, although it is not hard to imagine that

---

373 Fraser, p. 24.
374 Ibid., p.41.
375 About this, see following chapter.
376 Darnton, 1990.
378 Cf. Fish.
descriptions of English travails at the hands of the Mexican Inquisition must have been received with the same sense of astonishment and dread that news readers today feel upon learning about the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. As yet we know little about contemporary readers of Thomas Gage, but his descriptions of Mexico City were amply quoted almost two centuries later by William Bullock. Considering the source, it is no surprise that a lingering anti-Catholicism pervaded the early nineteenth century accounts of travel to Mexico. Bullock himself was among those travellers most quoted by the ones who followed, and it is perhaps a sign of his ubiquity as a reference for others sailing towards Mexican shores that he was extensively quoted in a novel posing as a real account of travel.\textsuperscript{379}

In studying the influence that certain texts had on the authors of English tales of travel one cannot neglect two authors whose work clearly marked that of those who travelled to Mexico with their books among their travel possessions. The first of them was Alexander von Humboldt, whose \textit{Political Essay on the Viceroyalty of New Spain} was published in England in 1811. Such was the popularity of Humboldt that that same year, the Spanish minister in London wrote to Madrid complaining that he had been unable to acquire a copy of Humboldt's books because it was sold out.\textsuperscript{380} In 1824, at the height of the mining speculation, John Taylor, director of the Real del Monte mining company, published an abridged version of Humboldt's work—leaving out all except the passages related to mining intelligence. Longman published Taylor's Selections from Humboldt on commission, so no production figures are available—editors at Longman would have received copies direct from the printers, and Taylor would have borne the production costs. It was recorded, however, that Longman received approximately 900 copies in three batches between 1824 and 1826, but sold only 676 copies and returned the balance in 1827. Of those sold only 315 were sold at full price (that is, the full discount price to booksellers) of 8s (it would probably retail at 10s or 10s6d—half a guinea) and the rest at remainder prices of 2s per copy. Despite the apparent demand for Humboldt, and the craze for all things related to mining venture since the 1820s, Taylor's abridgement doesn't appear to have been particularly successful.\textsuperscript{381}

References to Humboldt are hard to avoid in any of the books written in the early half of the nineteenth century. Humboldt's thorough account of the Spanish colony on the verge of its independence was quoted with reverence long after its figures and statistics ceased to be accurate. As Ward explained, there was little to add to Humboldt's description except the occasional updating here and there, a fact which

\textsuperscript{379} Cf. Chamier.
\textsuperscript{380} Jiménez Codinach, 1996, p. 41.
left the door open for a flood of "personal" narratives — exactly the sort of text Humboldt never published about Mexico. By the mid-nineteenth century, travellers whose previous knowledge of Mexico was based on the German sage found him wanting once they reached their destination. Hardy had bones to pick with Humboldt. He thought Mexico City one of the most wretched places he had ever visited: "If Humboldt, when he paid a visit to the city of Mexico, had examined it with the eyes of a humane philosopher and had represented it in its unadorned colours, how much disappointment would have been spared to travellers and to Europe." Similarly, Hall Bullock in the 1860s complained that "during my whole residence in Mexico, I made a constant effort to find the city as beautiful as travellers, from Humboldt downwards, describe it as being. Under one aspect alone could I find anything at all to admire about it. When seen by moonlight, it was impossible not to be struck by the faultless symmetry of the streets. But by the broad light of day, I could find nothing more to admire about Mexico than about Mannheim, or any other city built at right angles with itself." Vigne, when describing monumental engineering works outside the capital, could only be bothered to write that it "is minutely described by Humboldt, whose account of New Spain is still at least as good as any other, although not dressed in the elegant but too highly epithetted language of Mr. Prescott. Their joint accounts, with that of Mr. Ward and others, render it almost superfluous for any other traveller to describe in detail such well trodden ground."382

Mr. Prescott, of course, was William Hickling Prescott, whose *History of the Conquest of Mexico* appeared in 1841, and soon became the romantic embodiment of what most Anglo-Saxon foreigners associated with Mexico and its past. Some travellers, then, confirmed what they expected to see, and their expectations were clearly fashioned by their readings of Prescott as much as of Humboldt. Brockelhurst, in the 1880s, remarked admiringly on Mexico City: "From whatever point of view the city is seen... it is as beautiful as Humboldt had described it as being". He was critical of the impression that Robert Southey had given of the "islands" of Xochimilco. He was unsatisfied, too, about Prescott's contribution to knowledge: "Had Prescott, before his eyesight failed him, but visited Mexico, and inspected the localities of Cortes' most marvellous adventures, how very much more interesting to the Mexican traveller his 'Conquest' would have been. As it is, one has the greatest possible difficulty in realising his most telling incidents from the want of matter whereby to localise them." This gives us the impression of a man walking around trying to use Prescott's history book in the

---

381 I am indebted to Michael Bott, at the University of Reading Archive, for his essential assistance regarding the Longman Company archive.
more modern sense of today's companions to a particular place. The aging New England historian's popularity among English readers was confirmed by Tylor, according to who "Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* has been more read in England than most historical works; and the Mexico of Montezuma has a well defined idea attached to it."

Sometimes, previous accounts of the country were not only confirmed, but surpassed, especially among ethnographers. Tylor wrote in his *Anahuac*: "When we left England, we doubted the accounts of the historians of the conquest, believing that they had exaggerated the numbers of the population, and the size of the cities... to write as wonderful a history as they could, as historians are prone to do. But our examination of Mexican remains soon induced us to withdraw this accusation, and even made us inclined to blame the chronicler for having no eyes for the wonderful things that surrounded them."

In his *Mexico To-Day*, Brockelhurst stated: "Travelling here is very different from what it is in a country on which the shadow of Murray's handbook has fallen." However true this was about Mexico until then, it would not be the case for very long. This statement is not meant to imply that physical conditions of travel improved dramatically, but rather that whereas Mexico had been so far the subject of personal accounts of travel, a new type of book, destined for an altogether different reading public, was becoming available: the travel guide, specifically meant for the self-declared tourist. Authors were already showing some awareness of the difference between travellers -usually themselves—and tourists -usually other travellers. "The public buildings of Mexico are handsome, especially the national Palace, but descriptions of such pertain to guide books, and therefore are outside the scope of this story of travel", quipped Mrs. Ethel Tweedie, the roving journalist who had made her name writing about her jaunts, in her *Mexico as I saw it* (1901). A true professional of travel, she even decided to include an appendix for those that might follow in her footsteps -advice for travellers, including good guidebooks (*Campbell's Guide*), recommendations on modes of transport and food, and tips about health and hygiene on the dusty roads of Mexico. The inclusion of her travellers' decalogue is an indication that although she appeared to deem tourism a lesser type of voyaging, Mrs.

---

382 In fact, I am convinced that Vigne had plagiarised Forbes, and had probably not visited any place other than Veracruz and its environs.
383 Communications did improve during the period of Porfirio Díaz, when Brockelhurst was writing, only to be devastated by the Mexican Revolution.
384 William Bullock had included an appendix to his book in the form of letter from his doctor, offering advice on how to avoid illness.
Tweedie clearly had some sense of the growth of a particular sort of travel—and with it, a new reading public.
III. MEXICO: A LONDON PANORAMA. 1820-1830

It has been said that in no other period of English literary and cultural history is the need for information about the relationship between literature and society more urgent than the few decades following 1800—the beginning of the era of mass reading.385 The following chapter will add to the available knowledge about this era by focusing on the production and readership of a very particular type of published text within a specific genre. Having reviewed the long-term patterns and trends in the publishing and reception of British accounts of travel to Mexico, I will now look in greater detail at the period in which they became more conspicuous than ever before.

Even a cursory revision of books about foreign lands published at different times that there are moments when a particular place manages to capture the imagination of people elsewhere, when a foreign culture dominates the mental landscape of a faraway and otherwise improbable audience. These are times when a country’s attention fixes itself on a far-flung corner of the world, news from its travellers and correspondents eagerly awaited and hungrily consumed. Times, indeed, when the fate of two nations appear—if only temporarily—to be inevitably intertwined. England’s idyll with the South Sea at the time of Captain Cook was one of such moments. The craze for all things Egyptian at the height of the war against Napoleon was another. As far as the history of British-Mexican encounters go, it was the years between 1820 to 1830. The main scene for this peculiar coupling of cultures was London.

London in the 1820’s was a city of approximately one million people. Its physical aspect was changing dramatically—the period marked the definitive growth of the West End, the completion of conspicuous features—Regents Park was laid out between 1811 and 1828—and the erection of new landmarks in the cityscape—the construction of the new British Museum took off in 1824. The growth was not only taking place at ground level: throughout the decade thousands of workmen dug their way from Wapping to Rotherhithe to complete the first successful tunnel ever to be built under a river.

It was the London spawned by the industrial revolution. Steam was all the rage, and myriad speculators racked their brains to find ways of profiting from its power.

385 Altick, 1989, p. 95.
III. MEXICO: A LONDON PANORAMA. 1820-1830

It has been said that in no other period of English literary and cultural history is the need for information about the relationship between literature and society more urgent than the few decades following 1800—the beginning of the era of mass reading. The following chapter will add to the available knowledge about this era by focusing on the production and readership of a very particular type of published text within a specific genre. Having reviewed the long-term patterns and trends in the publishing and reception of British accounts of travel to Mexico, I will now look in greater detail at the period in which they became more conspicuous than ever before.

Even a cursory revision of books about foreign lands published at different times will reveal that there are moments when a particular place manages to capture the imagination of people elsewhere, when a foreign culture dominates the mental landscape of a faraway and otherwise improbable audience. These are times when a country’s attention fixes itself on a far-flung corner of the world, news from its travellers and correspondents eagerly awaited and hungrily consumed. Times, indeed, when the fate of two nations appear—if only temporarily—to be inevitably intertwined. England’s idyll with the South Sea at the time of Captain Cook was one of such moments. The craze for all things Egyptian at the height of the war against Napoleon was another. As far as the history of British-Mexican encounters go, it was the years between 1820 to 1830. The main scene for this peculiar coupling of cultures was London.

London in the 1820’s was a city of approximately one million people. Its physical aspect was changing dramatically—the period marked the definitive growth of the West End, the completion of conspicuous features—Regents Park was laid out between 1811 and 1828—and the erection of new landmarks in the cityscape—the construction of the new British Museum took off in 1824. The growth was not only taking place at ground level: throughout the decade thousands of workmen dug their way from Wapping to Rothethithe to complete the first successful tunnel ever to be built under a river.

It was the London spawned by the industrial revolution. Steam was all the rage, and myriad speculators racked their brains to find ways of profiting from its power.

385 Altick, 1989, p. 95.
Already it was being put to good use in short and medium distance steam navigation. 50 steam related enterprises were registered in London in 1824 and 1825. A further 37 new companies were projected in the same period. By the end of the decade, the promise of applying the power of steam to land locomotion appeared to be realised when a certain Mr. Gurney's “steam carriage” successfully completed a return journey to Bath. A satirical poem dreamed up the many possibilities for the uses of steam: steam hackney coaches, steam gallows, steam street-sweeps, steam powered writing and printing (the steam powered printing-press, invented in 1811, was already used in the production of newspapers, and its application for book printing was not far away). Even a government run by steam. This was the technology that British mining enthusiasts were hoping to apply to the silver mines of Mexico.

Politically, the decade was neatly inaugurated by the death of George III, in 1820, and closed by the death of George IV, in 1830. From a literary point of view, it was a period bracketed by the end of Byron’s literary career and the beginning of Dickens’, punctuated by the success of the Waverley novels. Painters like Turner and Constable haunted Hampstead Heath immortalising clouds and an idyllic rural England. Royal societies, places of meeting for the scientifically inclined, grew in number, until the creation of the Royal Geographic Society marked the end of the decade. In 1826 a bookseller had became Lord Mayor of London. Three years later books were at their highest price ever.

In the 1820s London was a focal point for Latin American rebels and exiles: obviously unable to look toward Spain or its allies for support, these creole patriots and politicians sought refuge, diplomatic recognition, and financial support in England instead. Bolívar, Bello, San Martín, Alamán—they all had a London stint, and were all, in turn, feted and taken into polite society. Never before had so many aspects of Mexican affairs been discussed so urgently among publishers and politicians, travellers and translators. The plight of the new nation aroused the interest of miners, stockbrokers, diplomats, journalists, writers and merchants. The leading liberal thinkers, John Mill and Jeremy Bentham, publicised their arguments in favour of Mexican independence. Britain’s poet laureate—a friend of the insurgents and rebels in London—was the same man who, some years before, had written an epic poem about the travails of a Welsh Prince among the Aztecs.

That the fate of the largest of Spain’s colonial possessions should cause interest is not surprising. After three centuries of Spanish rule, many felt Britain’s time

386 *The Times*, August 5, 1829.
387 Anon., “A vision of steam”, *The Times*, December 26, 1829.
388 Cf. Lynch (ed.).
had finally come to play its hand in the unrolling of events in Spanish America. Neither was the speculative bubble that followed—and promptly popped—surprising. What does surprise a modern commentator is the extent to which things Mexican seemed to be a matter of interest to such a wide range of people. Mexican antiquities made their debut in London. In 1824, the chirimoya, a new fruit “esteemed a more delicate fruit even than the pine-apple” was introduced from Mexico.369 Not until the very end of the nineteenth century would the British imagination ever be so caught up in Mexican matters. In all of this, literature of travel played no small role.

50 Albemarle St.
The essayist Charles Lamb referred to Albemarle Street—the thoroughfare running between Piccadilly and what was then Grafton Row—as John Murray Street.390 At number 50, the second John Murray had set up the company’s office in 1812, 46 years after his father started the publishing business at the sign of the ship, on Fleet Street. Here, then, the Murrays were the centre of editorial and literary activity in London’s West End. “My house is excellent” John Murray II wrote to one of his relatives; “and I transact all the departments of my business in an elegant library, which my drawing-room becomes during the morning; and there I am in the habit of seeing persons of the highest rank in literature and talent, such as Canning, Frere, Mackintosh, Southey, Campbell, Walter Scott, Madame de Staël, Gifford, Croker, Barrow, Lord Byron and others; thus leading a delightful life, with means of prosecuting my business with the highest honour and emolument.”391 At a time when literary-minded gentlemen had yet no Athæneum to convene at (the famous club did not open until 1823), the drawing room at 50 Albemarle Street was the meeting place for some of the day’s best informed minds, one of the hubs of London’s complex information network. It soon became legendary—the place where Scott and Byron had first met, the room where Byron’s memoirs had gone up in smoke.

During the summer of 1824, John Murray II must have wondered why references to the newly independent Mexico were so ubiquitous. Since January he had been getting wind of the publication of the Notes Written on the Coast of Chili, Peru and Mexico by his old acquaintance Basil Hall—a text Murray would have been given first refusal of had the author not been forced to winter in Edinburgh. In May he successfully published William Bullock’s book describing a residence of six months in Mexico. Meanwhile, Bullock’s Mexican exhibition at the Egyptian Hall, almost across the road from Murray’s Albemarle Street office, must have been hard to miss. By June,

369 The Times, 17 July, 1824.
Murray was ready to publish the translated memoirs of the disgraced Mexican emperor, who had spent his last months of exile in London and Bath. And in July, James Justinian Morier —Murray's best-selling author of *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*— was sent as part of His Majesty's mission to negotiate a treaty of recognition with Mexico. Ultimately, Murray appears to have fallen victim to the excitement that he himself had been instrumental in creating —by the end of the year, he had even been coaxed into buying shares in Mexican mining companies. Thus the year 1824 marked the beginning of a streak of editorial projects related to Mexico.

It was a landmark year in John Murray's career for other significant reasons — the year of the death of Lord Byron, his estranged friend and one of his strongest literary assets. Byron famously passed away at Missolonghi, Greece, on April 19th. Almost a month later, Murray —to the eternal chagrin of biographers and literary historians— found himself burning the unpublished manuscript of Byron's memoirs in his sitting room fireplace. Although the relationship between the two had cooled off somewhat in its later years, it seems fair to say that Murray's munificence had benefited Byron's career as much as the poet's name benefited Murray's business. The extraordinary figure of 10,000 copies sold of Byron's *Childe Harold, Canto IV* in 1818, at a time when a typical print run was around 750, is an indication of how successful the association was for both. Which is why it seems unkind of Byron to have chided his publisher for paying too much attention to travel accounts and naval chronicles:

> Tours, travels, essays too, I wist,  
> And sermons to thy mill bring grist,  
> And then thou hast the navy list, My Murray.

Murray's father, John Murray I, had in fact been appointed as publisher to the Admiralty, and naval publications had been part of the company's bread and butter ever since. Murray was certainly not the only publisher profiting from accounts of travel at the time, but he did seem to make the trade of travel books a speciality. The firm's inclination towards non-fiction was confirmed when in 1838 Murray sold the copyright to most of his poetry and all his novels —among them, unwisely in retrospect, those of Jane Austen —. Its reputation as a firm with a clear stake in the market for travel literature was cemented with the appearance, in 1836, of the first of the famous Murray Handbooks for travel.

---

391 Smiles, p. 266.
392 JMA, Production ledgers.
393 Besterman
394 Q. by Paston, p. 25.
Europeans guidebooks aside, Murray’s authors had covered most of the globe’s explored regions: Mungo Park’s *Travels in Africa*, which appeared in 1815, was still earning Murray a profit of £295.17.9 in 1824; the first edition of the successful *Sketches of Persian Life*, first published in 1827, ran to 1500 copies, as did the second edition of 1840, producing a combined profit of almost £400—not bad at a time when “out of all the books published... not more than one in fifty paid its expenses.” Even the North Pole was represented in the Murray catalogue by the narratives of Sir John Ross, Sir William Parry and George Francis Lyon —Lyon’s journal of the failed Arctic expedition, first published in May 1824, sold a total of 3750 copies.

Latin America was one region not covered by Murray’s titles until the 1820’s. But the pangs of independence that encouraged foreign political meddling and promised unbridled access to the new nations’ wealth ensured it was now brought to the public’s attention. In 1822 Murray published Martin Doblhoffer’s *An Account of the Abipones, an Equestrian People of Paraguay*, translated into English from the original Latin by Sara Coleridge —sister of the well known poet. Maria Graham, who even before embarking for South America was “on very intimate terms with Mr. and Mrs. Murray” — she was godmother to one of their daughters—published her *Residence in Chili* that same year, followed by her *Voyage to Brazil* in 1824. Captain Francis Head’s *Rough Notes Taken During some Rapid Journeys Across the Pampas* appeared in 1826; Joseph Andrews’ account of a *Journey from Buenos Ayres* was published in 1827.

Mexico appears to have first shown its face at the Albemarle Street publisher’s office in the form of a letter by William Bullock, dated December 1823. “I have just returned to England after spending six months in Mexico accompanied by my son who has made drawings of the most interesting subjects in the country”, it started. “By the favour and assistance of the Government I have collected and brought home a very interesting assemblage of Natural History in all its departments —Two fine cabinets of mineralogy, Antiques, Idols, Manuscripts, Maps and Drawings of the remarkable scenery and principal cities that have never yet been published. I have also”, Bullock continued, “the only map of the Ancient City of Mexico in existence being the one made for Cortez by order of Montezuma. I have also numerous notes on the present state of

---

395 J.M. Ledgers.
396 1st ed.: 1827, 1500 copies, profit: 249.7.6; 2nd ed. 1840, profit of 135.1.8, 1500 copies. J.M. Ledgers
398 1500 copies, 1st ed.; 1500, 2nd ed.; 750, 3rd ed. [J.M. Ledgers]
the country, its products, manufactures, trades." He then, matter-of-factly, pitched his book: "If you think it is a subject likely to interest the future in a publication I shall be glad to see you about it." As if to intimate that he was making Murray an offer he would be unwise to turn down, he prophesied: "To one it appears that Mexico will shortly be the object of a war in which England must take an active part already much [capital] is embarked in the mines of the country which I have no doubt will shortly be worked intensely by British machinery."

Murray most surely thought Bullock's ramblings "a subject likely to interest the future in a publication", and they appeared in May 1824 under the title *Six Months Residence in Mexico*. 1500 copies were printed, out of which 1167 were sold to "the trade" -200 alone to Longman, the rest to sundry other book-dealers. 11 copies went straight to the Stationers' Hall. The rest might have been sent off to reviewers or kept by the author himself for sale at his Mexican exhibition. The nominal value of each copy was 18s., although some were sold at the discounted price of 12s.10d. The cost of producing Bullock's book amounted to £893.8s.—including 62.19.10 for advertising—all of which Murray had recovered by June. The first Mexican venture was a moderate success. By June, Murray was dealing with a new one.

