

# Travels, Explorations and Empires, 1770–1835

Latin America and the Carribean

*Edited by*  
Nigel Leask



TRAVELS, EXPLORATIONS AND EMPIRES

Volume 7

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Tim Fulford

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Tilar J. Mazzeo

TRAVELS,  
EXPLORATIONS AND  
EMPIRES

WRITINGS FROM THE ERA OF  
IMPERIAL EXPANSION  
1770–1835

Volume 7  
LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARRIBEAN

Edited by Nigel Leask

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# INTRODUCTION

## HISTORY AND GEOPOLITICS

What sympathy does the traveller excite, while he imprints the first step, that leads to civilization and all its boundless blessings, along the trackless desert, and struggling with the savageness of the untamed wilderness, obtains a victory that belongs to mankind.<sup>1</sup>

Helen Maria Williams's euphoric praise for Humboldt's celebrated expedition to tropical Spanish America in the years 1799–1804 set the tone for many of the Northern European travel accounts about the region which proliferated over the following decades, and which are the subject of this volume. Williams represents Latin America as virgin territory, 'nature' unmediated by civilisation, awaiting the transformative magic of European reason, progress, and capital to stir it from the long slumber of Spanish and Portuguese colonial misrule. Humboldt himself personifies the restless Romantic spirit of exploration, turning his back on the bloody battlefields of Europe to win a victory for all humanity, exploring and evoking the unknown forests, cordilleras, and *llanos* (plains) of the new continent. From being a closed book, America is now represented as an opportunity for Northern European explorers, naturalists, merchants and miners. While (as I will demonstrate below) this was a deeply tendentious description of colonial Latin America on the eve of its bloody struggle for independence, Williams's praise of Humboldt's 'first step' in civilising the trackless desert aptly illustrates the depths of foreign ignorance about the present condition, and idealism about the future prospects, of the region.

Those parts of continental America and the insular Caribbean with which this volume is concerned were 'discovered' for Europeans in 1492 by Christopher Columbus and claimed for the Spanish crown. The rapid overthrow of the advanced indigenous civilisations of the New World by conquistadores like Hernàn Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, Diego de Almagro, Pedro de Valdivia and de Sousa, assisted by the lethal microbes against which native Americans had no resistance, is one of the most dramatic and bloody chapters of world history. Spanish and Portuguese rule was consolidated by the 1530s, an extraordinary short space of time considering the

1 Translator's preface, Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent*, trans. Helen Maria Williams (London, 1814), vol. I, p. v.



geographical scale of the conquest. Despite the rhetoric of civilization and conversion to Christianity, the conquerors were largely motivated by unbridled lust for gold and silver. While the legend of El Dorado long haunted the colonial imagination in the form of an elusive desire for fabled wealth, the mines of Mexico, Colombia and Peru did provide the bullion upon which the Spanish and Portuguese global empires flourished, until their supersession by the new empires of France, Holland and Britain. If the historical pattern of European settlement was initially determined by the quest for gold and silver in highland Mexico and the western cordilleras of the South American Andes, the political geography of Latin America subsequently developed in accordance with Spanish and Portuguese administrative and judiciary divisions. The huge sixteenth-century Spanish viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru (to which New Granada and Río de la Plata were added in the eighteenth century) were divided into captaincy-generals and *audiencias*, partly administrative, partly judicial units. These colonial divisions would largely determine the shape of the Spanish-speaking republics: Mexico in North America, the Central American republics, Venezuela, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Portuguese-speaking Brazil. In the case of Brazil, where a more sporadic conquest had created a less centralised authority and a smaller administrative system than in the Spanish colonies, the biggest state in Latin America was divided up into twenty captaincies granted to nobles for tropical plantations worked by imported African slaves.

The massive exploitation of indigenous Indian and later imported African labour in the plantations and mines of America, the notorious *encomienda* and *mita* systems, gave rise in Britain to the so-called 'black legend' of Iberian cruelty and rapacity, not of course without justification. On the other hand, few Britons seemed aware that universities and printing presses had been established in Mexico City and Lima since the middle of the sixteenth century, and that the colonies had developed a rich syncretic culture on the back of conquest and enslavement. Although the systematic brutalisation and legal enslavement of Indians by the *encomenderos* had been successfully challenged by the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas and others, even the church cleaved to the doctrine of 'spiritual conquest' and was only able or willing to mitigate the Indians' harsh yoke to a small degree. The impact of the Catholic missions (Franciscan, Dominican, Augustinian and later Jesuit) in colonising traditional Indian societies is the subject of several excerpts in this volume, notably those by Ulloa, Humboldt and Martin Dobrizhoffer.

The racial amalgamation resulting from these unprecedented programmes of social engineering produced large hybrid populations in all the colonies, and the Spanish obsession with *pureza de sangre* created a proliferation of racial and ethnic categories (the *castas*) ranging from *indios* and *negros* (both free and enslaved Africans) through *mestizos* (product of Indian and European amalga-

mation), *mulatos* (African and European amalgamation), *zambos* (Indian and African amalgamation), and a bewildering range of sub-categories such as *tercerones* and *cuarterones*, outlined here in the first excerpt from Ulloa's *Voyage to South America*. By about 1800 almost 45 per cent of the Spanish Empire's population of 14.1 million was non-Indian and over 20 per cent was mestizo or otherwise mixed: Europeans were in a clear minority. The poverty and oppression suffered by the *castas*, *indígenas* and *negros* are a recurrent theme in all the travelogues represented here, and they were barely alleviated (sometimes even exacerbated) by republican independence. At the top of the social pyramid sat the European colonisers themselves; pride of place went to those born in Spain (*penisulares*), followed, in a markedly subordinate position, by the American-born Europeans or *criollos*. It was this subordination which, more than any other single factor, would fuel the flames of the Creole independence movements after 1808.

The jealous exclusion of foreigners from the Spanish and Portuguese colonies and their cultural and economic isolation from the rest of the world perhaps helps to explain Williams's Promethean image of Humboldt, although in fact the Prussian explorer never stepped beyond the boundaries and infrastructure of Spanish imperial power, and travelled as its representative. With the default of colonial power from 1808, Latin America was suddenly opened to the outside world, and British, French and North American publics craved information about the newly independent republics, fed by a proliferation of new travel accounts. Although travel books about Latin America had circulated in print during the eighteenth century, most were either plagiarised from sixteenth-century Spanish chroniclers or were the narratives of pirates or freebooters such as Sir Walter Raleigh and William Dampier, whose knowledge was confined to the coastal margins of the continent. William Bullock, in his *Six Months' Residence in Mexico* (1824), claimed that his was the first British travel account of Mexico to be published since Thomas Gage's record of his visit to New Spain during the reign of Charles I. Gage had only been permitted entry because he was an English Dominican priest destined for the Manila missions, but he later absconded and travelled extensively in New Spain. The same closure prevailed in the Portuguese colonies: as one reviewer of John Mawe's *Travels* wrote in 1812, on the eve of independence, 'the extreme jealousy of the Portuguese would not, until very recently, allow a foreigner, touching at any of the ports of Brazil, to sleep on shore, nor even to walk about in the day time, without a soldier at his heels: the interior of the country was *terra incognita*, completely sealed up by a succession of guard houses, which the colonists themselves were not permitted to pass without leave from the highest authority'.<sup>1</sup>

1 *Quarterly Review* (June 1812), p. 346.

Colonial Latin America may have been isolated, but it was not as backward as many European travellers believed. Following Alexis de Tocqueville's paradox, revolution and independence followed in the wake of liberalisation rather than increased oppression, in this case the Bourbon reform programme of the later eighteenth century. In 1737 Phillip V of Spain permitted Charles-Marie de la Condamine's expedition to visit Ecuador and other Spanish colonies in America as part of a belated programme of Spanish Enlightenment. Antonio de Ulloa's *Voyage to South America* (see below, pp. 1–18), the official account of the expedition by its leading Spanish member, portrayed imperial rule in the American colonies in a generally positive light. Unbeknown to his contemporaries, however, Ulloa (and his co-author Jorge Juan) had been commissioned by the Spanish crown to draw up a confidential report on its colonies entitled *Noticias secretas de América*, which contained a devastating condemnation of colonial inertia, corruption and misrule. This work only became public after it fell into British hands in the early nineteenth century, when it caused something of a sensation. Acting on the advice of experts like Ulloa, Charles III of Spain (1759–88) dismantled many of the economic restrictions on his American colonists, introducing *comercio libre* and abolishing the trade monopoly of Cadiz and Seville. Such relaxations were however accompanied by a rigorous new imperialist ideology which sought to subject the colonies to a greater bureaucratic control, increasing dependence upon the metropolis and stirring up creole resentment. The expulsion of the Jesuit order from Spanish territory in 1767 was part of this process of imperial consolidation, and caused widespread unrest throughout Catholic America as well as establishing a diaspora of exiled Jesuits in Europe. Polemical attacks on Spanish imperialism and apologies for American Creole culture by exiled Jesuits like the Mexican Francisco Xavier Clavigero, the Chilean Juan Ignacio Molina and the Austrian Martin Dobrizhoffer contributed to the creation of a new Creole identity which would come into its own in the coming decades. These writers participated in the so-called 'dispute of the New World', parrying the attacks on American culture and nature by Enlightenment savants such as the comte de Buffon, Guillaume-Thomas Raynal and Cornelius de Pauw.<sup>1</sup>

Humboldt does not look quite so Promethean when we realise that his travels were only made possible by a commission from Charles IV of Spain to report on the state of his colonies, especially the mines (Humboldt was a Freiburg-trained mining engineer and mineralogist). In the words of David Brading, 'when he explored the upper reaches of the Orinoco [Humboldt] received every possible assistance from local missionaries and officials and in return he communicated the results of his observations on longitude and latitude (which showed that Portugal had advanced well beyond the agreed

<sup>1</sup> See Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World*, trans. Jeremy Moyle, (Pittsburgh, 1973).

frontiers) to the government in Caracas for dispatch to Madrid'.<sup>1</sup> For all his subsequent importance in promoting 'creole self-fashioning',<sup>2</sup> Humboldt travelled as 'the spokesperson for the Bourbon enlightenment',<sup>3</sup> transmitting to his European readers a summary of the geographical researches of a generation of Spanish and Creole savants in the supposedly 'backward' colonies of Latin America. Although the Portuguese Enlightenment had not kept pace with that of its more powerful Spanish neighbour, the Derby mineralogist John Mawe was privileged (in a fashion similar to Humboldt) to be one of the first foreigners permitted by the Portuguese crown to enter the Brazilian interior in 1809–10, with the commission of assessing the economic potential of the gold and diamond mines in Minas Gerais province.<sup>4</sup>

By the 1770s, the enfeebled Iberian powers no longer held the monopoly on the whole geographical area covered by this volume, and Spain's territorial losses to its colonial rivals were most evident in the valuable sugar colonies of the Caribbean. Although Santa Domingo, Cuba and Puerto Rico remained under Spanish rule (the latter two were Spain's first and last American colonies), France, Britain, Holland and later Denmark had wrested valuable plantation islands from Spain in the seventeenth century through war and piracy.<sup>5</sup> Both the French sugar colony of Saint-Domingue (renamed Haiti after the revolution against colonial rule initiated by Toussaint L'Ouverture) and British-owned Jamaica had been wrested from Spain, the latter in 1660. Nor was British, French and Dutch power limited to the Caribbean islands: French and Dutch Guyana, (to which British Guyana was formally added after 1815) were relatively small territories on the north-east corner of the South American landmass, and Britain also possessed logging camps in Belize (British Honduras) on the Caribbean coast of Central America. The confusing colonial proprietorship of Guyana is evident in Waterton's *Travels*, which refers to British possessions in 'ci-devant' Dutch Guyana. An earlier travelogue, John Stedman's *Narrative of a Five-Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796) described the Scottish author's experience as a mercenary soldier in the Dutch service suppressing slave rebellion in Surinam (Dutch Guyana).<sup>6</sup> In common with Matthew Gregory Lewis's celebrated

1 David Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State, 1492–1867* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 517.

2 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York, 1992), pp. 172–200.

3 Brading, *The First America*, p. 517.

4 Hugh Torrens, 'Under Royal Patronage: The Early Work of John Mawe in Geology and the Background to his Travels in Brazil in 1807–10', in M. Lopes and S. Figueiroa, eds, *O conhecimento geológico na América Latina: questões de história e teoria* (Campinas, Brazil, 1990), pp. 103–13. Thanks to Anne Secord for this reference.

5 J. H. Parry and P. M. Sherlock, *A Short History of the West Indies* (London and New York, 1965), pp. 27–62.

6 Despite its importance, Stedman's *Narrative* is not included here because there is a recent annotated edition of the 1796 text by R. A. J. van Lier (Barre, 1971) as well as an edition of Stedman's original manuscript edited by Richard and Sally Price (Baltimore, 1988).