* 

Mexico's self-proclaimed Emperor, Agustín de Iturbide, banished and disgraced, arrived in England on the first day of 1824. He had previously spent six months in Italy, and at Livorno —perhaps already considering the possibility of a return to his country—had penned his memoirs of revolution and exile. The story of Iturbide's tragic return from England has been told time and again: ill-advised by those close to him, he projected a triumphal return to Mexico and sailed from Southampton on May 11. Unbeknown to him or his advisors, only a few days before a wary Mexican Congress had passed a law declaring Iturbide an outlaw, and ordering his execution the moment he set foot on Mexican territory.

A small item appeared in *The Times* on the very same day that news of Lord Byron's death (which had occurred almost a month before) was finally printed in London:

> Some foolish reports are in circulation that Iturbide, the late Emperor of Mexico, has secretly left England to head the Royalist Party which he was the principal

---

400 John Murray was not the only publisher to take an active interest in accounts of travel to Latin American countries at the time: others trading in tales of travel to Latin America were Rudolph Ackermann, the Company of Smith, Elder; Colburn & Bentley.

401 JMA, April 1823

402 JML.
means of overthrowing in that country!! The public have been so easily duped of late by intelligence relating to the new trans-Atlantic states, that the fabricators deem no device too gross or palpable. General Iturbide is, we understand, now at Bath, where he has recently been joined by his family from Italy.\textsuperscript{403}

In fact the “foolish reports” were right, and the sailing vessel Spring was already cruising the high seas with the former emperor aboard. Back in London, the traveller and writer Michael Joseph Quin\textsuperscript{404} was finishing his translation into English of Iturbide’s memoirs. Quin, a personal friend of Iturbide who had by then already written his own travelogue\textsuperscript{405}, commissioned John Murray to publish the translated version—no doubt hoping that its publication would coincide with the arrival of good news from the Imperial party back in Mexico. Another note in The Times informed readers about the impending publication.

We understand that General Iturbide, before leaving this country for America, had prepared for the publication a statement of the causes which led to his attainment of supreme power in Mexico, and of the events which preseeded, accompanied and followed his abdication. This work has been translated into English, and will appear in a week or ten days.\textsuperscript{406}

Emperor of Mexico appeared on June 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1824. Murray’s production ledgers record that 58 copies were commissioned and distributed among a handful of acquaintances of the former emperor—Mr. Quin (25 copies), Mathew Fletcher (who appears as owner of the copyright, 30 copies) and William Jacob (single copy), the three men to whom Iturbide had addressed his parting letter, plus a certain Mr. Griffin, a Reverend Morock and the Spanish rebel José Blanco White—one copy for each, the price of a copy being 12s.\textsuperscript{407}

John Murray’s next step into Mexican affairs was altogether a larger gamble. He was no longer just investing in a copyright or hoping for the success of a profit-sharing book scheme, but participating in the speculative frenzy spawned by the independence of the Latin American republics—a frenzy to which, by publishing accounts such as

---

\textsuperscript{403} The Times, May 15, 1824, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{404} Quin, a barrister at Lincoln’s Inn, had been a regular contributor to the widely subscribed Whig newspaper, London’s Morning Chronicle—with a circulation of 3,180 copies a day in 1822, it was second only to the Times, with 5,730 [Altick, 392]—for which he wrote on foreign policy matters. Together with El Español, edited by José Blanco White, the Morning Chronicle was from early on a strong advocate of independence for Spain’s American colonies. It was surely this enthusiasm for the Mexican rebels’ cause that later endeared him to Iturbide.
\textsuperscript{405} A Visit to Spain, 1823; Quin would later publish A Steam Voyage Down the Danube, 1835, and Steam Voyages Down the Seine, both published by John Murray.
\textsuperscript{406} The Times, May 24, 1824, p.2.
\textsuperscript{407} JM Ledger
Bullock’s, he had contributed in no small measure. Murray was drawn into it by the son of an old family friend: an ambitious, twenty-year-old, aspiring novelist – Benjamin Disraeli. It was the young Disraeli with whom Murray conceived the ill-fated project of starting a daily newspaper, *The Representative*, to rival the most subscribed publication of the day, *The Times*. A memorandum dated August 3, 1825 shows that shares in the new morning paper were to be distributed among Mr. Murray (one half of the share), Mr. Disraeli and Mr. John Diston Powles (one quarter each), under the proviso that it was to be “published by, and under the management of, Mr. Murray”.

The latter was the same Powles of the City brokers Messrs Hering, Graham & Powles, who in 1822 were in charge of issuing bonds for the first Colombian loan. One of Murray’s biographers has suggested that the relationship between Disraeli and Powles had begun when the former “had been doing some work for Mr. Powles, who was one of the leading lights of the South American markets.” In the end, the newspaper floundered and the partnership dissolved. But not before Murray had been spurred by Disraeli and Powles into trying his hand at speculation in Latin American stock options. A letter from Disraeli to Murray is revealing:

My dear Sir,

...It was a holiday at the Stock Exchange today in consequence of the decapitation of Charles I, but many speculators attended on the Royal Exchange & consequently some little business was done among the ... men.

A seller of Anglo-Mexican was not to be found.

I purchased your ten Columbian shares at 39—they rose afterwards; but tomorrow will be the day of action. I know the contractors are buying & shall have my broker early on the market. At the present the danger of speculating is turning into the difficulty of acting.

I shall communicate immediately that anything decisive happens & in the meantime in great haste am ever yours.

B.D.

Disraeli’s letter provides evidence that John Murray had bought—or at the very least was seeking to buy—shares in the company. This fact is perhaps better understood in

---

408 Smiles, p. 186; Paston, p. 18.
410 Paston, p. 18.
411 The excited atmosphere of the Latin American investment boom in the mid 1820's is extraordinarily described by Disraeli in his anonymous novel, *Vivian Gray*, published in 1826. He describes a dinner scene at the house of a Mr. Premium—who Dawson suggests was based on Powles [216]. At Mr. Premium's drawing room were gathered "members to the different embassies, or missions of the various Governments, to whose infant existence Premium is foster-father... In one part of the room was a naval officer, hot from the mines of Mexico, and lecturing eloquently on the passing of the cordillera... Here floated the latest anecdote of Bolivar... and then the perpetual babble about 'rising states' and 'new loans' and 'enlightened views' and 'juncture of the two oceans' and 'liberal principles' and 'steamboats to Mexico'... Everyone at Premium's looked full of some great plan, as if the fate of Empires was on his very breath."
the light of a number of pamphlets penned by Disraeli and published, on commission, by Murray. One, “Lawyers and legislators: or notes on the American Mining Companies”, appears in the ledgers as published in April 1825. “The Present State of Mexico”, to which was added a “Memoir” of the Mexican minister Lucas Alamán (Disraeli earned £10.10s for its translation), was entered in the ledgers on May 13th. By the time it appeared, Disraeli’s “Inquiry into the Plans, Progress and Policy of the American Mining Companies” was running into a third, revised edition. Disraeli offered to pay Murray £150 for the trouble of publishing his pamphlets—a sum that remained unpaid two years later.413

“The Present State of Mexico”, of which only 31 copies were printed, is nothing if not an open plea for British investment in the new republic. “Mexico is at this moment an object of intense interest to every Briton”, the reader is assured in the opening paragraphs.414 The same point is elaborated further on: “The ancient Kingdom of Montezuma is now an object of interest, not merely to the statesman, in relation to the abstract principles of government, but to every Briton, as connected with his most important interests.” 415 Disraeli was especially impressed by “the staple commodities of the country”: its precious metals.

We associate the idea of Mexican mines with the insignificant strata of Saxony, and in some instances with the silver streaks of Devon. But we may as well compare the river of the Amazons to the Embss or the Char. One single mine in Mexico has produced more metal than the whole district of Freiberg.416

Here, again, was Humboldt’s outdated and overly optimistic view of immense mineral wealth (it mustn’t be overlooked that Humboldt’s mining-related texts had been abridged by John Taylor, director of the Real del Monte Mining Company, and published by Longman the previous year). Here, too, was Bullock’s dubious experience decanted into yet another speculative effort. It was perhaps inevitable that Disraeli should have included a favourable word about the Anglo-Mexican Mining Association in which he and John Murray were buying shares: “This company also possesses a considerable number of most valuable mines, among them, the celebrated Valenciana; and continued advices have been received that their operations are proceeding with

412 Disraeli to Murray, JMA, January 31, 1825.
415 Ibid., p. 17.
416 Ibid., p. 41
great spirit and energy." In private, too, Disraeli was unequivocal: "On the Mexican mines I rest my sheet anchor," he wrote to his stockbroker.

Enthusiasm for mining ventures was short-lived, as is clear from another newspaper report printed later in 1825:

Yesterday was kept as a close holiday both at the Bank and the Stock Exchange. In the private bargains, which were of very limited extent, the prices indicated some improvement, and a greater degree of confidence in the shares of the Mexican Mining Companies, the late depression in which appears to have been owing to the misrepresentations of persons speculating for a fall in their value. It is now affirmed that during the alarm among the holders of shares in the Real del Monte Company, they were never actually sold at par, although offered so by persons who sought to produce a false impression of the state of the market, but that the lowest terms of any actual bargain were 501 premium. The same shares found ready purchasers yesterday at a premium of 1501. each; the Anglo-Mexican shares were at 27 1/2 to 30 premium; and those of the United Mexican Company at 10 to 11 premium.

The caution in the wording of the Times' report seems to have anticipated the panic that rocked the City in December 1825. Exactly when or why John Murray stopped speculating in Latin American mining shares is hard to tell. Private correspondence and newspaper reports indicate that shareholders were growing increasingly annoyed with the directors of the various mining companies. Murray was also being alerted to the pitfalls of the enterprise by close acquaintances. Basil Hall was altogether skeptical about such ventures. "I have no opinion of those mining speculations" he confided, "but the best opinion of the So. American Govt. Securities—my reasons are too long to plague you with." Disraeli himself lost over £2500 in speculative investment. By 1826—at which time the shares in mining companies such as the Anglo-Mexican were deemed "positively unsaleable"—Murray had also published Captain Head’s account of travel in Argentina, and his report on the disastrous mining ventures he was sent to supervise. As the outcome of Murray’s next Mexican projects showed, the interest in the new American countries was waning—and so the market for accounts of travel to Mexico seems to have found its natural limit.

George Francis Lyon, Captain in the Royal Navy, had a long standing relationship with the firm of John Murray when he submitted his manuscript to John Murray. In the early

---

417 Ibid., p. 45.
418 Disraeli Letters, q. by Dawson.
419 The Times, 2 November, 1825.
420 Hall to Murray, 16 April 1825.
421 Dawson, p. 105.
422 Humphreys, p. 155.
twenties, at a time when the two major geographical endeavours were the charting of interior Africa and the exploration of the Arctic, Lyon could claim to have played a minor role in both. He had traipsed about Tripoli and Fezzan in full Muslim disguise, known to all as Said Ben abd Allah, trying to find the source of the Niger. His adventures and observations were duly recorded in A Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa in the years 1818, 19 and 20 —John Murray, publisher. In 1821, aching for promotion in the Navy, Lyon was ordered to join the Admiralty’s latest mission of Arctic exploration. His Private Journal During the Recent Voyage of Discovery under Captain Parry was published by Murray in May 1824, and quickly ran through three editions. A Brief Narrative of an Unsuccessful Attempt to Reach Repulse Bay, the account of the disastrous expedition which he captained himself, appeared in 1825, a few months after Lyon’s return. Lyon was positive that his services would be recognised, but frustrated by the Admiralty’s cool reception. “I say that we have found the magnetic pole—but this entrem nous, until my observations are laid before the Board of Longitude”, he wrote to Henry Bayntun, his “earliest and kindest patron”. For his troubles, Lyon was made an honorary doctor of law at Oxford. “I was honoured in presence of 2 or 3000 persons by receiving the degree of D.C.L. [...]”, he wrote to Bayntun. “It was a proud and flattering thing for me, and as unexpected as undeserved.” John Barrow, Murray’s trusted advisor on the matter of travel accounts—but also the man who, as Second Secretary to the Admiralty was responsible for sending Lyon on his mission—was less tolerant of Lyon’s “failure”. And so Lyon remained a half-pay officer, but all significant chances of furthering his career in the Navy seemed to have disappeared.

It is at this stage that a penniless Lyon was invited to go to Mexico. His letter of May 3rd 1825 to Henry Bayntun reveals he had serious misgivings, but felt compelled to accept out of necessity.

My dear Sir,

...About 5 weeks ago I was induced to propose myself to the Real del Monte company as a commissioner for assisting in the management of their affairs in Mexico, and, as I had no prospect of receiving employment or any other favour from Lord Melville, whose benefits are in most cases understood to be “qui pro quo,” I was naturally anxious for a favourable answer to my request. None however could immediately be given; but Mr. John Taylor who is extensively concerned in the mining interests of Cornwall, invited me to join him on the following morning and make a tour with him to the mines, in order that at all events I might gain some insight into their general economy. Off we went, & remained a month, and a few days since my service was accepted in the most handsome manner, and I am preparing as speedily as possible to set our for

423 1500 copies, 1st. ed.; 1500, 2nd. ed.; 750, 3rd. ed. Ledgers, JMA
424 Lyon to Bayntun, 15 November, 1824, SAR.
425 Lyon to Bayntun, 19 June 1825, SAR.
Mexico, where it will be decided upon examination and consultation with those already out, which particular mine, of the principal ones belonging to the company, shall be [assigned] to me.\textsuperscript{428}

Why John Taylor, director of the Real del Monte Mining Company since its creation in 1824, chose Lyon to be an on-site inspector of the company’s Mexican mines is not apparent. There is one likely connection. John’s brother, Philip Taylor, was at the time director of the Thames Tunnel Company—the company in charge of excavating the first tunnel ever dug under a river, soon to connect Wapping and Rotherhithe. The engineer behind the great tunnel project was Marc Brunel, son of the famous Isambard Kingdom Brunel. We know from one of his letters to Henry Bayntun, dated March 3\textsuperscript{rd} 1825, that Lyon had direct knowledge of the Thames Tunnel project around the time when he was invited by John Taylor to join the mining company. "I yesterday had the pleasure of passing the day at a meeting to lay the foundation stone of the Thames Tunnel, and such is the clearness and simplicity of Brunel’s principle that I think it cannot fail" he confided, before sketching for his correspondent a section of the projected tunnel.\textsuperscript{427}

Lyon was particularly concerned about the consequences that the acceptance of his new position would have for his naval career, but was assured “that I ought to accept the appointment, that the admiralty have nothing so good to offer me, ... and also that I shall in no way injure myself professionally by this step”. There were weighty arguments pushing him to accept the offer.

My reasons for it are these—I have not one farthing in the world but my half pay—I feel that I can never expect a ship while a Lord or a Scot wants one, and I have had more than one convincing proof, that it is no merit with my Lord that I have had more bumps & knocks, starvings, roastings & […] than many of the silken swans whose papas or mamas […] benefit him.\textsuperscript{428} I have toiled, heaven knows how zealously, to secure myself notice & employment. I sank my bark in my last expedition & spent my uttermost farthing in my outfit. Who thanks me? All, but those for whose patronage I have worked. Well, be it so. I do not have them in spite, but I must, as a duty, attempt to provide better for myself & family, and I feel my mind and energies of too much worth (to myself) to be shut up in a London lodging. I fear that you who have much true & proper esprit du corps will think I lower myself—but you must put yourself in my situation, & then judge me—for I too love my profession, which I do not forsake. I shall receive £1000 p. annum, & am fitted out by the company. Proper and scientific men will be sent under me, and all that I am required to contribute, is probity, and the manners &

\textsuperscript{426} Lyon to Bayntun, 3 May, 1825, SAR.
\textsuperscript{427} Lyon to Bayntun, March 3, 1825, SAR.
\textsuperscript{428} Resentment towards younger and more privileged officers is evident elsewhere in Lyon’s correspondence. See, for instance, this other passage of a letter to Bayntun: “these very young men accosted me thus a few days since, with much wit, and an equal quantum of sense. "D— your blood, Lyon, why do you quit your profession, hey?" To which, without being as settled as I am while I write it, " replied "D— your blood, because you were born with a gold spoon in your mouth, while I have best a horn ladle" which he thought very funny indeed.' [Lyon to Bayntun, June 19, 1825]
conduct of a gentleman – In fact I shall be a little bit of a governor... Believe me most faithfully & affectionately yours,
George Lyon.  

It is clear that the lot of a travel writer was seen as unworthy of a naval officer. But Lyon, in no way a stranger to the benefits that might be reaped from the exploration of uncharted territory, had something to look forward to. His letter dated June 19th is not without a touch of optimism.

And now for Mexico. I should have started long since, but that the yellow fever and black vomit now prevail and will do so until October. I therefore go in September to Vera Cruz I believe & thence to Mexico and Real del Monte, and then to Bolaños about 350 miles from Mexico, and 30 miles n. of the Rio Grande... Very few persons will accompany me now, as many are already out in the country who will join me there. Nothing can be more exquisite than the country round my mines. Although the climate is very hot, it is perfectly healthy.

But above all I must rejoice in it never having been sighted but by one party of English, and never having been described by any person. I have a circle of some hundred miles, of which the natural history, profile and antiquities are only known from the report of the Indians. So you may imagine how agreeably I shall be occupied.

In the same letter Lyon makes an amazing confession, the veracity of which seems impossible to confirm or refute. Its truthfulness would make Lyon a potentially significant character in the history of Anglo-Mexican relations – and indeed of Mexican history. Were it a spurious claim, made in an attempt to satisfy a need for self importance, it would place Lyon in the realm of great historical fantasists.

Do not mention what I am going to tell you, & which I merely write as a private proof to you, that I do respect my own profession. I have been consulted as to whether I would accept the entire command of the Mexican navy, with 1 ship of the [...] 3 frigates and several small vessels on a salary of 3000 per annum — my treble found — along with... various advantages besides. I refused — although but one of the Admiralty is aware of the fact, & he under promise of secrecy. An attack on Cuba would make my fortune. All my officers & most of my men would be English, & I might acquire that reputation as a seaman which now I can never hope to enjoy. So be it.  

By August, Lyon was preparing for the journey. “Yesterday’s time was entirely occupied in overhauling a neat little brig of 170 tons which my good masters have purchased for

---

429 Lyon to Bayntun, May 3, 1825, SAR.
430 Lyon to Bayntun, June 19, 1825, SAR. On the outside, the letter is marked “Secret”. Lyon’s claim is not as unlikely as it may appear at first if one considers the case of Lord Cochrane, who had left the Royal Navy in disgrace and later hired himself out to aid the independence processes of several South American republics. Another similar but less fortunate case is reported by Chamier: “When that unfortunate man, Captain Sydney Smith, so foolishly relinquished our service, to enlist under the tricolor rag of Mexico for the allurement of gain, and was by this act, in conformity with the Foreign Enlistment Bill, erased from the list of Captains,
the purpose of taking our own party, or more properly, a portion of it, he informed. “She is a famous craft, but rather small, and we are docking, [...] and fitting her in a great hurry —Although there seems a great probability that I may not leave England before the end of October —which will be rather a blowing season —but this cannot be helped.” His following letter to Bayntun offered the unexpected news of his marriage to the daughter of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Although this required a minor adjustment in Lyon’s original three-year plan, he was still prepared to carry on with the journey: “...we go to Mexico for a year. My wife is one of those affectionate creatures who will follow me all over the world, and I do not in any way anticipate that she will ever be in the way... We are to sail towards the end of October, and, with the exception of abundance of cock roaches, our vessel is full of comforts.” Lyon did not leave until January 8th, 1826, aboard the brig Perseverance. He was unaccompanied. “You will have heard, I am sorry to say, from others,” he wrote later, already in Mexico, “that my wife was at sea with me eleven days, but suffered so severely that I determined on leaving her behind & proceeding alone on my mining projects.”

Lyon’s first letter from Mexico to his editor in London was positively not about his travels. It was about bad press. More than three thousand miles from home, on the barren plains of the mine of Veta Grande in the northern state of Zacatecas, Lyon’s thoughts hovered over a book recently published in London: Captain William Nugent Glascock’s Naval Sketch Book. In one of its chapters, “Leaves from a log”, the famous naval author made light of the misfortunes that had cost Lyon his career, and mocked his honorary Oxford degree.