*Journal of a West Indian Proprietor, Kept During a Residence in Jamaica* (1834),<sup>1</sup> most early nineteenth-century travel accounts of the British Caribbean (such as those of John Stewart and Henry Nelson Coleridge in the present volume) were preoccupied with the reform of the plantation system in the light of the imminent emancipation of the slaves. Britain had pioneered the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in 1806–7, but slavery was still legal in its colonies until 1834, and there was an overriding fear on the part of white planters of rebellion along the lines of the genocidal Saint-Domingue uprising of 1791, as well as anxiety concerning the economic future of the sugar islands following emancipation.

### THE REVOLUTIONARY DECADES

The romantic Spanish America evoked by Helen Maria Williams as a silent and ‘trackless’ scene of nature could not be further from the turbulent reality of the two decades which followed Humboldt’s expedition. The historical background to the travel narratives of Hall, Graham, Head, Proctor and Bullock included in this volume is the protracted and violent struggle for independence of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies.<sup>2</sup> Although rebellion had been endemic in all the colonies before 1800, especially amongst the oppressed Indians, Blacks and *castas*, the Latin American independence struggle was precipitated by Napoleon’s invasion of Spain and Portugal in 1808, and the collapse of Bourbon rule. The fact that the Portuguese monarchy fled to exile in Brazil dictated the very different progress of Brazilian independence, surveyed below. In 1812 the new Spanish Cortes (parliament) produced a liberal constitution which claimed for the first time to represent the colonists. The Creole élites were unconvinced, equally distrustful of Napoleon, the Bourbons, and Spanish liberalism, with its strongly imperialist leanings. To support their interests and assert their independence in the face of conflicting messages from the metropolis, the Creoles needed to mobilise entire populations; but at the same time they feared the consequences of racial insurrection on the pattern of Saint-Domingue or the Peruvian Tupac Amaru revolt in 1780–2.

Faced by a crisis of legitimation, local Creole élites began to take power into their own hands, and the flames of independence quickly swept over the whole continent. The first outbreak kindled in Buenos Aires in the wake of the disastrous British invasion attempt of 1806–7. It led, in May 1810, to a declaration of independence in the sparsely settled viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata, and spread across the Pampas and the Andes to Chile and Upper Peru

1 See the new edition by Judith Terry in Oxford World Classics.

2 My brief account here is indebted to John Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808–26*, second edition (New York and London, 1986), and Mark Burkholder and Lyman Johnson, *Colonial Latin America*, third edition (New York and London, 1998).

(Bolivia) in the years that followed. The second (on the heels of the first) was sparked by Venezuela's declaration of independence in December 1811 and spread, with terrible violence and inter-ethnic strife, to New Granada, Ecuador and finally Peru. However the initial, frustrated social revolution of the years 1810–14 quickly suffered a severe setback as the authoritarian Ferdinand VII of Spain, finally rid of the Napoleonic incubus, began to strike back against his rebellious Creole subjects. An enormous Spanish force sailed to Venezuela under the command of General Pablo Morillo ('the Pacifier') in 1815, but despite initial victories in crushing rebellion, the counter-revolution achieved only temporary success.

Although Spanish American independence was finally achieved by a host of *caudillos*, mercenaries, opportunists and idealists, two men emerged to prominence as supreme 'liberators' in South America. From the Río de la Plata came José de San Martín, a Creole soldier and veteran of the peninsular campaign in Spain with strong monarchist leanings, who carried the revolutionary torch from Argentina across the Andes to Chile and Peru. From the north emerged the brilliant Simón Bolívar, scion of a Venezuelan aristocratic family who had travelled widely in Europe (he had met Humboldt in Paris in 1804), educated himself in Enlightenment philosophy and now struggled to accommodate his egalitarian political ideals to the inhospitable conditions of post-colonial Latin America. In 1817 San Martín crossed the Andes from Mendoza into the valleys of central Chile, where he defeated the royalists at the battle of Chacabuco in February 1817, and again at Maipo in April 1818, the latter a decisive victory which, in his own words, 'decided the fate of South America'. Under the directorship of Bernardo O'Higgins, Chile became the power base of the revolution on the Pacific coast of America, from which San Martín launched his expedition to liberate the royalist stronghold of Peru in August 1820. The Chilean navy was led by the brilliant mercenary Admiral Thomas Cochrane, future Earl of Dundonald, who in November 1820 attacked the Spanish navy in the Peruvian port of Calloa and captured its flagship, the 44-gun *Esmeralda*, thereby disabling the fleet from further action against the insurgents. O'Higgins, San Martín and Cochrane all figure prominently in the travel narratives of Basil Hall, Francis Head, Maria Graham and William Proctor. In her *Journal of a Residence in Chile*, Graham, an intimate friend of Cochrane, offers a detailed, if biased, account of Cochrane's increasing frustration with San Martín's softly-softly approach to Peruvian liberation, leading to his eventual resignation and transfer to the Brazilian service in 1823. Proctor's *Journey across the Cordilleras* paints a grim portrait of Peru during the critical years of 1823–4, when civil war divided the country in the wake of San Martín's resignation, and permitted the Spanish to regroup, before their final defeat by Bolívar and his trusted lieutenant Antonio José de Sucre at the battles of Junín and Ayacucho in August and December 1824.

Bolívar had been called to liberate Peru from the north, where he had finally triumphed against massive odds. The Spanish reconquest of Venezuela in 1815 had driven him into exile in Jamaica, where in September 1815 he composed his celebrated 'Jamaica Letter', analysing the failure of the first wave of the revolution and seeking to define the conditions for the success of the second. In December 1816, backed by Alexandre Pétion, ruler of free Haiti and rival of King Henri Christophe, Bolívar launched a new invasion of the mainland and declared the third Venezuelan republic. Attentive to the racial tensions which divided Venezuelan society, and successfully enlisting the support of the *llanero* caudillo José Antonio Páez from the plains of Apure (visited by Humboldt only a decade and a half before), this time Bolívar was successful. At the Congress of Angostura in February 1819, deep in the Guyanan jungle, he sketched his plan for a balanced constitution on the British model, and was declared president of the republic. Reinforced by a legion of British mercenaries, Bolívar joined General Francisco de Paula Santander in May 1819 and crossed the Andes to liberate New Granada (Colombia), defeating the royalists at the battle of Boyaca before returning to Venezuela, where he crushed the Spaniards at the battle of Carabobo in 1821. The fruit of these victories was Bolívar's declaration of the united republic of Gran Colombia, uniting Venezuela, New Granada and Ecuador. Although Bolívar was still to triumph (albeit temporarily) in Peru's reluctant revolution, his idealistic plan for Gran Colombia was doomed to failure. The problem of administering power over huge distances and the regionalism long fostered by Spanish colonial rule led to the breakdown of the republic in 1829–30, and the frustration of Bolívar's ambitious political projects. 'America is ungovernable', he wrote whilst travelling into exile after a failed assassination attempt; 'those who serve the revolution plough the sea. The only thing to do is to emigrate.' He died a month later, a broken man.

Meanwhile, in the enormous viceroyalty of New Spain, which stretched from the shores of Panama to California, a very different kind of revolution had broken out in 1810. With more than 60 million inhabitants, New Spain was home to over 40 per cent of the entire Spanish American population. Its capital, Mexico City, was one of the largest cities in the western hemisphere, with 150,000 inhabitants, and was graced by a university, a college of mining, museums, art galleries and a botanical garden. In 1804, Humboldt had spent a year in Mexico travelling and gathering statistical information from local savants; when his *Political Essay on New Spain* was published in Britain in 1811, it alerted eager investors and entrepreneurs to the wealth of the silver-rich colony. By the time the entrepreneurs arrived in the 1820s, however, the mines had been devastated by a decade of war and bloodshed. Mexico had provided Spain with a staggering two-thirds of her entire imperial revenue in 1800, but her seemingly insatiable appetite for Mexican silver alienated the Creole élite and the church alike.

The Mexican revolution actually began as a pre-emptive Spanish strike against liberal proposals following the imprisonment of the Bourbon monarchy in 1808. This had the effect of stirring up Creole anger, leading to a fierce popular uprising in 1810 instigated by a visionary priest named Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla in the small parish of Dolores near Guanajuato north of Mexico City. The massacre of wealthy Spanish refugees in the Alhóndiga (granary) at Guanajuato by a ragged army of mestizo *campesinos*, miners and Indians revealed the racial antagonism which animated the rebellion, quickly alienating the sympathies of the Creole élite, which had been in the forefront of the South American revolutions. After Hidalgo's defeat by royalist armies at Calderón in 1811, the torch of revolution was taken up by a number of guerrilla leaders, such as Guadalupe Victoria, Vicente Guerrero, and perhaps the most celebrated *insurgente* of them all, José María Morelos, like Hidalgo a rural priest. It was Morelos who formally declared independence in November 1813, but the popular uprising of the *insurgentes* were defeated by the Spanish counter-revolution (like the first wave of the South American revolution) by the end of 1815.

The second Mexican revolution of 1820, led by the conservative counter-insurgent General Agustín de Iturbide, was of a very different stamp. The liberal Spanish Cortes of 1820 had quickly alienated the most powerful interest in Mexico by abolishing forced labour and confiscating church lands. In February 1821 Iturbide took a break from harrying Guerrero's guerrilla bands in the south to publish the Plan de Iguala, which proclaimed Mexican independence from Spain whilst guaranteeing constitutional monarchy, the preservation of the church and property rights. This was a disappointment to the republican revolutionaries, but the church exerted its powers over the masses and the Plan was accepted. Iturbide was a military dictator with an appetite for pomp and circumstance, and when he crowned himself Emperor Agustín I he alienated the republican sympathies of many of his compatriots. Pressurised by a republican party led by Generals Antonio López de Santa Anna and Guadalupe Victoria, and having lost the support of the royalists, he was forced to abdicate on 19 March 1823 (just before William Bullock's arrival in Mexico) and fled into exile in England. A republican constitution was drawn up in October 1824 which sought to balance the conservative centralism of Lucas Alamán's party with the interests of the liberal federalists represented by Victoria, elected as Mexico's first president, and which managed to sustain a precarious stability until 1827.

Independence in Brazil, the background to the excerpt from Maria Graham's *Journal of a Voyage*, followed a different trajectory from the revolutions of Spanish America, on account of the presence of the exiled Portuguese royal family on Brazilian soil. The arrival in 1808 of the court of the Prince Regent John (crowned John VI in 1816) brought with it numerous privileges, including economic liberalisation, increased immigration from



Europe, and social prestige for the Creole élite. In 1815 John declared Brazil to be a co-kingdom equal with Portugal itself. Brazil was virtually untouched by the revolutionary fires that raged across the rest of the continent, with the exception of a short-lived republican uprising in Pernambuco in 1817. Yet as elsewhere in Latin America, events in the metropolis destabilised Brazil, and King John was forced to follow events in Portugal by accepting a liberal constitution in 1821. When he returned to Portugal in July of the same year, he left behind his 22-year-old son Dom Pedro as regent. It would not be so easy to set back the clock, however, as Brazilians were reluctant to revert to colonial status after their king's return to Lisbon. During his father's absence, Dom Pedro became a champion of independence and, aided by his conservative cabinet leader José Bonifácio, assumed leadership of the Brazilian government in 1822. On 7 September he declared himself Pedro I, constitutional emperor of an independent Brazil. Through her friend Admiral Cochrane, Maria Graham was well connected at Dom Pedro's court, and she became close to the Empress Leopoldina when she served as tutor to the Infanta María de Gloria in 1824. Her remarks on independence in the *Journal* present a unique 'insider' view of the rapidly changing course of events.

#### BRITAIN, LATIN AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE AND THE BOOM OF TRAVEL ACCOUNTS

Part of the enormous appeal of Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* was its contribution to dispelling Northern European ignorance about Spanish America, an ignorance which had only been partly mitigated by the publication of Ulloa and Juan's *Voyage to South America* and other eighteenth-century narratives of the La Condamine expedition. In the wake of Humboldt, and following the outbreak of the wars of independence, the number of travel books about Latin America published in Britain reached a peak between 1815 and 1830 not equalled until after 1850.<sup>1</sup> This clearly reflected both a massive increase in the number of foreigners visiting the region and the involvement of British merchants, diplomats, military men, mercenaries and mining engineers in the revolutions of Spanish and Portuguese America. Britain has unsuccessfully invaded the Río de la Plata in 1806–7 (an eyewitness account is contained in John Mawe's *Travels*) but soon realised that its economic interests would be better served by trade and investment than by foolhardy attempts at colonisation. Although official British sympathy for the independence movement was hampered by the fact that monarchist Spain was Britain's ally against Napoleon after 1808, British merchants were prime beneficiaries of the opening of Spanish American ports in the wake of inde-