“London, H.P. June 18th, 5:30... Weather oppressively hot —blood boiling— Thought freezing the mind might cool the body—sent to circulating library for ‘polar voyages’—Messenger returned with L____’s last—Prosed over pages of misfortunes, marvellous miracles, thin-ribbed dogs and ‘thick-ribbed ice’—Mem. Admired plate No. 5, viz. two craniological wolves discussing an esquimaux skull. —Pondered on the wild spread of philosophy— Imagined myself in fine reverie—startled by spectre—Post-Captain in full uniform metamorphosed into “Doctor of Law”—black gown with pudding sleeves over swabs—wig full bottomed.—Smelt powder—No wonder! Laughed aloud that roused and found candle in right whisker.—Read another page.—Thought Dr. eminent in prose— Sleep again promoted.”

Lyon was fuming. “My dear Sir,” he wrote to John Murray:

and deprived of the benefits of a British subject abroad, he little dreamed of the desperate stake he was about to play...” [pp. 307 f.]

431 Lyon to Bayntun, August 25, 1825, SAR.
432 Lyon to Bayntun, September 18, 1825, SAR.
433 Lyon to Bayntun, September 10, 1826, SAR.
434 Glascock, pp. 187 f.
A blowing rainy [day] in these Mexican mountains has reminded me somehow of those of the sea, and by a very easy transition my thoughts have turned to my friend Captain Glascoock whose book I received two days since from himself. 

... I have read over all the civil things he has said of me, and his extremely witty remarks on the honours which the University of Oxford conferred upon me, and of which I am very, very proud. Had "pudding sleeves and a black gown" been put over his uniform, the lovers of naval witticisms would never have been treated with the naval sketch book and would have gone down in ignorance...

As you are a fellow sufferer from this witty man, it may not be amiss to inform you that some of the paragraphs which attack the Quarterly, may no more be his own writing than those which give me such a trimming, for I know, & Captain G. cannot deny it, that the review of my journal was not written by himself. The gentleman who wrote it is not even a sailor, I believe, or if he is so, he let out a hint now and then that he knows very little of his profession – perhaps the article was contributed by the "officer of rank".... I am assured "no personal feeling towards me has dictated the whippings I have received" as a very [...] author, but Captain G. can only speak for himself if he had written the article which some of my friends have objected to, and then assured me that "personality in the remotest disguise" was not his intention I should have believed him, for in a long acquaintance I have ... found him to be a gentleman, and...I have imagined him to be my friend. ...

I write this to you my dear sir, because I think that something should be said by me, and if at your library table anyone does your [...] friend the honour to name him, pray read them some part or all of this letter. 436

It is illuminating that Lyon expected his defense to become public via John Murray's sitting room, rather than a newspaper or a journal such as the Quarterly. The next letter to Murray is dated three months later. Still in Mexico, Lyon was already making plans for his return to England in order to bring his wife to live with him at the Mexican mines.

The anecdotes of Lyon's time in Mexico are better told by the Journal. Its conspicuously cantankerous tone is not much different from the one the author had used in his letters. "We have been sadly deceived in many respects about this land of liberty which falls very, very lamentably short of what I expected to find it" John Murray read in another letter. "I came to this country full of feeling for the patriots & their liberty, but I have long since ceased to interest myself about them, for they neither know what liberty, laws or religions are, or deserve them. I shall perhaps find things better in Mexico [City], from whence all our ideas of the Republic are drawn in England, but I might as reasonably describe the picturesque, moral, legal & other beauties of Cornwall by a trip to Greenwich Park, as give an idea of Mexico from the rolling in a carriage to the Capital from Vera Cruz. I wish that some of our men of talent could be persuaded to come to the northwestern states, they would find much interest in their

435 The Quarterly Review, the literary journal published by Murray had, in recent numbers, reviewed the written accounts of the latest failed attempts to discover the elusive North West Passage. Glascoock mocked the magazine's reviewers, its editors and the authors of the accounts.
436 Lyon to Murray, July 11, 1826.
journey and the good people at home would learn what ilk of savages ‘The True, Enlightened & Independent Sons of Anahuac’ are.” His final return was not a happy one: his ship—the Panthea—was wrecked off the coast of Holyhead, causing the loss of many of Lyon’s documents and possessions; he made his way back to London, only to discover that his wife had recently passed away.

Correspondence between Lyon and Murray in the aftermath of the voyage tells us much about the process whereby a raw travel journal was turned into a published product. On January 18th, 1827, Lyon managed to recover his journal from the wreck of the Panthea. Less than two months later, he was already negotiating an agreement for its publication with John Murray. There is a hint that Murray was offering Lyon some help—useful, perhaps, in polishing the manuscript journal.

My Dear Sir,
In returning to you the books relative to Mexico, pray accept my best thanks for your having procured the loan of them for me.
...I will send you this evening a few sheets of my journal—about one fourth of what I have to present for your journal—The other shall be with you, if possible tomorrow, as the [parts in] relation to the mines are undergoing a little scrutiny by one of my friends.
Believe me,
Yours truly,
George Lyon.438

There was little doubt that Lyon was already familiar with Bullock at the time of—he had seen the Egyptian Hall exhibition, and throughout his own account seemed intent on revealing Bullock’s many impostures—the two had even met at a dinner party at the British legation in Mexico City. Lyon had most definitely read Basil Hall’s account of Mexico—letters to both Murray and Bayntun make some reference to his meeting the same Huichol indians that Hall had encountered at Tepic (his letter to Murray was actually sent alongside a Huichol set of bow and arrows which Lyon presented as a gift to his editor). He could hardly have been unacquainted with Humboldt or his work—in fact it is likely that Lyon had personally met the notorious geographer in Paris.439 As for the rest of the bibliographical references helpfully provided in his book—Cortés, Clavijero, de Solís, Bustamante, Robinson, Wafer (of whom he is “reminded” when he comes a cross a blue-tailed lizard)—one is tempted to assume that most were brought to Lyon’s attention after his journey, and only then were the appropriate references worked into the manuscript. It was a fitful editing process, in which Murray’s opinion counted as much as those of Lyon’s employers.

437 Lyon to Murray, September 10, 1826.
438 Lyon to Murray, March 1827.
My Dear Sir,

This is the last parcel of the narrative part. The appendix, with a short commentary on the habits of the people, agriculture &c will amount to rather more than I now send. In addition to which there are some pages on the amalgamation of silver. There is much to comment, so pray send me such sheets as you have read, that I may put them in order as soon as possible, for my time is very short...

Believe me, truly yours,
George Lyon. 440

That the journal was published with an eye on the mine-related public is evinced by Lyon’s decision to include an appendix about mining, as well as a glossary. “The whole of the appendix is ready”, he informed in another postscript, “but is still with my mining friends. I hope to send it to you tomorrow. There is an extensive glossary of mining terms which will be useful as but few of those mentioned in the correspondence of the mining companies are understood by share holders.” 441

A minor incident shows how anxious Lyon was to have the Real del Monte Company’s approval before publication. It appears that Murray was, uncharacteristically, jumping ahead of his author’s decisions. Lyon wrote:

My Dear Sir,

My brother will call on you for such parts of my journal as you have read, since it… requires much correction, with some important additions also, before I offer it to you. I am sorry that you sent away any of it to the Printer, as we have not yet come to any arrangement about it, and I am now so hard pressed for time that it is requisite that all this should be settled before Saturday next, since on Monday I leave London. I would come to you about this, but am obliged to go to the City, & am bending half crazy with a cold.

Should you not have time to arrange with me in this my hurried week, I leave the journal to the disposition of my friends Mr. Locke, Mr. C. Stokes & Mr. Taylor, my principal friends in the Real del Monte Company, who are anxious that it should soon appear. Mr. Stokes will kindly [contact] the [press], as we have read over the greater part of the [manuscript] together, and he knows all my ideas about Mexico.

Mr. Lane having been out of town, I am not aware if you have yet given him your answer about the drawings, which I propose leaving in his hands. Pray oblige me by an answer about his, as we have now lost one month in uncertainty, and some publishers are anxious to have the plates, about which, until your decision is known, we cannot give any answer. Pray remember that I close all business on Saturday, & oblige me by devoting 10 minutes to answering me on these points. Since, should we not agree about these matters (which I trust we shall) my friends will then be prepared to […] both the journal and drawings from me, and they then will take measures for their publication. Excuse this long letter, and believe me Dear Sir,

Truly Yours

439 "J'entends que Capt. Lyon que j'ai vu ici va dire [son] depart aux glaces du pole…".
Humboldt to Murray, Paris, June 7, 1821.
440 Lyon to Murray, April 9, 1827.
441 Ibid.
George Lyon.\textsuperscript{442}

Only a couple of days later an agreement was reached. John Murray paid Lyon £400 for the book’s copyright—a modest sum, admittedly, but not an unusual one for the less known authors. It appears that at the time any agreement would have suited a somewhat pressed Lyon.

My Dear sir

... I accept your proposition with pleasure, and am occupying every spare moment in making the journal more perfect. Your proposal of bill at 6 & 9 months would at any other time be of little importance, but I should much wish, if you could make it convenient that you should let me have some portion of money now, as I have some heavy bills to pay, & hoped to have liquidated them by the sale of my book. If therefore you could let me have 100 now, and the same sum in a 30 day bill, it would be conferring a great favour on me & prevent my leaving England in debt to tradesmen. The other 200 could stand over for 9 months. Pray let me know what you think of this. ...What are we to call this same book? Upon my word I know not.\textsuperscript{443}

Some discussion about the book’s title followed. “What think you of this title for the book”, Lyon asked: “The Journal of a Tour Through Several of the States of the Mexican Republic”—by Captn. G.F.Lyon, Hon. D.C.L. Oxford.” The author seemed as keen to emphasize his honorary degree as to suggest that he had visited and described a little known part of Mexico. It was important, however, not to overstate the claim.

I know not if we can say “the least frequented” —as English companies are established in the states through which I travelled.

Can we say “Journal of a tour through some of the northern states &c” which will imply least frequented since no one has written one word about them from actual observation. The Baron de Humboldt writes on the information of others, as regards the states of Tamaulipas (Tampico), San Luis Potosi, Zacatecas and Guadalaxara, 4 important states which I passed through. He himself saw the States of Valladolid, Mexico & Vera Cruz, through which I also travelled.\textsuperscript{444}

So it was that the two essential requirements of autopsy—seeing with one’s own eyes—and novelty—describing something before anyone else did—were negotiated in the choosing of a book title. When Lyon’s two volumes finally appeared, the accepted title said less about the author’s qualifications or about his originality than about their actual content. It was, quite simply, the \textit{Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico in the Year 1826, with some account of the mines of that country}, by Capt. George Francis Lyon. The copyright cost John Murray £400. Murray spent a

\textsuperscript{442} Lyon to Murray, April 10, 1827.

\textsuperscript{443} Lyon to Murray, April 12, 1827.

\textsuperscript{444} Lyon to Murray, April 19, 1827.
George Lyon.442

Only a couple of days later an agreement was reached. John Murray paid Lyon £400 for the book's copyright—a modest sum, admittedly, but not an unusual one for the less known authors. It appears that at the time any agreement would have suited a somewhat pressed Lyon.

My Dear sir

...I accept your proposition with pleasure, and am occupying every spare moment in making the journal more perfect. Your proposal of bill at 6 & 9 months would at any other time be of little importance, but I should much wish, if you could make it convenient that you should let me have some portion of money now, as I have some heavy bills to pay, & hoped to have liquidated them by the sale of my book. If therefore you could let me have 100 now, and the same sum in a 30 day bill, it would be conferring a great favour on me & prevent my leaving England in debt to tradesmen. The other 200 could stand over for 9 months. Pray let me know what you think of this. ...What are we to call this same book? Upon my word I know not.443

Some discussion about the book's title followed. "What think you of this title for the book", Lyon asked: "The Journal of a Tour Through Several of the States of the Mexican Republic"—by Capt. G.F.Lyon, Hon. D.C.L. Oxford." The author seemed as keen to emphasize his honorary degree as to suggest that he had visited and described a little known part of Mexico. It was important, however, not to overstate the claim.

I know not if we can say "the least frequented" —as English companies are established in the states through which I travelled.

Can we say "Journal of a tour through some of the northern states &c" which will imply least frequented since no one has written one word about them from actual observation. The Baron de Humboldt writes on the information of others, as regards the states of Tamaulipas (Tampico), San Luis Potosi, Zacatecas and Guadalaxara, 4 important states which I passed through. He himself saw the States of Valladolid, Mexico & Vera Cruz, through which I also travelled."444

So it was that the two essential requirements of autopsy —seeing with one's own eyes— and novelty —describing something before anyone else did—were negotiated in the choosing of a book title. When Lyon's two volumes finally appeared, the accepted title said less about the author's qualifications or about his originality than about their actual content. It was, quite simply, the Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico in the Year 1826, with some account of the mines of that country, by Capt. George Francis Lyon. The copyright cost John Murray £400. Murray spent a

442 Lyon to Murray, April 10, 1827.
443 Lyon to Murray, April 12, 1827.
444 Lyon to Murray, April 19, 1827.
further £56.9s.6d on advertising. Two thousand copies were printed. The ledgers indicate quite succinctly that “all copies [were] sold”. Meanwhile, other books on Mexico—notably a new edition of William Bullocks *Six Months’ Residence*—were not doing as well.

* 

If, as I will argue later, the relative success of Lyon’s book determined the absolute failure of a second edition of Bullock’s by testing the limit of a readership with an interest in Mexico, it also meant that new texts concerning the area had to be thoroughly refashioned in order to be saleable. In some cases, this meant dropping the Mexican content altogether. Alexander Thompson’s *Narrative of an Official Visit to Guatemala from Mexico*, as published by Murray in February of 1829, was just that: the description of a voyage from Mexico, through Belize and into Guatemala—at the time the name for the confederation of Central American Republics. Thompson’s original text, however, was much more than that.

In October 1823, with little previous diplomatic experience—he worked in the Foreign Office’s Audit Department—Thompson had been appointed Secretary to H.M. Mission to Mexico. He had been offered an initial allowance of £200 for his equipment, and an annual salary of £500 as long as he acted as Secretary to the Commission. Unlike others in the Commission, Thompson knew the language well (having translated five volumes of Antonio de Alcedo’s *Geographical and historical dictionary of America and the West Indies* in 1812), a skill which would allow him to be “that most valuable of junior members of a diplomatic mission, one who could blend with the locals, be liked by them and gather useful information.” After a residence of eighteen months in Mexico, shortly before his planned return to England, he was sent to Guatemala “with directions to collect detailed intelligence respecting the present state of that country”.

In the same Commission as Thompson was Henry George Ward, the legation’s secretary in Mexico City—later to become his country’s first chargé d’affaires. Ward’s authoritative book, *Mexico*—a Humboldtian collection of economic and commercial statistics, followed by a second volume containing his personal narrative—had been published in 1829 by the recently formed partnership of Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, whose New Burlington Street offices were barely a shout away from John

---

446 Foreign Office letter to Thompson, October 10, 1823. I am grateful to Maggs Booksellers for allowing me to see this letter and the unpublished proofs of Thompson’s Mexican diary.
448 FO dispatch, quoted in *ibid.*
Murray's. In October of that same year, yet another Mexican book—this one by R.W.H. Hardy, Lieutenant of the Royal Navy, commissioner to Mexico on behalf of the General Pearl and Coral Fishery Association of London—appeared: *Travels in the Interior of Mexico, in 1825, 1826, 1827 & 1828*, also published by Colburn & Bentley⁴⁴⁹, and sold at 16s.⁴⁵⁰ Ward and Hardy's paths had, in fact, crossed a number of times while in Mexico—a fact recorded by Ward's mention of his countryman's pearl-fishing endeavors, and by Hardy's gratefulness for Ward's hospitality.

1829, then, might have been another auspicious year for books with tales of travel through the Mexican badlands. George Thompson had undertaken the writing of such a book. To the joyless account of the travails of the British Commissioners as told by Ward, Thompson had added a myriad of personal details. The effect of the death of the Plenipotentiary Minister's spaniel, for instance, was narrated with the same attention as the legation's English butler's shocked impotence when faced with thieving employees. Thompson did not feel Ward's compunction in revealing unsavory aspects of the host country and its inhabitants.⁴⁵¹ Neither, however, did he hesitate to point out some of the Commission's cultural gaffes among the Mexicans. His account is the only available first hand description of the great lengths the Commissioners went to in order to entertain and please the local elites—it was precisely over the issue of excessive expenditure for social purposes that Ward would later be unceremoniously dismissed. When it came to explaining that few Mexicans attended the Commission's first balls,

---

⁴⁴⁹ The partnership of Colburn & Bentley was officially formed in September 1829. The first entry in their production ledgers for that year is James Fenimore Cooper's *The Borderers*, published on September 29 [Bentley Papers, BL]. Unlike Hardy's book, Ward's does not appear in the year's ledgers. The publisher's information tell us that it was, in fact, published by Henry Colburn and printed by Richard Bentley—further proof that it was produced before September, when the Colburn & Bentley partnership came into being. When exactly Ward's book was published, however, is difficult to say due to lack of further information.

⁴⁵⁰ Sold to subscribers for 12s, and on offer at 11s. The number of copies is not stated, although we know that 402 went to "the trade". [Bentley Papers, BL]

⁴⁵¹ "With regard to the general tone of my work, which will be found to differ materially from that adopted by some recent publications, I shall make no apology for this want of coincidence between my views and those of my predecessors. I have met with much kindness in Mexico, and should be sorry to think that this kindness emanated entirely from my public situation, which was an advantage only in as far as it brought me into contact with the natives. Upon this my opinions of their character are to be founded. To write either a satire upon human nature in general, or a criticism upon those peculiarities of manner, in which foreigners differ from ourselves, was not my object. The first I could have accomplished without leaving home; and had my happiness depended upon the second, I should have been a very miserable man during fourteen years of my life, nearly the whole of which I have passed abroad. I Confess, therefore, that it has been my pleasure to dwell rather upon the good, than the bad, and to separate the valuable parts of the national character from the scum, and dross, which a long period of misrule, followed by the total dissolution of all social ties, could hardly fail to bring to the surface. If I have succeeded in this attempt, my reward will consist in the gratification of thinking that the labours of the last six months may have some tendency to confirm that good understanding between Great Britain and Mexico, which, during the two preceding years, it was my anxious wish to promote" [Ward, vol. I, pp. xii-xiii]
not out of political considerations (which Thompson had believed to be the case) but because the Mexican ladies had pawned their jewels to survive through bad times, his petite histoire was poignantly telling of the state of Mexico after its independence. Much can be learnt about assumed social customs—both Mexican and British—from passages such as the following:

When the ball was at its height, just before supper, I discovered that many of the ladies seemed out of spirits and a little drooping, as if they wanted refreshments; but as plenty of these had been handed about, I was puzzled to think what it was that made them appear so dull;—when the Marquesa of C___a, with whom I had just been waltzing, whispering in my ear, unraveled the mystery. As it was our object to comply with the customs of the country, I was glad to find out the cause of the temporary dejection which prevailed, and in which it was evident she was participating. “You, señors, seldom smoke, I believe,” said she, “though you, señor”, she continued, with a flattering smile, “I know, have that good taste.” I immediately insisted on conducting her into the circular gallery, where she might, unobserved, indulge herself, under my protection, in what she wished, but which she was apprehensive might be thought irregular in the house of the British Commission.

Some young officers, at the gallery door, had been standing in a group, whiffing off the phlegmatic notions which had doubtlessly helped to induce them to take up so unsociable a location. My partner was revived by the smoke as we passed, as were the other ladies to whom she had whispered my kind of proffer of cigars, and who eagerly availed themselves of the opportunity. At the other end of the gallery, which was 100 feet across, was a large transparency, forty feet high and twenty wide, on which were represented the arms of His Britannic Majesty, with the initials G.R. well designed with coloured lamps, by a French artist. Behind the screen, the young Marquesa with her suite, which had already amounted to at least a dozen of her fair companions, struck a light; and each of them took a few comforting whiffs of some small paper cigars which they carried in their bosoms. I took one from each as they were obligingly and successively offered to me, though they were, of course, more than I could manage; and having thus performed by stealth, which enhances even the most innocent enjoyment, the operation on which we had been bent, we proceeded in high spirits to join the company in the ball room.452

Why, then, when Thompson's book finally appeared in print, was all the text related to Mexico left out? The first seven chapters of his manuscript were eliminated altogether, leaving only the parts dealing with the expedition to Guatemala. Because the print-proofs of the unpublished chapters still exist, we know that the decision of leaving them out was taken at a late stage. The proofs had even been corrected by hand, presumably by the author himself: “explain ‘norte’”, was one of the notes scrawled in the margin alongside the passage which describes the furious gales that so terrorised seamen in the Gulf of Mexico. The chapters on Mexico are neither politically sensitive nor personally offensive to any of the characters they mention. In any case,

452 Thompson, unpublished proofs, pp. 79-81.
the fact that they had reached such an advanced production stage suggests that they were meant to be published irrespective of their content.