1 R. A. MacNeil and M. D. Dean, *Europeans in Latin America: Humboldt to Hudson* (Oxford, 1980), p. 23.

pendence, a fact that the government could not ignore. As in the case of Greece fighting free of the Ottoman empire in the same decade, popular opinion was strongly on the side of the *independistas*, despite government recalcitrance. Latin American independence was hotly debated in the British public journals throughout the Romantic period; the Whig *Edinburgh Review* led the way by espousing independence, followed by the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Times*, but the Tory *Quarterly Review* (founded in 1809, it should be remembered, in sympathy with the Spanish monarchist cause belittled by the *Edinburgh Review*) regarded Latin American republicanism as a dangerous extension of French Jacobin principles.<sup>1</sup>

In response to Napoleon's invasion of Spain, the British government established the South American naval squadron with a view to defending British political and mercantile interests in the region against the French threat. Over the next twenty years naval captains like Thomas Graham (Maria Graham's husband) and Basil Hall were sympathetic observers of the independence movement in Brazil, Río de la Plata, Chile, Peru, Venezuela and Mexico. The Admiralty's project of charting South America's coasts and exploring the naval, military and commercial opportunities of the newly independent South Atlantic littoral from Bãhia in Brazil to Bahía Blanco in Argentina (and further south to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego) was also productive of the most famous South American travel narrative of the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin's *Journal of Researches*. In 1831 Darwin sailed from England with Captain Fitzroy on board HMS *Beagle* in the role of ship's naturalist, although his famous account of the voyage was not published until 1839, just beyond the chronological limits of the present volume.<sup>2</sup> Darwin was one of the many British travellers who credited Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* with having inspired him to visit Latin America; his vivid remarks on Pampas life and on post-independence Chile compliment the accounts of Francis Bond Head and Basil Hall (both of whose books he read on board the *Beagle*) excerpted here.

From the start, the Creole revolutionaries were desperate for British support. In 1810 a delegation from Venezuela consisting of Simón Bolívar, Luis López Méndez and Andrés Bello arrived in London to seek British protection and material assistance for the Junta. Bello, a poet, philosopher and educationalist, remained in Britain for nineteen years as propagandist for the cause of independence. Food, blankets, guns and ammunition were soon on their way to the Caribbean coast of Venezuela. In 1817 and 1818 Bolívar's emissaries recruited five regiments of British mercenaries in London under the nose

1 See José Alberich, 'English Attitudes towards the Hispanic World in the Time of Bello as Reflected by the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* Reviews', in John Lynch, ed., *Andrés Bello: The London Years* (London, 1982), pp. 67–81. This article contains a useful list of reviews of Spanish American travelogues in the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* reviews between 1803 and 1828.

2 For an excellent recent abridgement of the original 1839 text, see *Charles Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle*, edited and annotated by Janet Browne and Michael Neve (Harmondsworth, 1989).

of the infuriated Spanish ambassador. The following year, under pressure from Spain and the Holy Alliance, an embarrassed Tory government was forced to pass the Foreign Enlistment Act to curtail this practice, but it nonetheless continued in covert fashion. Enlistment in the revolutionary cause, however romantic, was not without its risks: a quarter of Bolívar's British Legion died during the march across the Andes to liberate New Granada in May–July 1819. William Miller, William Brown, Daniel O'Leary, Belford Hinton Wilson and Thomas Cochrane were amongst the most celebrated British generals and admirals in the *independista* service. In 1859, Cochrane published his memoirs, *Narrative of Services in the Liberation of Chili, Peru, and Brazil*. Accounts of the ordeals faced by common soldiers, such as Gustavus Hippisley's *Narrative of the Expedition to the River Orinoco and Apure in South America* (1819) or James Hackitt's *Narrative of the Expedition which Sailed from England in 1817, to Join the South American Patriots* (1818), although unrepresented here, deserve to form a sub-genre in their own right.

In 1826 Bolívar wrote hyperbolically that 'politically, alliance with Great Britain would be a greater victory than Ayacucho, and if we procure it you may be certain that our future happiness is assured. The advantages that will result for Columbia, if we ally ourselves with the mistress of the universe, are incalculable.'<sup>1</sup> Although hindsight might have forced the Liberator to eat his words, given the subsequent history of Latin American economic dependence, at least in the mid-1820s his aspirations were (for once) in the process of being fulfilled. By 1824 up to 100 British commercial houses had been established in Spanish America, and in Buenos Aires, where the British community numbered 3,000, half of the public debt was in British hands.<sup>2</sup> In Mexico, Lucas Alamán, leader of the interim government established after the fall of Iturbide in 1823, showered privileges on the semi-official commercial traveller William Bullock, permitting him to ransack museums and libraries, and to copy rare Aztec sculptures, in return for the reassurance of British capital investment in the country's waterlogged mines.

Britain's most substantial contribution to the independence struggle (apart from men, arms and provisions) was in loans to finance the insurgent armies and support the fragile economies of the new republics. The nominal value of these loans was a staggering 21 million pounds, but the amounts realised were far less, and the sums received by Latin American governments were even smaller still. Speculation in the loans was risky business; interest payments on the Colombian loan of 2 million pounds were suspended in 1826 and many a speculator was bankrupted when the bubbles burst.<sup>3</sup> Robert

1 Letter to Sucre, 22 January 1826, cited in John Lynch, 'Great Britain and Spanish American Independence 1810–30', in Lynch, ed., *Andrés Bello*, p. 22.

2 *ibid.* p. 9.

3 *ibid.* p. 14.

Proctor travelled as an agent for the contractors of the Peruvian loan in 1823–4, and his *Narrative of a Journey* vividly portrays the eagerness with which the loans were awaited and the political complications which rapidly ensnared all parties involved in negotiations. In the 1820s, the newly independent republics were also inundated by a wave of British travellers representing various commercial interests, notably the mining associations which sought to tap the legendary wealth of the Spanish American silver, gold and diamond mines, of which Humboldt had written in glowing terms quarter of a century before. In 1824–5, as many as twenty-six different mining companies were floated in London with a paid-up capital of over 3.5 million pounds.<sup>1</sup> In her pioneering work on Spanish American travel writing, Mary Louise Pratt has aptly described these travellers as the ‘capitalist vanguard’, indicating the degree to which, in their narratives, the ‘contemplative, estheticizing rhetoric of discovery’ associated with the Humboldtian traveller is ‘often replaced by a goal-orientated rhetoric of conquest and achievement’.<sup>2</sup> Although a cut above the rest in literary terms, Francis Bond Head’s *Rough Notes* (excerpted here) is characteristic of this South American sub-genre. John Miers’s *Travels in Chile and La Plata* (1826), Joseph Andrews’s *Journey from Buenos Aires through the Province of Cordova, Tucuman, and Salta to Potosi* (1827), and Captain Charles Brand’s *Journal of a Voyage to Peru* (1828) are other examples not included here.<sup>3</sup>

Another unifying feature of these travel accounts is their shared itinerary. Pratt writes that ‘one itinerary in particular became a canonical heroic paradigm for the Englishman’s South American journey: landing in the port of Buenos Aires, he made his way overland across the Argentinean pampas, up over the Andean Cordillera and down the other side to the capitals of Chile or Peru, from which he eventually embarked by sea for home’.<sup>4</sup> The equivalent ‘beaten track’ for Mexico is described in William Bullock’s narrative, as well as in works not included here like Henry Ward’s *Mexico in 1827* (1828) and (with variations) George Lyons’s *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico in 1826* (1828). The traveller arrived in the fever-ridden Caribbean port of Veracruz, ascended by the mountainous route via Jalapa and Puebla to Mexico City, and then proceeded to the mining districts of Taxco, Temascaltepec or Guanajuato. Although space has not permitted their inclusion here, narratives such as Charles Cochrane’s *Journal of a Residence and Travels in Colombia during the Years 1823–4* (1825) and John Hamilton’s *Travels*

1 John Ford, ‘Rudolph Ackermann: Culture and Commerce in Latin America, 1822–8’ in Lynch, ed., *Andrés Bello*, p. 148.

2 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 148.

3 See Ricardo Cicerchia, *Journey, Rediscovery and Narrative: British Travel Accounts of Argentina 1800–1850* (London, 1998). Thanks to Angel Gurría Quintana for this and other sources of information.

4 *ibid.* p. 148.

*through the Interior Provinces of Colombia* (1827) represent the 'capitalist vanguard' at large in highland Columbia, following the routes of pre-Hispanic and colonial trade networks and exploiting the labour of indigenous porters, mule drivers, and the bizarre *silleros* who, like human donkeys, carried affluent travellers over the cordilleras on upright chairs.<sup>1</sup> Characteristic of all the narratives of the 'capitalist vanguard' is their obsession with the ruinous state of the new republics, the dire legacy of colonial misrule and the violence of recent war: 'neglect becomes the touchstone of a negative esthetic that legitimated European interventionism'.<sup>2</sup>

A deflationary tone thus dominates many of the narratives of the late 1820s, in the wake of the collapse of the mining boom, and Humboldt is often blamed for having created false hopes and overestimated the economic potential of the mines. This is exemplified by Francis Head's discovery that the Uspallata mines promised to his company by the Argentinian government had already been sold off to a rival. Robert Southey wrote of the bubble in 1827, in a maliciously amusing review of the travel accounts of Miers and Head, that

there was scarcely an old lady in the country who did not continue to save something from her income to lay out in shares; nor a young and inexperienced adventurer in London who was not found dabbling in some mining scheme ... Most of the bubbles have long since blown up, and we see the few remaining ones bursting daily ... We have been woefully mistaken in all that relates to South America – the population, her resources, the activity, industry, and integrity of the revolutionists have been intentionally and most grievously exaggerated.<sup>3</sup>

To Southey, the nineteenth-century search for El Dorado now seemed just as quixotic as its sixteenth-century prototype.

Whilst the narratives of the 'capitalist vanguard' are arguably most representative of the travel writing of the capitalist and imperialist nineteenth century, the present volume seeks to situate these 'goal-orientated' texts within a broader and more varied context. My selection aims to reflect the stylistic variety of the whole field of contemporary travel writing, as manifest in other volumes of this edition. Whilst the objectifying 'statistical' reports of writers like Ulloa or Stewart exemplify travel writing as a form of degree zero 'geographical narrative', other texts display a more engaging and imaginative literary style. The quirky, pre-scientific 'missionary ethnography' of Dobrizhoffer, the aestheticising naturalism of Humboldt, or the eccentric anti-Linnaean natural history of Waterton all represent a distinctively romantic idiom of travel writing, whilst the social commentary of Basil Hall and

1 See Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man* (Chicago and London, 1987), pp. 287–335.

2 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 149.

3 *Quarterly Review* (January 1827), p. 115.

Maria Graham typify another, more urbane variety. Bullock's Pickwickian narrative persona reveals that even the capitalist vanguard had its more 'literary' moments.

I have aimed at some degree of historical coverage by providing passages pre-dating the wars of independence (the first four), in order to set up a contrast between accounts of colonial and post-colonial Latin America. Space has prevented comprehensive geographical coverage of this enormous continental region: Patagonia, Bolivia, highland Colombia and Central America are unrepresented here, and the far-flung insular Caribbean is only represented by the islands of Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and Montserrat. The fact that all the texts anthologised here, with the exception of one, are by men reflects the small number of female-authored travel accounts of Latin America in the period; it can only be hoped that quality will substitute for quantity, given that Graham's journal is one of the most accomplished in literary terms. This volume can only aspire to offer a sample of the many travel accounts written about Latin America and the Caribbean in a climacteric period of their history, but it is hoped that the selections are representative to the extent that they map out the terrain and encourage readers to explore further for themselves.



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## Ulloa and Juan: Voyage to South America

Antonio de Ulloa and Jorge Juan, *A Voyage to South America. Describing at Large, the Spanish Cities, Towns, Provinces, &c. on that Extensive Continent. Undertaken by Command of the King of Spain. 3rd edition, trans. from the Original Spanish, to which are Added, by Mr John Adams ... Occasional Notes and Observations, an Account of Some Parts of Brazil ... [and] a Map of S. America Corrected*, 2 vols (London, 1772), vol. I, pp. 29–35; vol. II, pp. 175–84.

In 1737 a joint European expedition, led by the French mathematician Louis Godin and the geographer Charles-Marie de la Condamine, arrived in Ecuador to measure the precise limits of the degrees of latitude at the arc of the Earth's meridian. This was to ascertain whether the Earth bulged at the poles or the equator, and thereby to settle a dispute between Cartesian and Newtonian mathematicians about the shape of the globe. They confirmed Newton's theory that the Earth bulged around its midriff. This was Europe's first modern scientific expedition, equipped with precise instruments never before seen in Spanish America, long closed by its jealous rulers to the outside world. Ecuador was chosen on the grounds that other sites 'under the equinoctial line both in Asia and in Africa, were either inhabited by savages, or not of an extent sufficient for these operations' (vol. I, p. 5).