The decision to exclude such material could only have been made by John Murray himself. Until further evidence can be found\textsuperscript{453}, there seems to be only one plausible explanation: Murray must have sensed that the law of diminishing returns was now applied to books regarding this particular corner of the world. With Ward’s book published—or about to be published?—the material related to the Commission’s work in Mexico would have inevitably overlapped and repeated itself. Murray was perhaps too experienced an editor to overlook the fact that the success of these accounts of travel depended almost entirely on the novelty factor. And Mexico was no longer a novelty. Guatemala, on the other hand, was. So Thompson’s book became something it was not originally meant to be. It would be over twenty years before the firm of John Murray published its next book about Mexico.

\textbf{49 \& 106 Pall Mall}

When Nathaniel Winkle, Augustus Snodgrass, Tracy Tupman and “the immortal” Samuel Pickwick were appointed members of The Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club, they were requested “to forward, from time to time, authenticated accounts of their journeys and investigations”. The ensuing debate among those who “had volunteered to share the perils of [Pickwick’s] travels, and who were destined to participate in the glories of his discoveries” had —according to that most celebrated “editor” of the Club’s “Transactions”—a “strong affinity to the discussions of other celebrated bodies”. The date, if one wishes to believe in such fictions, was May 12, 1827.

It is no accident that Charles Dickens’ first novel, The Pickwick Papers, is referred to as “the most famous of all pre-Victorian novels”\textsuperscript{454}. In the increasingly popular episodes that followed the first instalment, Dickens successfully captured many of the foibles and idiosyncrasies of late Georgian London —not least the rediscovered passion for travel. Although the reading of Samuel Pickwick’s paper —“Speculations on the Source of the Hampstead Ponds, with some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats”, heard by fellow Pickwickians with “unmingled satisfaction, and unqualified approval”—is reminiscent of the grand lectures offered at the many scientific Royal Societies of the time, the disposition of Dickens’ characters reminds one more

\textsuperscript{453} Sadly, correspondence between Murray and Thompson, if there was any, was not kept in the archives of John Murray Publishers.

immediately of the many gentlemen’s clubs dotting London’s West End. Among the new ones, in the 1820’s, was The Travellers Club.

Founded in 1819, when the end of the Napoleonic Wars allowed for a freedom of travel through the continent not enjoyed since the heyday of the Grand Tour, the Travellers Club was meant to be a non-political meeting place for gentlemen who had in common the experience of having been abroad. The Club’s first committee chose as its emblem a profile of the greatest of all travellers, Odysseus. Item six of the Club’s “Rules and Regulations” was unequivocal about the main condition for ordinary membership—that “no person be considered eligible to the Travellers Club, who shall not have travelled out of the British Islands, to a distance of at least five hundred miles from London in a direct line.” To prove their eligibility, prospective members were made to sign a form in which they stated what places they had visited, and to which were added the signatures of the candidates’ supporters. A few years later, a small scandal ensued when it was discovered that some of the members had not, in fact, travelled the statutory 500 miles—prompting newspapers to publish lists of places which would allow candidates to qualify.

To be sure, not all candidates took this procedure as gravely as it might have been guessed. A certain Mr. Higgins applied for membership claiming he had visited Italy, Long Island and one of the memorable places described by the fictional Lemuel Gulliver—Brobdingnag (Mr. Higgins was duly elected to membership three years after his application). Meanwhile, Sir Roger Gocisley Bart, MP, wrote that he had travelled through Italy “and the land of perspiration and inspiration” (Sir Roger was dead before his application was put to a ballot). Spurious destinations aside, some illuminating information can be gathered from looking at early candidates’ forms: in the 1820’s, members had been mostly to European—more precisely, Mediterranean—destinations: Greece, Spain, Italy. India had been the most commonly visited place throughout the 1830’s. Egypt and Syria seemed to be the popular spots among travellers in the 1840’s. It needn’t be stressed that the recurrence of particular destinations in the Club’s candidates’ records was not unrelated to the balance of power that emerged in the wake of Waterloo, and to the ever-expanding interests and engagements of Great Britain abroad.

456 Lejeune.
457 TC, Candidate Books, 13:3136 (June 5, 1836).
458 TC, Candidate Books, 13:3182 (July 9, 1826).
459 TC, Candidate Books, 1820-1855.
460 A more systematic study of common destinations, as evidenced in the Club’s Candidate books—unfortunately somewhat out of the scope of the present research—would be a most useful contribution to the history of British travel.
For the benefit of high-ranking diplomats and distinguished foreign visitors, naval officers and gentlemen of leisure with an interest in voyaging, the Travellers Club’s first committee rented a house at 12 Waterloo Place. When such a place proved to be “unsafe”, the committee took a lease in 1821 for a property that had once been a tavern and had later been in use by Brook’s Club, at number 49 on the north side of Pall Mall —“a shabby, low-roomed house” according to one account. In 1826, overcrowding due to the increase in the Club’s membership led to the purchase of part of the grounds of Carlton House for a new venue. The project was entrusted to Charles Barry, an architect whose notoriety would be cemented in 1834 with the commission to redesign the houses of Parliament. But unlike that of his most famous mock-gothic building, the design for the Travellers’ Club was inspired by the Renaissance Pandolfini palace, in Florence. Six years —and £64,189—after the original subscription was made to provide club members with a new meeting place, the magnificent Club house at 106 Pall Mall was complete, sandwiched on the south side of the street in between two of the most prominent London clubs of the day—the Athenæum and the Reform Club. The interior design was no less commendable than the grand exterior. In the midst of the library’s Corinthian columns, members could peruse the club’s collection of maps and accounts of travel acquired by, or donated to, the club. Much of the club’s furniture and lamps were the work of George Bullock, one of England’s foremost cabinetmakers —and brother of William Bullock, of Egyptian Hall fame.

461 Weinreb & Hibbert; or one of the best descriptions of the Travellers as it was in 1826, at 49 Pall Mall, one can turn to another account by a foreign visitor, which I take the liberty of quoting in some length: “All that luxury and convenience, without magnificence, ...is here to be found in as great perfection as in the best private houses. The stairs and rooms are covered with fresh and handsome carpets, and rugs ...are laid before the doors to prevent drafts: marble chimney-pieces, handsome looking glasses (always of one piece —a necessary part of solid English luxury), a profusion of furniture, etc., render every apartment extremely comfortable. Even scales, by which to ascertain one’s weight daily —a strange taste of the English— are not wanting. The numerous servants are never seen but in shoes, and in the neatest livery or plain clothes; and a porter is always at his post to take charge of great-coats and umbrellas...

In the elegant and well-furnished library there is also a person always at hand to fetch you the books you want. You find all the journals in a well-arranged reading-room; and in a small room for maps and charts, a choice of the newest and best in their kind. This is so arranged that all the maps, rolled up, hand one over another on the wall, thus occupying but a small space...

The table, —I mean the eating,— with most men the first thing, and with me not the last, —is generally prepared by a French cook, as well and as cheaply as it is possible to have it in London. As the Club provides the wines, and sells them again to each member, the are very drinkable and reasonable. But ‘gourmands’ must ever miss the finest wines, even at the best tables in London. This arises from the strange habit of the English ...of getting their wine from London wine-merchants, instead of importing them from places where they grow, as we do.” (Butler)

462 This figure is given by Weinreb and Hibbert. The official Club history offers the unspecific figure of “more than £30,000 for the building, furnishings and architect’s fees” (“List of members, 2000”).

140
Basil Hall first appears as member of the Travellers Club on the list for the year 1820. His application for membership no longer exists, but one could easily fill it in: "Captain Hall, of the Royal Navy, being desirous of becoming a member of the Travellers Club, and being qualified for the same, by having visited Corea\textsuperscript{463}, and China, and St. Helena..." A tour of duty had taken the young officer to various ports of the Korean peninsula in 1817—an experience which he put into writing in his *Account of a Voyage of Discovery to the West Coast of Corea and the Great Loo-Choo Islands*, published by John Murray in 1818. On the same journey, Hall stopped at St. Helena and used the opportunity to hold an "interview" with the island's most famous resident ever, the captive Napoleon Buonaparte. At a time when London was just recovering from its period of intense Napoleon "fever", this fact alone might have made a man like Hall a suitable candidate for a club like the Travellers.

On August 10, 1820, Hall left England once again. His man-of-war, the *Conway*, sailed directly for various ports on the South American and Pacific Mexican coast. Wars of Latin American independence were still smouldering, but the timing seemed propitious: only a fortnight after Hall's departure, the treaty provisionally recognising Mexican independence from Spain was signed at Córdoba, in Mexico. Given the conspicuous presence of the British Royal Navy in places like the Río de la Plata, Hall's instructions can be plausibly linked to British support of American Creoles' struggles to rid themselves of whatever weak grip Spain still had on its former colonies.

Although clearly not the main reason for his voyage, the captain and his officers engaged in scientific experimentation: in London before his departure, and then at various points along his route—the Galapagos Islands, San Blas in Mexico, Río de Janeiro, and back in London again—Hall measured variations in the swing of an "invariable pendulum" given him by the Board of Longitude. His results, forwarded to the Royal Society of London, were read on April 24, 1823—and promptly published in the Society's *Philosophical Transactions* for that year. More significant than the advancement of knowledge, though, was the furthering of trade. From merchants in San Blas and Tepic alone, Hall procured a "treasure" of more than half a million dollars, "all destined for London...the whole intended for the purchase of British goods."\textsuperscript{464} The *Conway's* arrival at a Mexican harbour marked a momentous occasion for other reasons—it was, according to Hall, the first of His Majesty's men-of-war ever to visit officially. The times were uncertain. His Serene Highness Agustín de Iturbide, head of the Mexican government, invited Hall and his officers to visit Mexico City—an invitation

\textsuperscript{463} I use here the spelling for Korea commonly used at the time.

\textsuperscript{464} Hall, *Extracts*, v II., p. 289.
they were unable to accept. The two would later meet in London under different circumstances, Hall no longer active in the Royal Navy, and Iturbide no longer emperor of Mexico.\textsuperscript{465}

The man who inaugurates nineteenth century British writing about Mexico was as much an eighteenth century mariner as a Georgian gentleman traveller. In the account of his travels Hall betrays a fascination with the bygone tradition of seamanship and rugged individualism that made navigators such as Dampier, Anson and Cook household names. Not surprisingly, his favourite book was Defoe's \textit{Robinson Crusoe}.\textsuperscript{466} Hall was overwhelmed upon arrival at the harbour of Acapulco, less, one feels, from finding the place striking in itself than out of its association with the glorious exploits of his countrymen.\textsuperscript{467} He revels in remembrance of George Anson's capture of the Manila galleon, and closely follows William Dampier's advice —published in 1699— regarding the use of trade winds and breezes off Mexico's Pacific coast. Like Dampier more than a century before him, Hall was a fellow of the Royal Society. Unlike Dampier, he was possessed by a keen spirit of empirical observation. If there is any eighteenth century figure Hall might be suitably compared to, then, it would surely be George Shelvoke, who sailed the same coasts dutifully carrying out the Royal Society's instructions for the description of foreign travel.\textsuperscript{468} Interestingly, Hall quoted his sources of information in full, down to chapter and page, again setting himself apart from his predecessors —and even most of his successors.\textsuperscript{468} Among the many authors he quotes is the one who will be incessantly evoked in any future account of travel to Mexico —Humboldt.

If Hall is the most "eighteenth-century" of nineteenth century travellers, he is also one of the most modern authors to hail from the school of Old Tars. Keenly aware of the nuances of cultural difference, almost painfully conscious of the cultural underpinnings of his own perceptions, he shows exceptional sensitivity in his depictions of Mexico. Conveniently detached by duty from events going on around him, and yet prepared to strike up friendships with Mexican, Spaniard and Briton alike, he was well

\textsuperscript{465} The only evidence we have of a meeting is in Quinn, Iturbide's translator.
\textsuperscript{466} At least until 1829. A letter written to Thomas Moore, one of John Murray's most trusted editors and authors, is interesting for what it tells us about Hall's reading preferences: "My Dear Moore, I can stand it no longer, I must give vent to some portion of my delight and, may I add, astonishment at your magnificent work \textit{Memoirs of Lord Byron}! Possibly since I became a man of letters —that is, since I learnt A,B,C, I have not read anything with one tenth part of the pleasure I have experienced in perusing this most delicious of books. I won't except my worthy friend Robinson Crusoe —patron saint though he be of all true blue sailors. So much for exordium, & now to go on with a word or two of so

\textsuperscript{467} \textit{Vide supra}, chap. I.
\textsuperscript{468} \textit{Vide supra}, chap. I.
placed to make sense of the highly partisan environment of a barely independent Mexico. Hall was a model traveller for another reason. If modern Mexican historiography (some have argued that even world historiography⁴⁶⁹) begins with the famous *Political Essay on the Viceroyalty of New Spain*, Hall, who had read Humboldt’s work before it appeared in its many abridged versions, was the first modern British traveller in Mexico. He was Humboldtian in his attachment to what one scholar has described, referring to Humboldt, as “the Laplacian emphasis on measurement⁴⁷⁰”—but unlike Humboldt was unable to place his observations in the context of a wider body of knowledge because scholarship was secondary to his official obligations. Thus, more than any British traveller before, and than most afterwards, Hall incarnates the spirit of that allegorical print used as frontispiece for Humboldt’s *Atlas Géographique et physique du Nouveau Continent*, in which a defeated Aztec prince is offered an olive branch by Athena—Classical goddess of knowledge—while propped up by Hermes—protector of commerce.

* 

Basil Hall was a curious traveller but a reluctant author. When negotiating with John Murray the terms of an agreement regarding his book on Korea, he displayed great wariness of his peers’ opinion. As was the case in George Francis Lyon’s correspondence, it soon becomes apparent that to most naval officers the idea of writing about one’s travels—and, even worse, publishing such writing—was contemptible. An undated letter to Murray exhibits some of Hall’s concerns. His first concern was to show his agreement with a proposal put forth by Murray, that author and publisher should divide profits equally. He therefore moved onto editorial matters.

In the next place—what do you say to giving my interview with Bonaparte, at the end of the Book. It has a very natural connection; because the conversation turned almost entirely upon Loo Choo, & therefore it would not appear to be lugged in by the head & shoulders. *I think it might contribute to the sale of the work, without hurting its character, or mine; & without adding to the price of the book, especially augment its value.* If you think otherwise—or if you think that it will have a Book-making appearance—I trust to your honor & your friendship for me to state your opinion. *No circulation of the book—nor any profit could compensate to me for having it thought by the Public that I went out of my way to press my work.*⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁹ The scholar Ottmar Ette has argued that Humboldt’s work was, in fact, a centrepiece in the development of the Habermasian “Modern project”. [*Humboldt y el proyecto moderno*, *Internaciones*, num. 126 (1999), pp. 2-5.]
⁴⁷⁰ Leask, unpublished draft, pp. 223.
⁴⁷¹ JMA, 1818 (?), italics mine. The interview with Napoleon was not, in fact, published until many years later.
Price was also an issue, as it was related in an inverse proportion to the number of potential buyers and readers. "I could not agree to what I suggest", Hall continued, "unless the price also were to be kept down to the ordinary cost of such a volume, which I think you rated at 6/6 or 7/.") However opposed he might have been to giving the appearance of "book-making", Hall was not entirely loath to self-promotion. Even before its publication, he reminded Murray, his book was already subscribed for by a number of people in Calcutta. And in Edinburgh, the publisher Archibald Constable had suggested that "a small edition would sell well in Scotland". 473 With the book's later success Hall actually became quite sanguine about advertising, even asking of Constable whether it would be "consistent with your plans and practice to let [a second edition] be advertised on the envelopes of your wide-spread books—the Edinburgh Review, the Magazine, the New Journal and so on?" 474 That Hall believed in the benefits of such a policy is obvious from further correspondence: "I have not forgot the princely manner in which you advertised my little book, and indeed I am disposed to ascribe much of its sale (I won't say success) to that act of kindness on your part."

Returning in the spring of 1823 from his voyage around the coast of South America and Mexico, Basil Hall offered his journal for publication to the Edinburgh publisher that Sir Walter Scott often referred to as "the grand Napoleon of the realms of print" 476. "I have some thought of bringing out a little work on South America," he explained to Murray, "& if I had not been obliged to stay in Edinburgh during the winter I would certainly have given you the refusal of it—though it be in a far humbler style than you like to show up as naval heroes to the public. I confess I am very timorous, after the success of our friend Loo Choo; & should perhaps lose heart at last, & not publish at all." 477 Hall's anxieties about publishing were not hidden from Constable either. During the preparation of the manuscript he wrote: "I have taken a fit of alarm about publishing which perhaps you will think idle. I have an apprehension that it may do me professional harm, and get me the title of a book-maker, because I publish on an occasion when it is not customary for officers to do so. I myself do not join in this fear much, but friends, whose opinion I respect, have given me the caution. I would do nothing hastily..." 478

---

472 Italics mine. See also, for discussions on potential price, the correspondence of Murray and Brocklehurst, chap. II.
473 Loc. cit.
474 Hall to Constable, November 16, 1819 [Constable, vol. II, p. 472].
475 Hall to Constable, date unknown [loc. cit]
476 Lockhart, biographer of Scott, quoted by Alick, p. 208.
477 JM, Hall to Murray, January 21,1824.
478 Hall to Constable, taken from Constable, II, p. 476.
Hall was aware, nevertheless, that he was venturing into editorially uncharted territory at a time when “interest in the New World and the progress of the revolutions therein” was nearing its zenith. “I think I have got abundance of material from a virgin soil” he justly boasted, “or one at least very little wrought, and that you know is something in these times.” Publisher and author were at odds regarding the outward presentation of the book—Constable hoping for a “handsome edition” while Hall preferred a smaller, understated and more “unpretending” one. Constable prevailed, and the book was published in two octavo tomes despite Hall’s protestations that he was “entirely resolved not to humbug the public purse a second time,” and feeling incompetent to do justice to anything more than one small volume.” In fact Hall was still unsure about his own literary talent: “I am very truly grateful to you, not only for your attention to my business, but for your good opinion of my unwritten work. How do you know that some hungry scribe of Mr. Murray’s did not dress up [Loo Choo] for me?”

Public reception of the Extracts from a Journal was good. If Hall had any doubts about the propriety of publishing, they must have been assuaged by the commentary in the Edinburgh Review.

It is a fortunate thing for the public when the sailors take to writing, if they write with any portion of sense and skill; or even if they write without the commission of gross and palpable faults. Their opportunities of seeing new countries and extraordinary events are greater than those of other people; and many pleasing narratives have been lost to the world, from the dread which nautical men too often entertain of becoming authors, and appearing before the public with hands washed clear of tar and besmeared with ink.

Young men who often are desirous of rising in their profession, and establishing a character as good officers, are afraid of doing anything which may make their superiors imagine that their time and attention have been dedicated to objects which are not nautical, to the exclusion of more important studies. Reputation, however, will follow facts, and must depend on them. If a diligent officer write well, he will be thought a good officer and a good write.

The anonymous author ended his review by “recommending very earnestly to our readers Captain Hall’s book” and reassuring them that they would “derive from it great amusement and considerable instruction”. The fact that this particular review happened to appear in the periodical owned by his very publisher makes it little less than a full blow advertisement—an exercise in puffing, as the practice was commonly known. But such was, at the time, the nature of the most prominent literary reviews.

479 Hall, Extracts..., from preface.
480 Hall to Constable, loc. cit.
481 The Voyage to Loo Choo had appeared in a lavish quarto edition.
A letter from Constable to Hall confirms that the book was both a critical success—"I must be permitted the gratification of offering due congratulations on the success of your recent interesting work, which has been read by every member of my family with peculiar delight"—and a money winner—"The third edition is doing well. I came here a week ago, and on the journey up, by way of Manchester, Derby, Birmingham, etc., almost nothing else, I assure you, was talked about". Hall was delighted. "I am greatly rejoiced by what you say of my book", he replied to Constable. "I imagine, however, that it cannot go on long selling, and that a stop will now be put to it. This at least is the fate of similar books...Is it at all likely that the interest of the work, independent of the momentary interest of the subject, will carry it on for some time to come, or must it have the fate of all Voyages—except Anson’s and one or two others,—and soon run to neglect? I fancy, however, that none but the old gentleman with the scythe can venture to anticipate what shall become a standard work. We may venture to predict what shall not, but the affirmative is, I suspect, beyond our reach."

When Constable suggested that Hall’s travels in East Asia and Latin America be reprinted together, Hall was no longer the publication-shy author of a few years back. "I am rather pleased with your idea of a junction in three volumes, and shall be glad to talk it over with you in Edinburgh. I am all for cheap books, and if such a little work could be made neat and very reasonable, it would, I am convinced, have great circulation, and might become a little gift-book, a sort of present for young people. I have no ambition higher than this, I must own". The projected triad never materialised. Instead, in January 1827, under the title of Hall’s Voyages, its components were compacted into the first volume of “Constable’s Miscellany” —a series of cheap reprints, to be sold at only three shillings and a sixpence each.

Hall’s voyaging was far from over then, as later that year he would set out on a journey to the United States, the recounting of which would cause great irritation among his North American hosts. By then, Hall was more active as an editor of other people’s work than as an author of his own. He had contributed the items on "Navigation" and "Seamanship" to Constable’s Encyclopaedia of Youth, had advised the Scottish publisher on his Encyclopaedia for Mechanics and had even taken interest in the publication of a cook-book which eventually went to other publishers. A couple of letters to Constable show Hall trying to persuade a fellow naval officer to publish his

486 Loc. cit.
487 Travels in North America appeared in 1829. In her famous book Domestic Manners of the Americans, Fanny Trollope—mother of Anthony—wrote about the indignation Hall’s descriptions of North American habits had caused among the people she visited.
journal. Not unlike Hall at an earlier stage, the Captain Frederick Lewis Maitland was reluctant. "I met him yesterday at our dinner to Lord Melville," Hall wrote, "and made it my business to sit next to him, that I might talk over matters. I was glad to find that he did not fly quite off when I asked him about publication, and at a fit moment I came in with your forty-two pounder, which made a deep impression. He said he would consider of it, and I changed the discourse accordingly." Hall evinced unusual interest in the matter: "I have lately got Captain Maitland's Narrative, and I wish very much that you had time to read it before it goes to the Great Unknown." It exceeds in interest anything I ever read in my life, and would make an admirable separate article for the Miscellany... I have no reason to think Captain Maitland disposed to publish—quite the contrary: but you have ways and means, as I well know, to induce people to become authors who never dreamed of it." It is hardly surprising that Sir Walter Scott referred to Hall as "that curious fellow, who takes charge of every one's business without neglecting his own."

Among the things he took charge of was giving occasional advice to John Murray on the matter of books of travel. Few documents are as revealing about the way in which travel literature actually came to be—the way in which manuscript turned into book, the way in which the author's intentions interacted with the publisher's expectations, the way in which the readership, even the genre itself, were conceived of by those who produced accounts of travel—than Hall's letters to his old friend in London. In Hall's letters, the underlying conventions of the genre are clearly articulated, as is his idea of who made up the audience for this sort of work, and what such an audience wished to find in it. Hall must surely be counted among the earliest users of the term "travel writer" to describe themselves or their peers, and "travel writing" to describe their trade.

It is interesting to note that by 1829 Hall even claimed to be pushing the genre's boundaries—and the public's taste—beyond the limits of the conventional.

My Dear Sir,

I was really much satisfied by your kind observations respecting my travels [to North America]... I have brought out a separate volume containing a selection from the sketches which I made in America with the Camera Lucida. And I shall feel much obliged if you will accept of a copy in testimony of my sincere regard. This ...work is a sort of hobby of my own, or, I may call it, a sort of Experiment in

488 Hall to Constable, June 26, 1825: Constable, vol. II, p. 488. The reference to the forty-two pounder eludes me. Might it have been a reference to a large cannon, that is, a clinching argument? Or perhaps an irresistible offer to hand over a bulk sum in advance of publication?
489 Sir Walter Scott, who was charged with the editorial tinkering of Maitland's journal.
491 Constable, vol. II, p. 473
travel writing. I wish to see what will be the effect of giving at a cheap rate as nearly as possible, bona fide, the exact transcript of sketches made on the spot by an instrument. Accordingly, these now published (shadings included) are done from the actual drawings, every line of which was done under the Camera Lucida. I almost fear, however, that the Public taste has been so much accustomed to highly finished works of art, that they will not care much for the undoctored truth. And indeed, I have no right to expect they should—for I am no artist; and perhaps the subject is not very inviting. What is your opinion?  

This brief communication is a forceful reminder of many of the ideas commonly associated to the production and consumption of books of travel. Hall’s “experiment in travel writing” was as much about a new medium—the camera lucida—as about the way in which the finished product should be presented—“at a cheap rate”. His misgivings about the possible reception of his sketches blatantly expose one of the central contentions in the ordinary depiction of foreign lands, be it in written or graphic form—that there was inevitably an element of interpretation in it, artistic license for the sake of the narrative or the painting, and that the public expectation of such artifice rendered the “undoctored truth” an unpalatable one.

Signs of Hall’s awareness of the conventions governing the genre of travel writing are best appreciated in a letter written to Murray in 1835, in which he gave the publisher his opinion on a manuscript he had been asked to comment on. The reply amounts to little less than a guide for the writer who wished to tell his tales of travel.

My Dear sir,

I have read a considerable portion of Cap. Skinners’s narrative which has pleased me much, and I have very little doubt will please the general run of travel readers even more than it has done me. If you make a neat ... single volume of it, I feel... certain of its doing well.

...Perhaps the following few remarks from an old stager in travel writing may have their use in Capt. Skinner’s case...

I. In the first place I would advise Capt. Skinner to use the past tense throughout, never to use the ...journal on present style. This is never agreeable to the reader.

II. Let him break the narrative into short chapters. Nothing fatigues like a continuous story.

III. He is rather too free of common place quotations. Most of them are good & well placed, however, but they should be given without the great staring inverted commas, which belong only to the higher [world] of quotation.

IV. Let him by all manner of means avoid apologies for his descriptions—as indeed for anything. The reader is prone to be ...irritated by such liberties. In this principle I advise his omitting the last 2 pages & a half...All that follows is calculated to hurt the effect & to put us out of humour with the book, the author and the subject. Who, in reading such a work, cares a ... for Dr. Johnson and the Hebrides?

492 JM, Hall to Murray, July 22, 1829. Italics mine.
V. He should give us the date at full length, including the year, more frequently. I shall not be able to guess within 10 or 12 years when the journal was made!

VI. Beg him never to use the hateful expression “Former & Latter” which is always [provoking].

VII. If possible, let him give us more anecdotes —real, individual anecdotes, I mean, of the people about him—such as that of his coolies battling with the ... & flinging flour in ... faces. Not one writer in a million can write a tolerable description of scenery, & not one reader in ten million can bear any but the best description... What we all sigh for, in a book of travel, is stories of the people with whom the traveller is actually living.

VIII. Finally, the whole style will bear polishing & cutting, & if this is done with great care & with clearness and simplicity for their object, I have no doubt whatsoever of the book being ... very interesting.

Almost as an afterthought, Hall added: “There ought to be a map —certainly—and a few wood cuts of costumes or houses would be very great additions.”

* *

In the autumn of 1826 (the same year when a subscription was made to allow for the purchase of a larger Club house) a handful of members of the Travellers Club decided that the Club no longer satisfied the purpose of providing a venue for travellers to meet and share their thoughts. Membership, originally limited to 400, had by then extended to 500. Even a cursory study of the Club’s candidate books reveals the effect this extension had on the average time it took the relevant committees to review and ballot a candidate’s application —as much as three years in the late 1820’s. The most noticeable consequence was overcrowding of the building at 49 Pall Mall. Even putting aside the inconvenience of queues at the bar, some members felt “that many of the newly elected members did not sufficiently represent the spirit of foreign exploration”. One of the founding members, a retired Captain of the Royal Horse Guards who had travelled extensively through Scandinavia, decided that something ought to be done. This was the origin of the Raleigh Club.

More than a club proper, it was intended to be a “most agreeable dining society composed solely of travellers”, consisting “at first of 40 members”, the number “to be afterwards increased so as not to exceed 50”. It was agreed “that the Globe should be mapped out into so many divisions corresponding with the number of members, and that each of these parts, or divisions, should be supposed to be represented by at least one of the members... so that the Society, collectively should have visited every, or nearly every part of the known Globe.” The Raleigh was not conceived of as a

493 JMA, Hall to Murray, June 8, 1835.
494 TCA, Candidate books.
495 Quotes from minutes of the Raleigh Club’s meetings were taken from Marshall-Cornwall. I am grateful to Thomas Sutherland, Chairman of the Library Committee at the Travellers Club,
splinter group breaking away from the Travellers, but rather as a parallel society, as proved by the fact that assiduous diners in the one remained loyal committee members of the other. So the Raleigh’s first dinner, attended by nine distinguished travellers, was held at the Alfred Club on Albemarle Street, late in the year 1826.

The first regular meeting occurred on February 7, 1827 at the Thatched House, a restaurant on St. James Street, from six o’clock onwards. Thirteen members dined together at a cost of £18.0s.6d— even though by then the Club’s membership had grown to thirty six. Among the new members was a Captain Edward Sabine, who had been aboard the Hecla in the very same ill-fated Polar mission under Captain Parry that George Francis Lyon had taken a part in and written about. Also on the list were William Marsden—author of a Dictionary of the Malayan Language and a History of Sumatra— Sir Murray Maxwell—knighted a few years before for his services on the China coast—and John Cam Hobhouse M.P.—close friend of Byron, avid Mediterranean voyager, later Secretary of State for War. There too, among the many restless grandees, was Captain Basil Hall.

While at the Travellers Club it was a custom for members to donate books to nourish the ever growing collection of travel accounts and geographical descriptions— Basil Hall offered his autographed copy of Antonio de Herrera’s Descripción de las Indias Occidentales (1725) to the Club’s library— members and guests of the Raleigh Club were more likely to offer their dining companions far-fetched delicacies. They were encouraged “to present any scarce foreign game, fish, fruits, wines, &c. as a means of adding greatly to the interest of the dinners, not merely from the objects of luxury thus afforded, but the observations they will be the means of giving rise to.” And so, according to the minutes of the first regular meeting, Captain Arthur de Capell Brooke—the man whose original idea the new association had originally been—made a gift of “A haunch of Rein Deer Venison from Spitzbergen”, “A Jar of Swedish Brandy”, “Rye Cake (Flad Brad) baked near the N. Cape”, “A Norway Cheese” and “Preserved Cloud Berries from Lapland”.

The Club’s minutes for a dinner on March 5 of that year, with a record assistance of 21 members and five guests, show that a “Ham from Mexico was presented for the dinner by Mr. Morier, and the health of the gentleman was accordingly drunk.” They add that “Mr. Morier was proposed as a candidate by Col.

---

496 It may not be a relevant fact, but for the sake of geography I think it interesting to note that Basil Hall’s address when in London was, according to his own letters, 27 St. James Street—only a couple of blocks away from 50 Albermarle Street and a few minutes’ walk from the Travellers Club.
Leake⁴⁹⁷, and seconded by Capt. Basil Hall R.N." The man toasted in absence was James Justinian Morier, by then the author of two accounts of travel through Persia and a picaresque novel of some popularity⁴⁹⁸—all published by John Murray. Morier, a veteran of diplomatic service in the Middle East, had recently returned from Mexico, having served for a year and eight months as First Commissioner in His Majesty's diplomatic mission to Mexico. His job was not an easy one, sent as he was to replace a commissioner who had been recalled due to his unauthorised meddling in Mexico's internal politics.⁴⁹⁹ But the measure of Morier's success lay in that, by the time of his return to England, he and Henry George Ward could later claim responsibility for having steered diplomats in Mexico City and London into signing the first Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the two countries.⁵₀₀

We can only be sorry that Morier, a prolific—if not always memorable—writer, did not take up his pen to offer readers an account of his time in Mexico in the same way he had twice done it after his voyages through Persia. His experience, however, did not escape his fiction. In 1833 Morier published *Pepita, a Mexican Story*, unremarkable even to the author's biographers. Another novel appeared in 1837 which, although lost in oblivion today, appeared to have some critical success at the time of its publication. *Abel Allnutt* was compared positively to Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*. The *Examiner* damned with faint praise, claiming that Morier had "very narrowly escaped writing a very admirable book." Among its enduring portrayals was that of the candid Allnutt family, who lost whatever small fortune they had by investing it all in Mexican Bonds.⁵₀¹

The Mexican part of George Alexander Thompson's journal—the one containing those chapters that were completely lopped off the published text—ends at the moment when he is waiting for Morier to arrive at the British mission in Mexico City. This also

⁴⁹⁷ Lt-Clnl. William Martin Leake (1777-1860), one of the original committee members of the Travellers Club and founders of the Raleigh Club, had travelled extensively in the Middle East, Greece and Asia Minor.
⁴⁹⁸ *Journey through Persian Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople* (1812); *A Second Journey through Persia* (1818). Morier's novel, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* was published by Murray in 1824. and was later followed by *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan in London* (1828), *Zorab the Hostage* (1832), *Pepita, a Mexican Story* (1833), *Ayesha, the Maid of Kars* (1834) and various other privately published works of fiction.
⁴⁹⁹ A well documented account of Morier's time as commissioner to Mexico is given in Henry Mckenzie Johnston's *Missions to Mexico*.
⁵₀₀ Concluded December 26, 1826.
⁵₀¹ A letter to his brother, written in March 1827, confirms Morier's opinion on Mexican bonds as expressed a few years later in his novel: "For my part, if the Mexican Government be honest, prudent and able, I think the country has enough resources within itself to give confidence to those who hold Mexican stock and await interest thereon. But they are in general such a set of narrow minded [illeg.] that until a few years of good straightforward government can be passed over their heads, I should be loath to risk any think [sic.] of much magnitude among them, or to endanger my fortunes and independence". [Quoted by Mckenzie Johnston, 1992, p. 292n.]
happened to be the moment at which Thompson received instructions from the Foreign Office to set out for Central America. He left Morier behind with Ward, by then the mission’s chargé d’affaires, who spent a considerable amount of his time travelling through the host country. It is no small irony that it should have been this inexperienced, junior diplomat who should have become famous for his book on Mexico, rather than his superior, who was already a seasoned diplomat, traveller and author. Why Morier, described by one biographer as “a compulsive writer”\textsuperscript{602}, did not approach any publisher with his Mexican diaries is a mystery. Had he – perhaps attuned to trends in public taste—given up factual accounts in favour of fictional characters? The catalogue of his following books certainly confirms this inclination.

In any case it was Ward who wrote a book, today considered a classic text, about his time in Mexico. Among the members of the British commission living in the stately property that once belonged to the emperor Agustín de Iturbide, Ward was perhaps the least likely to become an acknowledged authority on the country. Unlike Morier, he had no ambition to write; unlike Thompson, he lacked the command of Spanish —despite having spent some time as attaché to the British legation at Madrid—that would allow him to better understand the place. In fact, before being appointed Second Commissioner to Mexico, Ward knew close to nothing about the place. After a crossing of six weeks to Veracruz aboard HM frigate Thetis, Ward confessed to his future father-in-law:

I have never turned my mind at all to American affairs before, and felt most thoroughly ashamed of my ignorance on a subject with which I ought to have been well acquainted in order to be fit for my present situation... For the last six weeks I have devoted nearly ten hours a day to the works which I thought best calculated to give me an insight into it. I have now, I believe, gone through everything of consequence that has been published respecting America.\textsuperscript{603}

The utter lack of knowledge to which Ward admitted was not unusual. In the 1820’s, when enthusiasm for, and misinformation about, the American republics went hand in hand, it was the norm. This was a fact that Ward seemed to have forgotten when in his book’s introduction he scoffed at those who hadn’t had the chance of personally travelling to Mexico—or spending six weeks at sea, locked up for ten hours a day with “everything of consequence” ever published about the Americas.

I have been asked repeatedly, since my return to England, whether Captain Head’s description of the Pampas is correct, although Mexico is nineteen degrees North, and Buenos Ayres thirty-four degrees South, of the Line; while men well read, and well informed upon every other subject, have expressed

\textsuperscript{602} Mackenzie, 1998, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{603} Quoted by Mackenzie, 1992, p. 53.
surprise, that, after a residence of three years in the Capital of New Spain, I should not be intimately acquainted with the state of parties in Lima and Santiago, Bolivia and Bogota.\textsuperscript{504}

He then confessed to his free use of Humboldt’s *Essai Politique*, Carlos Bustamantes’ *Cuadro Histórico*, the work of Blanco White, Robinson, Brackenbridge, “and a number of other works published in the United States, and but little read in England, from each of which I have taken whatever my own observations pointed as correct.”\textsuperscript{505} In the end, his authority came less from his readings than from his personal experience—the weight of autopsy—and his unusual access to information. The vast amount of raw data he was able to gather in his official capacity allowed him to fill an entire volume with descriptions of geography, the country’s population, its products, its political situation, the state of government revenue and of all British mining ventures. Ward, who constantly refers to the inadequacy of his own observations compared to those of Humboldt, was attempting nothing less than to update the German sage for his readers.

Ward was a contemporary of Bullock, Lyon and Hardy, all three of whom he personally met in Mexico at some point. But his status as representative of a country with which Mexicans ached to formalise relations placed him in a position that the other three, as emissaries of private London companies, could never aspire to. This was not just an advantage in terms of his position as perceived by the Mexicans, but as seen by readers back in Britain too. And it set the tone for Ward’s book. His peculiar placement, the view from the top, sets him apart from the others. It is also, no doubt, what makes even his personal narrative starched and less lively in terms of anecdotes, characters and local colour.

For all the troubles and tribulations he underwent in the course of almost three years in Mexico, Ward was repaid with acrimony. He was recalled in May 1827, shortly after the treaty he had struggled so hard to engineer was ratified by both governments. His last months in Mexico had been occupied by a personal dispute with the Foreign Office, leading to a bitter exchange of letters with the secretary George Canning himself. The main reason for rebuke had been Ward’s allegedly excessive expenditures at the British mission. And now, since April, Canning was Prime Minister. Ward would not have lasted long, no matter where he was. Whereas Canning died shortly thereafter, Ward would live to become a Member of Parliament, to be knighted, and even briefly serve as governor of Madras. But his career in diplomacy was over from the moment he returned from Mexico. He was made to feel unwelcome even in

\textsuperscript{504} Ward, vol. I, pp. v f.  
\textsuperscript{505} Ibid., p. vii.
the social circles usually haunted by members of the Foreign Office. At the time, the Travellers Club happened to be one of them. Admission procedures for new members of the Club required that at least twelve ordinary members be present for a ballot, and stated that one “black ball” should be enough to reject a candidacy. On May 21, 1830, “Henry George Ward, Esq., being desirous of becoming a member of the Travellers Club; and being qualified for the same, by having visited Mexico” applied for admission. It seemed like a natural aspiration for someone with his career and interests. But it took more than merely having travelled at least 500 miles out of London to be accepted. Not even having written a book about one’s travels was enough. As in all gentlemen’s clubs, personal reputations counted as much as the right connections. Sadly for Ward, this was confirmed almost three years later when, on February 15, 1833, he was “balloted for and not elected”.

172 Piccadilly

When Basil Hall paid a visit to Napoleon in his island exile at St. Helena, he may not have noticed that the emperor’s furniture was the handicraft of George Bullock, one of England’s finest cabinetmakers and sculptors—the same George Bullock who would later provide some of the Travellers Club’s lavish furnishings. The Bullocks were linked to the deposed emperor in more ways than one. William Bullock, George’s brother, made one of his career’s greatest fortunes when he bought Napoleon’s field carriage and exhibited it—together with Napoleon’s coachman—at his Piccadilly museum between January and August of 1816. Such was Bullock’s success with the London public that the “swarm of English bees hiving in the Imperial carriage”—the 220,000 people who rushed to see this relic—was immortalised in prints by George Cruikshank and Thomas Rowlandson, London’s best known satirists.

Popularly known as the Egyptian Hall, Bullock’s London Museum, designed by the architect Peter Frederick Robinson, was completed in 1812. It was meant to hold the content of a vast collections of natural specimens—thousands of birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, monkeys, a giraffe, a rhinoceros, a bear, a zebra, a lemur, an African sloth—and assorted objects amassed by Bullock since 1800, when he presented the Birmingham public with his first “cabinet of curiosities”. It was also apt for the

---

506 TCA, Candidate books, 9, 2100.
507 From this show alone, Bullock made £35,000. The immense popularity of such an exhibition invited fierce criticism from many quarters. Altick quotes one poet in Brighton who, commenting on the sensation caused by the carriage, wrote: “What wondrous things are daily brought to view, / Produced by time, and shown by Fortune’s glasses! / Six noble horses the great Napoleon drew. / Now, one Bullock draws a hundred thousand asses.” [Altick, 1978]
508 A man with a taste for the foreign: he had advised the Prince of Wales on the furnishings for the Brighton pavilion, and would later design the Swiss chalet at the London Colosseum. [Altick, 1978, p.236].