The expedition was beset by difficulties. Professional and national rivalries between Frenchmen and Spaniards, constant friction with the colonial authorities, technical problems of surveying and damage to equipment in the inhospitable climate all took a heavy toll. The savants complained that 'in the torrid zone ... where it was natural to suppose we had most to fear from the heat, our greatest pain was caused by the excessiveness of the cold' (vol. I, p. 211). Between August 1737 and July 1739 Antonio de Ulloa's party suffered the severe conditions of Pichincha, to the bafflement of local inhabitants; 'our hands were covered in chilblains; our lips swelled and chopped; so that every motion, in speaking or the like drew blood' (vol. I, p. 5). Suspected of spying out mineral resources by the authorities, the expedition's surgeon Jean Seniergues was murdered in 1739; La Condamine himself narrowly avoided the same fate. In the end the French delegation fell apart and several more members were murdered, went missing or insane, as they made their separate ways home. The whole grim story was told in La Condamine's *Brief Narrative of Travels through the Interior of South America* (1745).



The expedition's existence depended on the good will of the Spanish King Philip V, who was determined to end Spain's long intellectual isolation. Spain's backwardness dictated that two naval officers (rather than natural philosophers) were sent as official representatives. Jorge Juan y Santacilla (1713–73) and Antonio de Ulloa (1716–95) were graduates of the new Cadiz naval academy, and were encouraged to write a full-length account of the expedition, partly with a view to countering La Condamine's critical perspective. Ulloa's *Relación histórica del viaje a la América meridional* (Juan took a secondary role in its production) was published in 1748, and its English translation by John Adams went through five editions. Its success was due as much to the sheer scarcity of information about Spanish America in the Anglophone world as to any intrinsic literary interest, for the narrative itself is a rather dry compendium, a 'statistical' account in the eighteenth-century meaning of that word, 'an inquiry into the state of a country'. The *Relación* signals the new importance of interior expedition rather than coastal surveying. As the book's translator wrote, 'What idea can we form of a Turkey carpet if we look only at the border, or it may be, at the selvage?' (quoted in Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York and London, 1992), p. iii).

Just as important was the credibility of the witnesses themselves. In this respect Ulloa and Juan could not be faulted: on their return journey, their ship was captured by the British and they were brought to Boston and London, where they were welcomed as distinguished members of the La Condamine expedition and elected members of the Royal Society of London. The *Relación*'s English translator made much of this fact in promoting the work to an English readership. In 1763 Ulloa became governor of Louisiana, and in 1772 he published *Noticias americanas*, an account of the natural history of the New World.

The passages excerpted here exemplify the sober, descriptive style which Adams calls 'civil history' (vol. I, p. x). The first describes the complex racial hierarchy of Spanish colonial society and the rigid distinction between *criollos* and *peninsulares*, which would eventually goad the former into revolution. Ulloa propagandised the wealth and economic potential of Spanish America, although precise statistical figures were carefully omitted. It is ironic that the Jesuits praised in the second passage were expelled in 1767 by Charles III. Unbeknown to their contemporaries, Ulloa and Juan had been commissioned to write a secret report on colonial America. *Noticias secretas de América*, a devastating portrait of colonial misrule and corruption, was only published in the early nineteenth century after it had fallen into British hands. But as David Brading has indicated, Ulloa's two narratives reveal him as a zealous servant of the Spanish crown, willing to propagandise in public and criticise in secret, 'the most talented exponent of the recrudescence of the Spanish imperial tradition of commentary on the New World' (Brading, *The First America*, p. 428).

## CHAP. IV.

*Of the Inhabitants of Carthagena.*

THE inhabitants may be divided into different casts or tribes, who derive their origin from a coalition of Whites, Negroes, and Indians. Of each of these we shall treat particularly.

THE Whites may be divided into two classes, the Europeans, and Creoles, or Whites born in the country. The former are commonly called Chapetones, but are not numerous; most of them either return into Spain after acquiring a competent fortune, or remove up into inland provinces in order to increase it. Those who are settled at Carthagena, carry on the whole trade of that place, and live in opulence; whilst the other inhabitants are indigent, and reduced to have recourse to mean and hard labour for subsistence. The families of the White Creoles compose the landed interest; some of them have large estates, and are highly respected, because their ancestors came into the country invested with honourable posts, bringing their families with them when they settled here. Some of these families, in order to keep up their original dignity, have either married their children to their equals in the country, or sent them as officers on board the galleons; but others have greatly declined. Besides these, there are other Whites, in mean circumstances, who either owe their origin to Indian families, or at least to an intermarriage with them, so that there is some mixture in their blood; but when this is not discoverable by their colour, the conceit of being Whites alleviates the pressure of every other calamity.

AMONG the other tribes which are derived from an intermarriage of the Whites with the Negroes, the first are the Mulattos. Next to these the Tercerones, produced from a White and a Mulatto, with some approximation to the former, but not so near as to obliterate

their origin. After these follow the Quarterones, proceeding from a White and a Terceron. The last are the Quinterones, who owe their origin to a White and Quarteron. This is the last gradation, there being no visible difference between them and the Whites, either in colour or features; nay, they are often fairer than the Spaniards. The children of a White and Quinteron are also called Spaniards, and consider themselves as free from all taint of the Negro race. Every person is so jealous of the order of their tribe or cast, that if, through inadvertence, you call them by a degree lower than what they actually are, they are highly offended, never suffering themselves to be deprived of so valuable a gift of fortune.

BEFORE they attain the class of the Quinterones, there are several intervening circumstances which throw them back; for between the Mulatto and the Negro there is an intermediate race, which they call Sambos, owing their origin to a mixture between one of these with an Indian, or among themselves. They are also distinguished according to the casts their fathers were of. Betwixt the Tercerones and the Mulattos, the Quarterones and the Tercerones, &c. are those called *Tente en el Ayre*, suspended in the air, because they neither advance nor recede. Children, whose parents are a Quarteron or Quinteron, and a Mulatto or Terceron, are *Salto atras*, retrogrades, because, instead of advancing towards being Whites, they have gone backwards towards the Negro race. The children between a Negro and Quinteron are called *Sambos de Negro, de Mulatto, de Terceron*, &c.