154
temporary display of novelties (Napoleon’s carriage), works of art (Gericault’s “Raft of the Medusa” was displayed there), freak shows (the ageless midget Count Boruwlaski made an appearance) and collections of antiquities. The Hall, with its mock-Egyptian façade overrun with mock-hieroglyphs and dominated by colossal marble statues of Isis and Osiris, immediately became a salient feature of the urban landscape. “There is no missing its great lumpish face as you go along”, wrote a London stroller many years later; “It gives a blow to the mind, like a heavy practical joke.” Its place among the landmarks of London was confirmed when Rudolph Ackermann, owner and publisher of Ackermann’s Repository of Arts, included an aquatint view of the façade in the 1815 issue of his illustrated magazine.

One of the unanswered questions about William Bullock is why this successful entrepreneur—the word “showman” has been accurately used to describe his line of business—should have travelled to Mexico as commissioner for a London-based mining company. That he became a shareholder in one of such ventures might not have been unusual. But what reason did he have to actually be employed by the Mexican Mining Company? Was it financial hardship—Bullock auctioned off his entire museum collection in 1819 and began renting the museum for temporary exhibitions—or perhaps the promise of ownership of a mine? The common assumption, based on what Bullock himself would have his readers believe, is that he was already planning an exhibition of Mexican antiquities. Why then did he need to be employed by a mining company? In any case, he found himself stepping onto a Mexican pier in March of 1823.

Bullock’s stint as mine owner turned out to be short-lived. Despite his public boasts about the wealth of the silver mine he took possession of, he found very little silver to line his pocket. George Lyon, admittedly not an admirer of Bullock from the outset, later found him dejected and railing “most unmercifully” against Mexico, the Mexicans and the delusions of quick profit he had once embraced and even publicised.

---

509 From The Times, June 22, 1820, p. 3: “Most of our readers must recollect the dreadful calamities which befell that portion of the crew of the French frigate Medusa, who, after the loss of the ship, committed themselves to the frail protection of a raft. M. Jerricault, a young French artist of great promise, has made the melancholy event the subject of a very fine picture, which is now exhibited at Mr. Bullock’s museum, Picadilly. Though the painting bears the mark of that cold, pedantic schol of which David may be considered the founder, yet the powerful talent of the artist has broken through the trammels of his system. Thus the colours are cold, and the attitudes are artificially contrasted; but the expression is energetic, true, and full of pathos, and the story is altogether told in a manner that shows an acquaintance with the higher principles of art”.

510 These marble statues of Isis and Osiris can be found today at the entrance to the Museum of London.

511 Hunt, p. 43.

512 King, p. 117.
At the time of his exhibition on "Ancient and Modern Mexico", however, Bullock was still the most conspicuous advertiser of the benefits of British investment in Mexico.

He had already combined doubtful business ventures with his career as an exhibition impresario. When a project to import reindeer from Lapland for breeding in England went awry following the death of most of the animals, Bullock decided that the paying public's interest—and his own—could still be served by displaying a family of Laplanders, and the few remaining reindeer, in a "natural" setting at the Egyptian Hall. This was, without a doubt, the immediate precedent to Bullock's idea of having José Cayetano, a Mexican Indian, on display by a "typical" hut in the room of his museum containing the "Modern Mexico" display. Not all the exhibition's attendees were impressed by this. "With respect to the objects for illustrating the natural history of Mexico," quipped the *Times*, "we shall say nothing: by way of making it more interesting, Mr. Bullock has placed in the room a rare specimen of a Mexican Indian 'all alive'. Is he to be a fixture, like the stuffed birds and fishes?"\textsuperscript{513}

The project for a display of Mexican "antiquities" was more closely linked to another exhibition held at the Egyptian Hall in 1821. Giovanni Battista Belzoni, a sideshow "giant" and mountebank from Padua who had become a celebrity in England during the Napoleonic wars, travelled to Egypt as soon as the fighting was over. His mission was to sell an improved system of irrigation to the court of Muhammad Ali Pasha. When the mission proved fruitless, Belzoni turned failure into profit by proposing to British authorities that he be commissioned to claim and bring back a number of Egyptian treasures—among them the monumental stone head of Ramses II.\textsuperscript{514} At a time when the most significant advances in Egyptology were being carried out by French savants who had arrived in the wake of Napoleon's army, the collection of Egyptian that Belzoni brought back to England in 1820 proved to be a source of immense national pride. As it happened, there could hardly have been a more appropriate venue for their display than Bullock's Egyptian Hall. Alongside his exhibition, Belzoni wrote a book—*Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia; and of a Journey to the Coast of the Red Sea, in Search of the Ancient Berenice; and Another to the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon*—published by John Murray. Murray was so involved with the Belzoni exhibition that, in fact, he was given the right to handpick those who might be invited to attended the private viewing of Belzoni's exhibition on May 1, 1821.

\textsuperscript{513} *The Times*, April 8, 1824.
\textsuperscript{514} Altick has a good summary of Belzoni's career and exhibition, from which most of the references are taken [Altick, 1978, pp. 243-246].
Both the travel narrative and the exhibition were successful.\textsuperscript{515} Not only because they capitalised on a growing interest in Egypt, but also, as Murray and Belzoni must have guessed, because they complemented and advertised each other quite effortlessly.

This was a lesson Bullock was sure to remember, as he set out to publish his *Six Months's Residence in Mexico* in late 1823. There can be little doubt that, when it appeared in May of 1824, its readership had been significantly enlarged by public interest in the exhibition, which opened in April. Reaction to the latter had been mixed. The *Literary Gazette* complacently presented Bullock as nothing less than a new sort of *conquistador*, who “arrived when the flood-gates were opened for the first time during centuries”, and whose “only difficulties seem to have been how to collect the best and carry off the most” in his attempt to “ransack the superb capital of Mexico”.\textsuperscript{516} An anonymous writer for the *Times* was decidedly less enthusiastic:

Yesterday there was a private inspection of a collection or curiosities and antiquities from Mexico, imported into this country by Mr. Bullock, and arranged by him in the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly. The view was called *private*, we suppose, simply because the spectators were admitted without pay; for, if we were to judge of the nature of the admission from the numbers who filled the room, the exhibition would be reckoned probably as public as it will be on any day of more profitable resort. Admitted by the liberality of the proprietor, every person felt a kind of obligation to be pleased; but, we must confess that with this feeling upon us, and even in the presence of the “Great Serpent”, the “Colossal Idol”, the “Great Calendar Stone”, and other wonders of the collection, we felt little disposition to admire. The casts of the above objects, and the specimens of art from ancient Mexico, which we find in the “Hall”, are certainly highly worthy of attention, *if the former be correct, and the latter genuine*.\textsuperscript{517} But why is the collection so exceedingly meagre? Why have we not, from a person who professes that he was patronized by the present Mexican Government, a much greater assortment of objects to illustrate the civil and religious customs of this singular people, who has made considerable progress in the arts without the sea of iron, and carried on the business of an extensive empire, without the assistance of the horse, or any other of the tame animals known in the old world? We expected to see their mode of recording events—specimens of their arms—their dress—their household furniture, and other objects of interest. We might at least have had as much from Mexico as we have from Herculaneum or Pompeii.

The rant came to an end with a complaint about “the charge for catalogues”, which was “enormous; making the whole expense of admissions 3s. 6 d.”\textsuperscript{518} Putting aside the pernickety matter of price, such a review was significant because it appears to be the

\textsuperscript{515} 1,900 people visited the exhibition on its first day, each paying half a crown for admission [Loc. Cit.]

\textsuperscript{516} Reprinted in *The Times*, January 12, 1824.

\textsuperscript{517} Italics mine.

\textsuperscript{518} *The Times*, April 8, 1824.
only contemporaneous commentary to have raised a shadow of doubt about the authenticity of some of the exhibited pieces.

Despite such publicity—or because of it—Bullock’s exhibition could not fail to cause some impression on the London public. It is tempting to imagine who might have paraded through the great hall of the London Museum studying the plaster cast reproductions of “antiquities”, surely perplexed by the Aztec calendar or terrified by the spurious “great serpent” devouring an Indian: Walter Scott, who had almost unwillingly bought a suit of armour when Bullock auctioned off his collection of curiosities in 1819; the countess of Blessington, a ubiquitous socialite who had visited the museum and written about the Belzoni exhibition to great effect; the former emperor Iturbide, whose arrival in London preceded the opening of the exhibition; the young Benjamin Disraeli, inflamed by prospects of mineral wealth; Benjamin Robert Haydon, the publicity-craving painter who had rented out the Egyptian Hall four years earlier to exhibit his latest canvases; José Blanco White and Rudolph Ackermann, both laboring to keep Spanish and Latin American exiles in London abreast of the latest intelligence regarding the American Republics; the North American writer Washington Irving, at the time living in London and hunting out the eccentricities of life in the English capital; Edward King MP, later Lord Kingsborough, whose Antiquities of Mexico (1831) would eventually cost him his health and his fortune; George Frederick Waldeck, yet to become a celebrated Maya scholar, but then in London and about to set off for Mexico as hydraulic engineer with the British mining company of Tlalpujahua. It is not unlikely that Bullock’s publisher himself was present at some point, living and working, as he did, only a few paces away from the Egyptian Hall. An author like Basil Hall, with his own stake to claim regarding knowledge of Mexico, could hardly have stayed away. George Francis Lyon most definitely attended the exhibition, and later, in his book, expressed doubts about the authenticity of some of the pieces. It is said that Thomas Daniel Egerton, a minor landscape painter who had acquired a reputation as an imitator of Turner, was inspired by Bullock’s exhibition to go to Mexico—where he would end brutally murdered by a roadside under mysterious circumstances.

In the summer of 1825, William Bullock closed the exhibition, sold off his Mexican collection and returned to Mexico with the hope of reaping the benefits of his

520 Altick, 1978, p. 245.
521 This claim of Bullock’s influence on Egerton’s decision to go to Mexico was made by Mario Moya Palencia, whose novel, El Mexico de Egerton [Mexico City: Porrúa, 1991] is well documented but otherwise quite unreliable as a source. I have found no other evidence to substantiate the claim.
silver mine at Temascaltepec. It was the end of his career as museum owner and showman in London.

The first bricks for the foundation of the new British Museum building were laid on September 8, 1823. Plans for an extension of the musty Montagu House site had been afoot since earlier that year, and had finally materialised when Parliament voted a £40,000 grant towards the construction of an appropriate place to house the magnificent library collected by George III, and recently "presented to the Nation" by his son, George IV. Not only was the King's Library in need of a better venue; so were the sundry artefacts and antiquities acquired by the museum since its opening in the previous century. Lord Elgin's Marbles, "purchased" in 1816, were still housed in a makeshift room waiting for a more befitting resting place. Inside Montagu House proper, other archaeological pieces lay haphazardly against walls or propped up by iron bars, crowding halls and galleries.

Already the Museum had begun its collection of Mexican pieces. "Various objects from Veracruz in Mexico"—earthen images and a jar—were presented to the trustees, along with "natural history objects", in 1821. Two "figures of solid silver amalgam made by the miners of Mexico" were given to the museum by the Mexican General Michelena in April 1824, only days after William Bullock's exhibition opened to the public. But when Bullock approached the museum's trustees on the matter of selling off his own collection of Mexican "antiquities" he was promptly turned down.

A letter dated July 8, 1825, at the Egyptian Hall—although apparently not written by Bullock—made a case for the purchase of the collection. Its allusions to "learned" and "competent" sources is an indication of Bullock's awareness that his collecting efforts were not taken seriously enough by the more knowledgeable establishment.

The Mexican antiquities enumerated in the enclosed paper are the whole that could be obtained there by Mr. Bullock upon the most indefatigable search, and as the government of Mexico has since issued an edict prohibiting any more from leaving the country in consequence of its being their immediate intention to establish a national museum in the city of Mexico, it may be fairly inferred that these are the only specimens that will find their way to Europe.

The high estimation in which these objects are held by the learned will be seen by consulting Baron Humboldt's travels in New Spain—and that they have excited no less attention from the same class of person, as well as from the admirers of the arts generally since their arrival in this country is no less evident from an article which appeared in the Classical Journal No 57 and from another in the Monthly Magazine of June last as well as from the testimony of many competent persons who are in the frequent habit of referring to them.

622 EBMR, April 14, 1821.
623 EBMR, November 13, 1824
Mr. Bullock has the best reasons for believing that they would be deemed an acceptable acquisition to the national collection at Paris but hoping they may be thought worthy of an asylum in his own country offers them previously to the Trustees of the British Museum for the moderate sum of two hundred and fifty pounds.

Minutes taken at the meeting of the museum’s Standing Committee record that the letter was read, and it was resolved that the offer be declined. What happened next is revealed in a letter addressed on November 25 of the same year to one of the museum’s trustees by the Rev. Dr. Buckland, fellow of Christ Church, Oxford.

My Dear Sir,

...I present to you a catalogue of the Mexican antiquities imported by Mr. Bullock including everything he brought home & which I found him in the act of selling to be exported to France the day before he left England. The price he originally set on them being little more than they had cost him, was £250, but finding he was on the point of selling them for exportation at £100 I immediately proposed to him that I would give him that sum myself, & promised to make the offer of repurchasing them [from] myself at the same sum to the Trustees of the British Museum.

This offer I now beg to make to the Trustees... I shall be obliged by earliest communication of their determination. I have mentioned the subject to ...the Bishop of London525... & I am myself most anxious to see them deposited with the Antiquities of Egypt & Asia where they will form a most interesting object of comparison in illustrating the history of peoples, of the arts as well as the common origin of te human race —should the Trustees choose to purchase them for £100. The objects are named in the catalogue & are now at the Museum in Piccadilly...

I remain dear sir
Yours very truly
W. Buckland.

A fortnight later the members of the Standing Committee resolved “that an especial letter of thanks be written to Dr. Buckland for his offer, which the Trustees accept” and that the officer of the department of antiquities “take measures to obtain possession of the Mexican sculptures without delay”. 526 52 pieces —excluding all plaster casts—were retrieved from the Egyptian Hall and taken into the care of the British Museum’s keeper of antiquities. There they would become the core of the museum’s Mexican collection — but not for a while. Even despite the fashionable and vaguely diffusionistic theories surrounding pre-Hispanic American antiquities, archaeologists and ethnographers at the time were still more interested in what the remnants of Ancient Egyptian and Asian civilisations had to teach them. In the 1830s the keeper of the Museum’s book

---

524 BMA, Standing Committee Minutes, July 8, 1825 [C.3.vol 9-13].
525 The Lord Bishop of London appears as one of the Standing Committee Members in the minutes for the meeting of December 10, 1825.
526 Ibid.

160
collection, Antonio Pannizzi, considered that it should be “no loss” if Bullock’s pieces were moved to “less useful” space—the basement. 527

*  

Basil Hall’s reaction to William Bullock’s *Six Months’ Residence in Mexico* evinces the unexpected pleasure of a good read mingled with some measure of scepticism about its author. “Bullock’s book reads well”, Hall admitted to John Murray, using question marks to emphasise his surprise. “Is it written by him? It looks a little bookish...in fact [it] is a very difficult matter after all to write decently. It is incumbent ...on officers to write their own books... But no such obligation lies with our friend of the Egyptian Hall!” 528 Such mixed reception seems to have been the norm regarding both Bullock’s book and his exhibition. To those who were acquainted with Bullock as an exploiter of popular curiosity, he must have appeared an unlikely expert on all things Mexican. But he had travelled widely through Mexico, and had returned with the sort of message that he knew his British public was hungering to hear: there were mines to be had, fortunes to be made. Until December 1825 the public had been quite eager to believe this.

Ward, Lyon and the anonymous author of *A Sketch*... did much to disabuse the reading public of Bullock’s authority as entrepreneur and as expert on Mexican culture, suggesting that he had been naïve (to say the least) as the former, and inaccurate (if not outright deceitful) as the latter. And yet Bullock remained widely read by fellow travellers to Mexico. Edward Tylor, author of the much celebrated study on *Primitive Culture*, and with Henry Christy perhaps the first systematic British student of pre-Hispanic American archaeological objects, mentioned Bullock’s book in his own *Anahuac* (1861), confirming what he witnessed by referring to Bullock’s observations. If a book’s ubiquity can be confirmed by references to it in later writing, it can be said that *Six Month’s Residence* became a standard text among anyone with some interest in Mexico. Bullock’s book was constantly referred to in the relevant chapters of Captain Chamier’s novel, *The Life of a Sailor*—one of Richard Bentley’s infamous triple-decker novels costing 31s, published in 1832. Chamier’s narrator goes as far as assuring his readers that he had seen the original “great serpent” of which Bullock had made a copy for his exhibition—proof that, even if he had acquired first hand information first hand from other sources, the well informed Chamier had filled out parts of his book using other travellers’ writing. Here was yet another naval author trying to give some

527 I am indebted to Isabel Medina for information about the later history of the British Museum’s Mexican collection.
528 JMA, Hall to Murray, May 1824.
529 Chamier, p. 86.
credibility to his own fiction by unwillingly referring to the fictional elements in someone else’s account, thus perpetuating those particular untruths.

Bullock’s contemporary audience, however, did not show more than a passing interest in his book. On September 2, 1827, John Murray rashly launched a second edition. 750 copies were printed—half the size of the first print run. Advertising expenses were also halved—£32.5s—although, in the end, the total cost for the entire new edition—£224.19s—amounted to less than a third of the first one, presumably because the sunken costs of making the book had been covered at the time of the first edition. Unlike that first edition, however, this one was a complete failure. The entry in John Murray’s ledgers indicates a balance deficiency of £28.3s. Almost five years later Murray felt compelled to sell all remaining copies off at a huge discount—136 copies went for 3s each, almost as low a price as that of the cheap editions that flooded the market some time later. This he did in February 1832, at one of his annual Coffee-house sales at the Albion Tavern, on Aldgate Street\(^{530}\), in the course of which prospective buyers were treated to dinner and “refreshments” before bidding for remained books.

It can be plausibly argued that the success of Bullock’s first edition was related to the curiosity aroused by his Mexican exhibition—as in the case of Belzoni’s Egyptian exhibition at Bullock’s museum, the book and the exhibition complemented and advertised each other quite naturally. Bullock’s second edition lacked such a conspicuous marketing device. The low sales could also be ascribed to an equally low public interest in the speculative aspect of Bullock’s text. Again timing was of the essence: a book that trumpeted the adventurous aspect of mining speculations would have had a wide readership at the height of the mining mania in 1824-25, but less of an audience after over-inflated stock prices plummeted in 1826. This is, perhaps, a confirmation that “a book changes by the fact that it does not change when the world around it changes”.\(^{531}\) Yet another explanation, partly linked to the above two, is that the market for books about travel to Mexico had become saturated by the recent publication of Lyon’s *Journal of a Residence and Tour of the Republic of Mexico*.

Had Bullock been alive in 1887 he might have felt a certain satisfaction at the knowledge that one of the better known antiquarian booksellers in London was offering the first edition of his book for 10s. —a relatively good price compared to the 3s. 6d. asked for Lyon’s two volumes. But the true pecking order of authors writing about Mexico in the 1820’s was revealed by the fact that anyone hoping to purchase a copy

\(^{530}\) JM Ledgers

\(^{531}\) Q. by Chartier.
of Henry George Ward's two volumes that year, almost sixty years after their publication, would have been expected to pay no less than £2.16s for them.\footnote{532}

101 The Strand

Can travellers be judged by what they carry in their luggage? Might one learn anything about them by rummaging through the contents of their bags and travel chests? What can we glean from items of clothing, transported foodstuffs, titles of books? When the painter Jean Frédéric Waldeck set sail for Mexico in 1825 he thought it essential to carry with him 14 volumes of Voltaire's \textit{Dictionnaire Philosophique}, all 28 volumes of Diderot and D'Alembert's \textit{Encyclopédie}, Homer's \textit{Odyssey}, the works of Montesquieu, Plutarch and Xenophon, a Greek lexicon, and books of ancient and natural history.\footnote{533} William Bullock, on the other hand, arrived in Mexico carrying among his possessions a number of issues of Rudolph Ackermann's \textit{Repository of Arts}, with coloured plates illustrating public buildings and the latest women's fashions in London. Was Bullock carrying the issue that featured a print of the Egyptian Hall's façade, perhaps hoping to impress his hosts?\footnote{534} Whether that was the case or not, it was Ackermann's prints that he chose to convey a sense of where he came from.

The German-born publisher Rudolph Ackermann had, since the appearance of the first number of his serialised \textit{Microcosm of London} become the capital's leading publisher of illustrated magazines and coloured prints.\footnote{535} His magnificent books on \textit{Westminster Abbey, Oxford, Cambridge, Eton, Rugby, The Rhine, The Ganges, The Seine} and \textit{The Thames} made him a household name in London and turned his business address—number 101 at The Strand—into another of the city's cultural landmarks. His monthly magazine, \textit{The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics} was the most lavishly produced periodical of the day, an eye-catching compendium of prints, news and caricatures that predated the \textit{Illustrated London News} by more than two decades. By then Ackermann could already

---

\footnote{532} Other items related to Mexico were a first edition of Hakluyt offered for the paltry sum of £18.18s; Thomas Gage's \textit{New Survey of the West Indies} at £2.2s; eight volumes of Humboldt's \textit{Voyages aux Regions Equinoxiales du Nouveau Continent...}, including his \textit{Essai politique}, at £30; Lord Kingsborough's \textit{Antiquities of Mexico} at £60; the two volumes of Brantz Mayer's \textit{Mexico: Aztec, Spanish and Republican} (1853) at 36s; E.B. Tylor's \textit{Anahuac} (sold in 1861 for 12s.), at 7s; Fanny Calderón de la Barca's \textit{Life in Mexico} at 7s.6d. [Bernard Quaritch, \textit{Booksellers, Catalogue for the Year 1887}] Most of the items on sale had been part of the collection of José Francisco Ramírez, formerly the head of the National Museum of Mexico, afterwards a minister of the emperor Maximilian, who fled the country when the empire was toppled. In the 1870's a significant part of his library was purchased by Bernard Quaritch, in London. [\textit{DNB}, "Quaritch, Bernard"]


\footnote{534} \textit{Vide. supra}, ch. 1.

\footnote{535} He was naturalised as British subject in 1809 [\textit{Ford}, 1982, p. 139]
boast about many significant professional achievements: he had been one of the early retailers of paintings by new artists of the likes of Turner; after Trafalgar he had been commissioned to design the decorations for Nelson's funeral carriage; he was an innovator in printing processes, one of the earliest users of gas-lighting and a passionate campaigner for harnessing the power of steam.\textsuperscript{536} In 1822 the City brokers Messrs. Hering, Graham & Powles—the same J.D. Powles who would later persuade John Murray and Benjamin Disraeli to invest in Mexican mines—approached Ackermann, who was at the time attempting to patent a new method of engraving that would allow for the safer printing of sterling notes. They were in need of an experienced engraver to design and print the bonds for the first major Colombian loan to be issued, and Ackermann was willing to do it for them. Thus began the publisher's involvement with Latin America.\textsuperscript{537}

The following year, Ackermann printed the first of many publications in Spanish—\textit{Variedades o Mensajero de Londres}—a miscellany modelled on the \textit{Repository of Arts} and aimed mostly at the restless community of Spanish and Latin American expatriates in London. It was not yet the pro-independence publication it would later become, promising in its first issue that "everything that can tend to excite party spirit will be carefully avoided in order that it may be equally adopted for circulation in Old Spain and in her late American Colonies."\textsuperscript{538} In the course of the next few years, Ackermann published over eighty items in Spanish, including translations of some of his illustrated books, the first translations of Walter Scott's novels into Spanish, various magazines, almanacs, accounts of travel, an assortment of catechisms, books on history, foreign language grammar, table-manners, wedding fashions, poetry, mathematics, theology and an assortment of "useful knowledge."\textsuperscript{539} But under the influence of one of his closest collaborators on the Spanish language enterprise, the Spaniard José Blanco White, Ackermann slowly veered towards open sympathy with the cause of Latin American independence. Portraits of many of the revolutionary leaders—Bolívar, José María Morelos, Guadalupe Victoria—could be easily purchased at the Repository of Arts, along with prints allegorising the triumph of American independence.

\textsuperscript{536} Ford, 1980, pp. 198 f.
\textsuperscript{537} Ford, 1983, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{538} January 1, 1823.
\textsuperscript{539} I have used the updated list of publications compiled by Dr. Eugenia Roldán Vera for her unpublished doctoral dissertation, \textit{Book Export and the Transmission of Knowledge from Britain to Early-Independent Spanish America}, University of Cambridge, 2001. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Roldán for her generosity in allowing me unrestricted access to the material she has used for her own research.
Not one to shirk from a new business prospect, Ackermann even dipped his hands into the poisoned well of the Latin American investment bubble. In January 1824, through the agency of B.A. Goldschmidt & Co., Ackermann invested £800 in Mexican Bonds.\footnote{Followed by £600 in the second major Colombian loan and £540 in a Brazilian loan [Ford, 1983, p. 87]} On January 25 of the following year he invested a modest £80 in the recently floated mine of Tlapuaxahua, in the Mexican state of Michoacán.\footnote{In the same year he invested a further £260 in mines in Chile and Argentina [Ford, 1980, p. 204]} It was ill-spent money, as the collapse of such speculative enterprises would soon prove. “There was scarcely an old lady” wrote Robert Southey, Britain’s poet laureate at the time, “who did not contrive to save some of her income to lay out in shares” of similarly unfortunate mining schemes.\footnote{José Alberich, “English attitudes towards the Hispanic world in the time of Bello as reflected by the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews”, in Lynch, p. 77.} Ackermann was, in that sense, no different than John Murray or Benjamin Disraeli or the hundreds of others who were persuaded to invest in the mining companies of the “New World”. Ackermann, however, took his involvement with Latin America beyond mere investment, even beyond the already unusual decision to publish in Spanish.

In early 1825 Rudolph Ackermann sent his son, George Ackermann, to Mexico with the intention of sounding prospects for the sale of the Spanish language publications he was already selling in London. It seemed like a natural and highly profitable market to move into. Surely the new republics of Latin America would be hungry for the useful knowledge, the beautiful fashion prints, the indispensable catechisms and the overall informative and educational products that Ackermann dealt in. It has been suggested that his decision was partly inspired by attending Bullock’s exhibition, and realising that Mexico must have an enlightened government if it allowed such treasures to be exhibited abroad. The sort of government, he thought, with which it was surely possible to transact.\footnote{The case for a causal relationship between Bullock’s exhibition and Ackermann’s decision to start business in Mexico is a weak one. The exhibition was favourably reviewed, however, in the Repository of Arts, May, 1824. Cf. Ford, 1980, p. 203.} In any case, by Spring the young Ackermann was on his way to the Mexican capital carrying 45 cases of books, accompanied by Heinrich Dick, Rudolph Ackermann’s future son-in-law.\footnote{On board the same ship as these two was Jean Frédéric Waldeck, the newly recruited hydraulic engineer on his way to the very Tlapuaxahua mine in which Ackermann Sr. had invested £80. In Waldeck’s diaries, George Ackermann appears as a familiar figure of is life in Mexico City.}
At a time when Anglo-Mexican trade was reaching one of its highest points, the correspondence between Rudolph Ackermann and his emissaries in Mexico is revealing of the difficulties in personally establishing any kind of business. The Mexican government depended heavily on the income from import taxes, and tariffs were steep. The shipment of the books across the Atlantic had cost the Ackermanns £128.5s.6d. A duty of 26.5% per kilo was levied at the first Mexican port of call – even though Ackermann’s agent in Pueblo Viejo, Tampico, was acquainted with the “local style” of declaring the contents “with a significant reduction” to reduce the duty. A further 17% was paid for all merchandise that was sent inland – and all this was before even bringing the boxes ashore. Heinrich Dick complained that “the expenses from the ship to the aduana will be significant since everything has to be reloaded twice in boats and has to be brought over a distance of three hours to the aduana over the river”. Once safely on dry land, the cost of transportation by mule from Tampico to Mexico City over near impossible roads remained to be covered – approximately £30 more pounds. A final cost to be considered came in the form of the internal excise duties exacted from traders by each state they crossed.

George Ackermann had hope in the enterprise. His enthusiasm gushed out in a letter to his father: “It is impossible to conceive the business people are doing here and we will no doubt soon make immense fortunes... As for speculations turning to our great advantage, there seems no doubt in a short time we shall have it in our power to acquaint you of our proceedings in [the City of] Mexico.” By mid 1825, he had set up a bookstore in the centre of Mexico City. It was soon considered as one of the most important bookshops in the capital. There, browsers could spot Ackermann’s own publications alongside the more traditional religious works. Prospective buyers could also find Ackermann’s imprints in a handful of other prestigious bookstores around Mexico City. Business seemed to be flourishing, and George Ackermann opened up new bookstores in Caracas, Bogotá, Lima, Buenos Aires and Guatemala. The Ackermanns had become publishers to the Americas. The store in Mexico City remained open until about 1830, when trouble with business associates forced Ackermann to close it down. The balance of the Latin American venture was, in the end, disastrous.

545 Roldán, p. 110.
547 Roldán has made an estimate based on the average price of mules in Tampico – 15 pesos – and the approximate number of mules necessary to carry 44 cases of books.
549 Roldán, p. 113.
550 Ackermann’s commissioner in Colombia was none other than J.D. Powles. Cf. Roldán, 112.
In his *Six Months' Residence in Mexico*, William Bullock had suggested a scheme to increase British trade in Mexico, or at least one sector of it. "In a short time," he wrote, "I have no doubt that little else will be seen in Mexico but English manufactured goods and English fashions. It would be a good speculation for our merchants to forward a few handsome and well-dressed specimens of our countrywomen as pattern cards: our muslins and printed goods would be in greater request... A few numbers of Ackermann's fashions would probably assist in producing the same effect." If Bullock had been hopelessly misguided about the future of British concerns in Mexico, he was prescient as far as Ackermann's role was concerned. Although a study of the specific impact of Ackermann's publications on Mexican habits and fashions has yet to be carried out, there can be little doubt that access to his catechisms, to those plates depicting the latest London fashions, and prints of English furniture and architecture, must have been instrumental in the Mexican Anglophilia described earlier.

While George Ackermann traipsed around Mexico, his father, back in London, carried on with his mission to acquaint a larger public with the state of affairs in that country. Mexico appears to have been, still, a topic that aroused popular curiosity, and London's entertainers were wringing it for every bit of crowd-pulling potential. In December 1825 Messrs. Bruford, owners of the Leicester Square Panorama, offered the public a view of Mexico City—admission 1 shilling. About the panorama, based on William Bullock's illustrations, *The Times* reported that even though "this capital of the new world does not now present to the traveller's view the wonderful spectacle which its palaces and gilded domes did at the invasion of Cortez, yet it still preserves sufficient attraction to awaken and gratify a reasonable degree of curiosity." Ackermann too was in a position to satisfy this "reasonable degree of curiosity". From sketches sent by the son, Rudolph Ackermann published in 1826 lavish prints with his own views of Mexico City—a "Bird's Eye View Looking Towards the West" and a "View of the Great Square and Cathedral". And even after the collapse of most British mining speculations Ackermann still found it useful to publish a set of maps of Mexico's mining districts. Until he was forced to close his shop in Mexico City sometime around 1830, Ackermann's involvement with Mexico was wholehearted. Until then, too, his Repository of Arts on 101 The Strand remained—like John Murray's, like William Bullock's or the Travellers Club—one of the landmark addresses in the London panorama of Mexico.

---

551 Bullock, pp. 484f.
552 Vide. supra, ch. 1.
ARRIVALS: SOME CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding pages, two complementary approaches have been used to study British accounts of travel to Mexico within the broad field of British cultural history. In the first instance, through the serial study of related texts over a long period of time, I have attempted to chart variations in attitudes towards the subject matter. Among the striking discoveries is a significant degree of discursive continuity throughout the whole period, and a conspicuous recurrence of particular themes, especially religion and wealth. Since the scrutinised must not be merely read as sources of information, but should be understood as culturally specific products, my attention turned to the process whereby these texts were composed, produced in their published form, and received by readers. This line of inquiry revealed compact but consistent networks of authors, publishers and readers (often authors themselves) trading in, and commenting on, accounts of travel and geographical information, in general, and, more specifically, accounts of travel in Mexico. It revealed, too, that despite the genre's indeterminate form, authors and publishers—even in different periods—had a clear notion of who comprised their readership. Readers, on the other hand, responded to these particular texts in accordance to genre expectations.

A comparative reading of texts written from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries has limits that, as pointed out in the introduction, I hope to have circumvented by attention to particular case studies and time-specific conditions. But a microhistorical approach, as attempted in chapter III, can also produce a distorted view when transposed to a larger picture. We must not overlook the fact that, even at the height of interest in them, accounts of travel to Mexico could hardly compare in number to publications on Africa, Europe or the Near East. Three hundred years of travel to Mexico can be summed up in a two-digit number—a stark reminder of how secondary that country was to the general public.

A significant lesson to be learnt is that fact and fiction were less distinct, in many readers' minds, than we now believe. The difficulties in establishing the precise limits of the genre have been discussed in the opening pages. James Secord has reminded us that assumptions about genre "assist readers, publishers, and authors in

553 December 13, 1825, p.2.
creating stable conventions for interpretation. Locating a work within a particular genre makes some aspects appear central and others trivial.\textsuperscript{554} This knowledge allowed authors like Daniel Defoe or Jonathan Swift to satirise accounts of travel by using the genre's conventions. It allowed novelists like Captain Chamier, in the nineteenth century, to write fiction in the guise of a sailor's diary. Chamier, whose anonymous "seaman" wrote about dining in the halls of Montezuma, was using the best-known accounts of his day, mixed with what appears to be genuine first hand information, to give his fiction some veracity. So fiction, too, must be included among the texts that informed readers' images of Mexico alongside accounts of travel. The fact that the Victorian novelist Rider Haggard sold 25,000 copies of his novel Montezuma's Daughter—more volumes than the total number of copies of all other accounts of Mexico sold before—tells us something about where late nineteenth century Britons were finding their images of Mexico. Of course there was history too, and the irony of British travellers using William Prescott's book as a travel guide in their explorations of Mexico City. In the meantime, a naval author such as Basil Hall was considered by at least one reader to be "a famous novelist."\textsuperscript{555}

**Themes and variations**

"If one wishes to know a country," wrote the Romanian philosopher Emile Cioran, "it is necessary to read its mediocre authors, the only ones who truly reflect its defects, virtues and vices. Other writers, good ones, tend to react against their country, they are ashamed of being part of it." One of the things than can be said about all the authors of British accounts of travel to Mexico considered here—without exception—is that they belong to the category bluntly described by Cioran as "mediocre authors"—unremarkable from a literary point of view, and truly reflecting British defects, vices and virtues. In all cases, they were adhering strictly to conventions of what a book of travels should be. It is perhaps this that makes them unremarkable, a forgotten handful of books in the midst of thousands of others that only historians seem to busy themselves with today. The books studied here are interesting to historians of Mexico for what they say about the country's past: Gage's acquaintance with the Bishop of Chiapas, Fanny Calderón's description of Santa Anna, or Forbes' glimpse of the imperial couple Maximilian and Charlotte open intimate windows onto interesting figures and episodes in Mexican history.

Accounts of travel are valuable, too, to the cultural historian who wishes to learn about the underlying and rarely stated assumptions that are common to a particular

\textsuperscript{554} Secord, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{555} CUL, autograph collection.
group of people. It is a widely held tenet that travel writing can tell us as much about the observer’s culture as it does about the culture he observes. The best way to appreciate what, in a particular place and time, is assumed to be commonplace is to confront these assumptions with other customs and ways. Travel accounts have always been an extraordinary record of this confrontation.

Two main themes run throughout the entire British literature of travel to Mexico: religion and wealth. A third strand of thought, which is observable mainly in the nineteenth century, has also been identified here as the inevitable compulsion to describe abroad in terms of home. They are not the only recurrent topics: disease, the ugliness of native Mexicans, the ubiquity of mosquitoes, a certain fascination with tobacco—especially with women smoking—and the tendency of British travellers to present themselves as physicians might all explored usefully as some of the common loci of observation and description. But no other themes inform the narratives as heavily as the matters of the many vices and very few virtues of Catholicism, or the overwhelming appeal of Mexican wealth in all its exploitable forms.

Not a single travel account fails to make some mention of instances of Catholic bigotry, of which Protestant travellers usually felt the sharp end. It must not be forgotten that these remarks were made for a public that, even after the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, remained divided about the place of Catholics in a primarily Protestant society. It is true that both Ward, a Catholic, and Fanny Calderón, familiar with Spanish Catholicism, did not dwell on criticisms of Catholicism as practised in Mexico, or even bother to describe some of its more remarkable aspects—proof that things which are familiar remain unnoticed, or as Samuel Johnson remarked about Wales, that it was “so little different from England that it offers nothing to the speculation of the traveller”. And yet, even they could not help commenting on the mistrust of Mexicans for Protestant foreigners. “The way in which Mexico is first introduced to the Anglo-Saxon conscience is negative”, suggests Ortega y Medina, “in other words, Hispanic and ‘Papist’, and will thus condition, almost up until now, all ulterior vision”.

Equally inevitable were mentions of the riches to be found in Mexico. It can even be said that such riches were what attracted many of the travellers there to begin with. Because England was a latecomer to the age of discovery, by the time it opened its eyes to the new world the treasures to be had were mostly in the hands of Spanish and Portuguese. It is no surprise that this wealth—mostly in the form of silver mines and ships laden with unimaginably valuable cargo—became almost an obsession.

---

556 Ortega y Medina, p. 10.
Against a staunchly puritanical background, Gage's reaction to the Mexican riches is typical: repudiation of their corrupting effects in hands of Catholics, but desire for them to be in the correct—that is, British—hands. Was this not the message of mining prospectors like Lyon and Bullock? Leask was right to identify these nineteenth century travel authors as part of what Mary Louise Pratt has called the "capitalist vanguard" of European encounters with Latin America. An examination of these travellers' precursors reveals, however, that the capitalist project, so to speak, had been in place since the sixteenth century. The desire of possession articulated by the likes of Bullock, Lyon, Hardy and Forbes is an echo of the desire expressed by travellers to Mexico since the time of Hakluyt. The only objective difference, in the nineteenth century, was that possession was finally attainable, as Britons were allowed to acquire silver mines and set up trading companies.

When dealing with the matter of recurrent themes it is impossible to avoid some consideration of the problem of intertextuality. A brief mention was made in chapter II of how the nineteenth century author G.T. Vigne most probably plagiarised the work of his contemporary countrymen in Mexico. Vigne's descriptions of Veracruz, its carcass-strewn streets, buzzards disposing freely of dead animals, seem extracted word by word from Forbes and Hall Bullock—as do, too, most of his spelling errors when it comes to Mexican proper names. It is difficult, however, to distinguish plagiarism from references to common topoi. With only a few exceptions, most travellers, well into the nineteenth century, tread exactly the same route: Veracruz to Mexico City, to the mines, and back again. Most were subjected to the same sort of treatment by welcoming yet slightly wary hosts, and encountered the same types of characters—the slothful customs officer, the savvy muleteer, the bigoted priest, the untrustworthy Indian, the opinionated host and self-effacing hostess. It is not surprising that the same vignettes appear over and over again. But was Annie Sampson Poole unknowingly reproducing Fanny Calderón's assertion, upon being invited to become godmother to her maid's newborn baby, that she would rather not have the responsibility of fostering such an unsightly child, or was this simply a commonplace social situation in which the wife of a foreigner might easily find herself? An answer might point in both directions.

A most important question which has only begun to be considered here remains to be fully addressed in future research: how distinctive were British travellers, as opposed to, say, French, or Italian, or other European travellers? Might European Catholics who wrote about Mexico share with their mostly Protestant British counterparts any of the themes constantly discussed by the latter? Rather than pointing

---

556 Cf. p. 47n.
out a theme that is peculiar to English literature about Mexico, in a section on "Britannia abroad" I have tried to illustrate the assertion made by Humboldt in his *Views of Nature*: that men will always try to explain what they encounter abroad in terms of what they find familiar. A comparative study of British accounts of travel to Mexico and other destinations, sadly beyond the scope of this dissertation, might yield some interesting clues as to whether these three themes are indeed born out of cultural preoccupations embedded in collective mentalities or are circumstantial to the peculiarities of Anglo-Mexican history.

The elusive reader

On a wet April day in 1824 a known man at a known London address woke up and had his breakfast. He sent his manservant to fetch some books at his usual West End bookseller. We know from a surviving letter to his bookseller that he had ordered, among others, a copy of Bullock's *Six Months Residence*, for which he paid 13s. We know that at some point in the course of the same day he sat down and began reading it, for he was in the habit of writing down the date when he began a book, and of marking the pages where he stopped reading or took it up again. He also kept a diary, in which he wrote down his first impressions of the book: "Have read a few pages of Mr. B.'s 'Mexico'. Reminded of the panorama he displayed at his Egyptian Hall." We can compare his diary to the annotations he made in the margins of his copy: an exclamation mark next to the description of Bullock's arrival at Veracruz, or a note saying how Bullock's description of the mines was "As in Humboldt".

The man does not, to my knowledge, exist, and the precious sources—letters to booksellers, annotated copies of books, diaries filled with impressions about readings—are imaginary (although surely for some books, and for some readers, something like this must be available). This is the sort of evidence that the historian of reading longs to find: documentary proof of the existence of the elusive historical reader. Instead, we are faced with a mixed bag of evidence: anonymous library records, statistics on reading trends, publishers' production ledgers showing the retail price and number of copies sold, anecdotal evidence of acquaintance with a title, quotations or references made in someone else's book. We must approach the reader from many directions simultaneously, corner him, and if we are careful, or lucky, or both, we might almost catch a glimpse of him or her, skimming the pages of a book.

The comparative nature of this project has not allowed as detailed an inspection of particular periods as might have been desired. The only period for which documentary evidence of reading was found was the nineteenth century. Even then, one needs a book as widely read as Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History
of Creation (1844) —read by more than a hundred thousand people in all walks of life—to be able to gather such a mosaic of information. Books of travel to Mexico had a more compact readership, made up mostly of colleagues writing their own similar accounts. Evidence of their interaction is more thinly spread.

A few conclusions do emerge even from the study of such scant evidence. One of them is that assumptions of readership based on current knowledge or ubiquity of texts are wrong. Humboldt, whose Political Essay on the Viceroyalty of New Spain was allegedly sold out in when it first appeared in 1811, did not sell many copies in 1824, when John Taylor had an abridged version of his work published. It is hard to imagine anyone but the hardest readers with vested interests in Mexico, ploughing through his compendium of statistics and geographical information—a reminder, surely, that there are more uses to a book than to read for pure leisure. It might be argued, then, that by the late 1830’s Humboldt was more quoted than actually read by the British travellers who followed in his wake. Bullock, too, was an unlikely popular author at the time of his exhibition, but clearly not three years later, when few, it seems, would buy his books.

The question of what exactly counts as travel literature was brought up in the introduction. Whatever it was, by the mid eighteenth century, reviewers were well aware of a certain type of reader for the genre. By mid nineteenth century, as the case of Mexican books proves, writers were well aware of the limits and conventions governing the perceived genre, and of a certain type of audience for it. Basil Hall’s correspondence, as much as publishers’ readers’ reports, is indicative of this.

The sources for a history of readership of this particular type of literature need to be re-evaluated. Subscription lists have been used mainly to determine the readership of eighteenth century publications. “We have been accustomed to speak of a ‘reading public’, and much of our cultural thinking is based on its existence”, wrote one author; “Yet if subscription lists are any kind of guide, the public was not an entity but a sharply stratified array of separate audiences...there was little homogeneity in the more literate public. And readership even of belles-lettres or history would be strongly conditioned by social and political factors. This knowledge must have coloured the writer’s awareness of his own task.”. According to accounts of travel to Mexico, the anecdotal evidence stands against this assumption. Readers of this very specific type of book were few, and from similar background: geographers, publishers of other travel accounts, cartographers. Among the compact group of people who subscribed to these books, the most recurrent were booksellers. Knowing who retailed books is still a far cry from knowing who the readers were.

559 Secord, 2005.
560 Pat Rogers, p. 1540.
Even when we know who subscribed to a publication, “the information available tells us frustratingly little about the motives which led people to buy or borrow specific texts and it tells us nothing at all about how those texts were read. Perhaps most basically, it tells us almost nothing about what counted as reading.” Kaufman said as much when, describing circulating libraries, he warned that “we are never [...] sure what a record of borrowing means as a criterion of interest and/or actual study”.

Ultimately, then, we must look at the group of people most interested in accounts of travel—other travellers—to find the elusive readers. They are hardly representative of the so-called common reader, but we can be sure that they, of all people, made up the audience for the genre.

Regarding the author
That the identity of an author is crucial for the credibility of the tale of travel needs not be stressed any further. Hakluyt’s omission of an account he believed to be spurious from the second edition of his book sets the trend for later publishers of travel accounts. The discussion over the dubious authorship of some of the texts published by Hakluyt overlooks the fact that, no matter what particular text was being mentioned, it was Hakluyt himself who was the authority. Hakluyt the editor assumed the authority of all the travellers he helped to become famous. This is not only true of Hakluyt’s era: Robyn Davidson recently included an account of travel to South East Asia in her anthology, giving us not the name of the actual traveller, but only the name of Richard Hakluyt, as if the geographer who never travelled any further than France had embarked on the long journey.

Who, then, were the authors? They were sixteenth century seamen probably using the help of what today we would call a “ghost writer”; a seventeenth century renegade friar, trying to save his own life; ship captains in the eighteenth century, wanting to enter the pantheon of naval glory. In the nineteenth century, a naval officer and aspiring author; two commissioners for mining companies—one, a museum owner, the other a disgruntled former naval officer on half-pay; two diplomats; an anonymous merchant—the only nameless account, in the form of letters to an unknown recipient; a prospector for an English pearl fishing company; a mercenary at the service of the French in Mexico; a businessman, the wife of a Spanish ambassador, the wife of the administrator of a silver mint, a self-professed tourist, an ethnographer, a self-proclaimed travel writer and journalist.

561 Raven.
562 Kaufman, pp. 188-221.
With the exception of the latter, not one of them was actually a full time author. Only three books were written by women. If Annie Sampson Poole’s account of life in Mexico confirms what Leask has observed about Fanny Calderón’s account, that women travellers tended to concentrate their attention on the domestic and private rather than the public and political, Ethel Tweedie’s late nineteenth century account subverts all specific ideas of femininity associated to the genre. It cannot be said that Ethel Tweedie was the only woman writer to break out of the late Victorian domestic mould, as the writing of Freya Stark would soon illustrate. As in most other matters, in fact, it can hardly be said that developments in this particular body of literature were unique to British writers about Mexico. In fact, they usually echo the genre’s earlier development elsewhere. The Mexican case study is thus relevant because it is typical of the development of British travel literature as a whole.

Generally speaking, there is a progression from travel writing as religious pamphleteering (as in Hakluyt and Gage) to travel writing as a report of privateering and piracy (as in Cavendish, Anson, Dampier and Rogers), and later an almost natural offshoot of a career at sea, to travel writing as means for communicating geographical knowledge (as in Basil Hall) and, finally, to travel writing as personal narrative. This last development could be attributed in great part to Humboldt’s legacy. As Ward complained, the German sage had done such a monumental job in providing statistical and geographical information about Mexico that the only possible contributions thereafter were strictly personal narratives. There was clearly, then, a change in intent. We must beware however, as Chartier warns, to distinguish between authorial intent—“mechanisms…that are a part of the strategies of writing and the author’s intentions”—and the eventualities of the publishing process—“the ones that result from publishing decisions or the constraints of the print shop.”^563

The publisher as midwife
The matter of whether the British were the most avid travellers, or whether they were simply the most avid publishers of travels, can hardly be discerned without similar studies regarding the publishing history of non-British travel writing. As far as the British publishing business goes, it can hardly be said that during the early modern period there was a group of printers, publishers or booksellers who specialised in knowledge about New Spain. Accounts of travel to Mexico comprised a diminutive fraction of the total number of texts included in the collections edited by Hakluyt and Purchas. In the eighteenth century, the syndicate of retailers who consistently subscribed to and were shareholders in books related to the Spanish colony were, to judge by the list of other
publications they supported, interested in books of geographic knowledge in general. It is easier to understand why of all nineteenth century publishers John Murray would have had a direct interest in Mexico: not only had John Murray III given prominence to travel accounts, but he had actually had shares in Mexican mines, and a number of his authors ended up in Mexico. And yet, books on Mexico remained a sort of niche market, with a devoted but restricted readership. They may have been profitable during the very brief period following independence and leading up to the financial crash of late 1825. After that, they were the sort of books publishers produce at a loss, financed by other more successful titles.

To delve into the history of a book’s production process does not clash with textual criticism. On the contrary, it allows those concerned only with text to better place it. It matters, for instance, that Fanny Calderón was persuaded by someone else to turn her correspondence into a book, as much as it matters that Hakluyt excluded an author because he thought he was lying. This sort of history intersects a broader history of communications in more than one way. A recurrent observation regards what one might call the stabilisation of print. It is clear from Payne’s research on Hakluyt—who extracted texts and inserted maps after The Principall Navigations was printed, causing surviving copies to show a slightly varied content—\footnote{Payne, 1997, pp. 3-16.} that the advent of print did not mean knowledge became fixed. It is clear, too, even from evidence from the nineteenth century, that information at the stage of proofing was still liable to be dramatically discarded, and lost. In a less literal way, too, knowledge was more fragile with the spread of print. Among other things, it was capable of the destabilisation of knowledge, “or what had been thought to be knowledge, by making readers more conscious of the existence of conflicting stories and interpretations. As in the case of texts, therefore, the fixity of knowledge encouraged by print was relative rather than absolute.”\footnote{Briggs & Burke, 2001, p. 68; cf. also Johns, p. 49.} The history of British accounts of travel to Mexico is an endless succession of knowledge being superimposed on knowledge, tales of travel layered over each other, paving the way for future travellers. It is also a history of stories contradicting each other, and of travellers claiming to have travelled further, for longer, under the best conditions for the observation of the country’s true nature. It is, ultimately, a history of different forms of knowledge—statistical, narrative, geographic, fictional, personal—competing against each other in the authors’ minds and on publishers’ desks as well as in the readers’ minds.
Appendix I

British travellers in Mexico—printed sources.

1569  Hawkins, John, A true declaration of the troublesome voyage of Mr. John Hawkins to the parts of Guynea and the West Indies, in the year of Our Lord 1567 and 1568, London: pr. For T. Purfoote for L. Hanson.

1589  Hakluyt, Richard, The Principal Navigations, Violages and Discoveries of the English Nation, made by Sea or Over Land, to the most remote and Farthest distant Quarters of the Earth at any time within the compasse of these 1500 yeeres, London: pr. By G. Bishop & R. Newberie [Includes accounts by Robert Tomson (1561); John Chilton (1561); Roger Bodenham (1564); John Hawkins (1568); Miles Philips (1568); David Ingram (1568); Henry Hawks (1571); Francis Drake (1577-80); Thomas Cavendish (1586-88)].


1648  Gage, Thomas, The English-American, his travail by Sea and Land, or a New Survey of the West—Indias, containing a journal of three thousand and three hundred miles within the mainland of America, London: pr. By R. Cotes, sold by Humphrey Blunden at the Castle in Cornhill, and Thomas Williams at the Bible in Little Britain.

1697  Dampier, William, A voyage round the world, London: James Knapton.

* Collections and travel compilations have been excluded unless they offered original information about Mexico, as in Hakluyt and Purchas.

1718  Rogers, Woodes, Captn., *A Cruising Voyage Round the World: First to the South-Sea, thence to the East Indies, and Homewards by the Cape of Good Hope, begun in 1708 and Finish'd in 1711*, London: pr. for Andrew Bell and Bernard Lintot.

1724  Philips, Miles, *Voyages and Adventures of Miles Philips, a West-Country Sailor* (1568), London.


1769  Cook, (Lt. of Royal Navy), *Remarks on a passage from the Balice, in the Bay of Honduras, to Merida ,the capital of the province of Jucatan, in the Spanish West Indies*, London: pr. For C. Parker [On dispute between Spanish Crown and English wood cutters in the Bay of Honduras].

1824  Bullock, William, *Six Month’s residence and travels in Mexico; containing remarks on the present state of New Spain, its natural productions, state of society, manufactures, trade, agriculture and antiquities, etc.*, London, J. Murray.

Anon. [Wavell, A.G.], *Notes and reflections on Mexico, its mines, policy, &c. By a traveller, some years resident in that and other American states*, London: J.M. Richardson.


[Corrected proofs for original first seven chapters, unpublished, were available for revision at Maggs Booksellers, London].

Forbes, Alexander, *California: a history of Upper and Lower California from their first discovery, comprising an account of the climate, soil, natural productions, agriculture, commerce, etc. A full view of the missionary establishments and condition of the free and domesticated Indians. With an appendix relating to steam navigation in the Pacific*, London: Smith, Elder.

1843 Calderón de la Barca, Francis Erskine (Inglis), *Life in Mexico during a residence of two years in that country*, London, Chapman and Hall.


1863 Vigne, Godfrey Thomas, *Travels in Mexico, South America, etc., etc.*, London: W.H. Allen.


1883 Brocklehurst, Thomas Unnet, *Mexico to-day: a country with a great future, and a glance at the prehistoric remains and antiquities of the Montezumans*, London: J. Murray.


1901 Tweedie, Ethel Brilliana (Harley), *Mexico as I saw it*, London: Hurst and Blackett.
## Appendix 2:  
Some nineteenth century books and production figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (Publisher)</th>
<th>Date of publication</th>
<th>Copies</th>
<th>Price (£.s.d.)</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Bullock, *Six months' residence* (J. Murray) | 1<sup>st</sup> ed., May 1824  
2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Sept. '27 | 1500  
750 (136 sold at Coffee House sale) | 18s  
Remainders sold off at 3s. | All copies sold  
Loss: £28.3s |
| Lyon, *Journal of a residence, 2 v.* (J. Murray) | April 1827 | 2000 | £400  
"Copies all sold" | |
| Thompson, *Narrative of a mission...* (J. Murray) | Feb. 1829 | 750 | Loss: £45.19s.6d (by 1835) | |
| Hardy, *Across Mexico* (Bentley & Colburn) | 30 October 1829 | 16s. | | |
| Ruxton, *Adventures in Mexico* (J. Murray, Colonial & Home Library) | Nov. 1847 | 8,850<sup>***</sup> (1847-'96) | 2s.6d. | All copies sold. |
| Tylor, *Anahuac* (Longman, on commission) | Mar. 6, 1861 | 400 | 12s. | Most sold within a year; further supplies sold at about 3 copies/yr. |
| Lempiere, *Notes in Mexico* (Longman, on commission) | Nov. 1862-April 1863 | 350 | 12s.6d. | 80 disposed of for free; 10 copies returned to author June 1872. |
| W. Hall Bullock, *Across Mexico* (MacMillan) | April 1866 | 750 | 10s.6d. | No destroy date (i.e. no unsold copies) |
| Geiger, *A peep at Mexico*, (Trübner, on commission) | Sept. 1874 | 500 | 17s. | Unsold copies at hand in 1892. |
| Brocklehurst, *Mexico To-day* (J. Murray) | March 1883 | 1500 | 21s. (1 guinea) | 1200 sold by April 1883; causing losses by June 1894. |
| Rider Haggard, *Montezuma's Daughter* (Longman) | 1893 | 1893: 10,000  
1895-1913: 17, 500.  
Total: 27, 500. | Published profitably on royalty system. |

<sup>***</sup> With a few exceptions (cf. note 3), "750 copies was... the standard figure for a serious book of some general interest" [Basteman]

<sup>**</sup> A very rough conversion to modern monetary value can be carried out by multiplying the 19<sup>th</sup> century price by 50, and considering £1=20s, 1s=12d. Thus, at 18s. Bullock's book of 1824 would cost approx. £45 today (18x50/20)

<sup>***</sup> The standard print run for Murray's Colonial and Home Library, the firm's failed attempt at entering the popular cheap book market, was 4,000 [Fraser, 1997].

182
BIBLIOGRAPHY

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Bentley papers, British Library, London: correspondence, production ledgers and readers' reports from Richard Bentley, Publisher, later Bentley & Colburn.

British Museum Archive, London: Museum's trustees' correspondence and meeting minutes.

Conway papers, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge: transcriptions and some translations of Inquisition records, mostly from Mexico City's National Archive, regarding Englishmen in Mexico.

John Murray Archives, London: correspondence and production ledgers from the John Murray publishing company.

Longman Company Archives, Reading University Library, Reading: production ledgers from the house of Longman.


Somerset Archive & Record Office, Taunton: letters of George Francis Lyon to Sir Henry Bayntun.

Travellers Club Archive, London: candidate forms and committee meeting minutes.

REFERENCE


* Pre-1900 periodicals and newspapers cited in the text do not appear in this bibliography.


**PRINTED SOURCES & SECONDARY LITERATURE**


Alberich, José, “English attitudes towards the Hispanic world in the time of Bello as reflected by the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly Reviews*”, in Lynch (ed.)


Anon., “Conozcan los Mexicanos a los Malos Extrangeros”, Mexico City: Imprenta de Riviera, 1832 [pamphlet, BL, Add. 9770.k.10(70)]

Anon., “Los Extrangeros y los Aventureros”, Mexico City: 1832 [pamphlet, BL, Add. 9770.bb.21 (41)]


Batten, Jr. Charles, “Literary responses to the Eighteenth-Century voyages”, in *Howse* (ed.).


Bullock, William, *A Description of the Unique Exhibition, Called Ancient Mexico; Collected on the Spot in 1823, by the Assistance of the Mexican Government, and now Open for Public Inspection at the Egyptian Hall, Poccadilly, London*: privately printed, 1824.


Crouch, Nathaniel [writing as Robert Burton], *The English Empire in America...*, London: printed for author, 1635.


-----------------,


A Complete View of the Joint Stock Companies Formed During the Years 1824 and 1825, London: Boosey & Sons, 1827.


Fish, Stanley, Is There a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities, Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.


Flores Salinas, Berta, México visto por algunos de sus viajeros. Siglos XVI y XVII, Mexico City: Ediciones Botoras, 1964.

Ford, John, “Rudolph Ackermann: Publisher to Latin America”, in Bello y London.

“Rudolph Ackermann: Culture and Commerce in Latin America (1822-1829)”, in Lynch (ed.).


Freyre, Gilberto, Ingleses no Brasil (1948), Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1977 (2nd ed.).

Froude, J.E., English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century (1895), London: ..., repr. 1922.


Hall, John, Quo Vadis? A lust Censure of Travell as it is Commonly Undertaken by the Gentlemen of our Nation, 1617.


Hodgen, Margaret, Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Philadelphia: ...1964.


Humphreys, R.A., Liberation in South America. 1806-1827. The Career of James


Hunter, J. Paul, Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth Century English

private circulation), 1923.

Illife, Robert, “Author-mongering. The role of the ‘editor’ between producer and
consumer”, in Bermingham & Brewer (eds.)

Iser, Wolfgang, The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from

Israel, Jonathan, Race, Class and Politics in Colonial Mexico. 1610-1670, Oxford,

Iturriaga de la Fuente, José, Anecdotario de viajeros extranjeros en México. Siglos

James, Edward, Remarks on the Mines, Management, Ores, &c., &c., of the District of
Guanaxuato, Belonging to the Anglo Mexican Mining Association, by... late a
mine-agent in the service of that Association, London: Effingham Wilson, 1827.

Jardine, Nick, and Marina Frasca-Spada, Books and the Sciences in History,

Jiménez Codinach, Guadalupe, La Gran Bretaña y la Independencia de México. 1808-

--------------------------------------, “La Europa aventurera, 1800-1899”, in Viajeros
Europeos del siglo XIX en México.

Johns, Adrian, The Nature of the Book. Print and Knowledge in the Making, Chicago:

Johnson, Francis, “Notes on English Retail Book-Prices, 1550-1640”, The Library, 5th

Jordan, John O., Robert Patten, Literature in the Marketplace. Nineteenth Century
British Publishing and Reading Practices, Cambridge: Cambridge University


Keen, Benjamin, The Aztec Image in Western Thought, New Brunswick: Rutgers


Mecziems, Jenny, ""Tis not to divert the Reader": Moral and Literary Determinants in some Early Travel Narratives", in Dodd (ed.).


------------------------, "Strange, remote, and farre distant countreyes': the travel books of Richard Hakluyt", in Myers & Harris (eds.)

Phillips, Richard, "Writing travel and mapping sexuality: Richard Burton's Sotadic Zone", in Duncan & Gregory (eds.).


Rubíes, Joan Pau, “Instructions for travellers: Teaching the eye to see”, *History and Anthropology*, vol. 9, nos. 2-3 (1996).


Wilcox, Scott, “El Panorama de Leicester Square”, in *Viajeros Europeos del siglo XIX en México*.


Attention is drawn to the fact that the copyright of this dissertation rests with its author.

This copy of the dissertation has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author. In accordance with the Law of Copyright no information derived from the dissertation or quotation from it may be published without full acknowledgement of the source being made nor any substantial extract from the dissertation published without the author’s written consent.