THESE are the most known and common tribes or Casts; there are indeed several others proceeding from their intermarriages; but, being so various, even they themselves cannot easily distinguish them; and these are the only people one sees in the city, the *estancias* \*, and the villages; for if any Whites, espe-

\* *Estancia* properly signifies a mansion, or place where one stops to rest; but at Carthagena it implies a country-house, which, by rea-

cially women, are met with, it is only accidental; these generally residing in their houses; at least, if they are of any rank or character.

THESE castes, from the Mulattos, all affect the Spanish dress, but wear very slight stuffs on account of the heat of the climate. These are the mechanics of the city; the Whites, whether Creoles or Chapitones, disdaining such a mean occupation, follow nothing below merchandize. But it being impossible for all to succeed, great numbers not being able to procure sufficient credit, they become poor and miserable from their aversion to those trades they follow in Europe; and, instead of the riches which they flattered themselves with possessing in the Indies, they experience the most complicated wretchedness.

THE class of Negroes is not the least numerous, and is divided into two parts; the free and the slaves. These are again subdivided into Creoles and Bozares, part of which are employed in the cultivation of the haziandes\*, or estancias. Those in the city are obliged to perform the most laborious services, and pay out of their wages a certain quota to their masters, subsisting themselves on the small remainder. The violence of the heat not permitting them to wear any clothes, their only covering is a small piece of cotton stuff about their waist; the female slaves go in the same manner. Some of these live at the estancias, being married to the slaves who work there; while those in the city sell in the markets all kind of catables, and dry fruits, sweetmeats, cakes made of the maize, and cassava, and several other things about the streets. Those who have children sucking at their breast, which is the case of the generality, carry them on their shoulders, in order to have their arms at liberty; and when the infants are hungry,

son of the great number of slaves belonging to it, often equals a considerable village.

\* Hazianda in this place signifies a country-house, with the lands belonging to it.

they give them the breast either under the arm or over the shoulder, without taking them from their backs. This will perhaps appear incredible ; but their breasts, being left to grow without any pressure on them, often hang down to their very waist, and are not therefore difficult to turn over their shoulders for the convenience of the infant.

THE dress of the Whites, both men and women, differs very little from that worn in Spain. The persons in grand employments wear the same habits as in Europe ; but with this difference, that all their clothes are very light, the waistcoats and breeches being of fine Bretagne linen, and the coat of some other thin stuff. Wigs are not much worn here ; and during our stay, the governor and two or three of the chief officers only appeared in them. Neckcloths are also uncommon, the neck of the shirt being adorned with large gold buttons, and these generally suffered to hang loose. On their heads they wear a cap of very fine and white linen. Others go entirely bareheaded, having their hair cut from the nape of the neck \*. Fans are very commonly worn by men, and made of a very thin kind of palm in the form of a crescent, having a stick of the same wood in the middle. Those who are not of the White class, or of any eminent family, wear a cloak and a hat flapped ; though some Mulattos and Negroes dress like the Spaniards and great men of the country.

THE Spanish women wear a kind of petticoat, which they call pollera, made of a thin silk, without any lining ; and on their body, a very thin white waistcoat ; but even this is only worn in what they call winter, it being insupportable in summer. They however always lace in such a manner as to conceal their breasts. When they go abroad, they wear a mantelet ; and on the days of

\* Here, and in most parts of South America, they have their hair cut so short, that a stranger would think every man had a wig, but did not wear it on account of the heat.—A.

precept, they go to mass at three in the morning, in order to discharge that duty, and return before the violent heat of the day, which begins with the dawn \*.

WOMEN wear over their pollera a taffety petticoat, of any colour they please, except black; this is pinked all over, to shew the other they wear under it. On the head is a cap of fine white linen, covered with lace, in the shape of a mitre, and, being well starched, terminates forward in a point. This they call panito, and never appear abroad without it, and a mantelet on their shoulders. The ladies, and other native Whites, use this as their undress, and it greatly becomes them; for having been used to it from their infancy, they wear it with a better air. Instead of shoes, they only wear, both within and without doors, a kind of slippers, large enough only to contain the tip of their feet. In the house their whole exercise consists in sitting in their hammocks †, and swinging themselves for air. This is so general a custom, that there is not a house without two or three, according to the number of the family. In these they pass the greater part of the day; and often men, as well as women, sleep in them, without minding the inconvenience of not stretching the body at full length.

BOTH sexes are possessed of a great deal of wit and penetration, and also of a genius proper to excel in all kinds of mechanic arts. This is particularly conspicuous in those who apply themselves to literature, and who, at a tender age, shew a judgment and perspicacity, which, in other climates, is attained only by a long series of years and the greatest application. This happy disposition and perspicacity continues till they are between twenty and thirty years of age, after

\* The heat is inconsiderable, compared with that of the afternoon, till half an hour after sunrise. A.

† These hammocks are made of twisted cotton, and commonly knit in the manner of a net, and make no small part of the traffick of the Indians, by whom they are chiefly made. A.

which they generally decline as fast as they rose ; and frequently, before they arrive at that age, when they should begin to reap the advantage of their studies, a natural indolence checks their farther progress, and they forsake the sciences, leaving the surprising effects of their capacity imperfect.

THE principal cause of the short duration of such promising beginnings, and of the indolent turn so often seen in these bright geniuses, is doubtless the want of proper objects for exercising their faculties, and the small hopes of being preferred to any post answerable to the pains they have taken. For as there is in this country neither army nor navy, and the civil employments very few, it is not at all surprising that the despair of making their fortunes, by this method, should damp their ardour for excelling in the sciences, and plunge them into idleness, the sure forerunner of vice ; where they lose the use of their reason, and stifle those good principles which fired them when young and under proper subjection. The same is evident in the mechanic arts, in which they demonstrate a surprising skill in a very little time ; but soon leave these also imperfect, without attempting to improve on the methods of their masters. Nothing indeed is more surprising than the early advances of the mind in this country, children of two or three years of age conversing with a regularity and seriousness that is rarely seen in Europe at six or seven ; and at an age when they can scarce see the light, are acquainted with all the depths of wickedness.

THE genius of the Americans being more forward than that of the Europeans, many have been willing to believe that it also sooner decays ; and that at sixty years, or before, they have outlived that solid judgment and penetration, so general among us at that time of life ; and it has been said that their genius decays, while that of the Europeans is hastening to its maturity and perfection. But this is a vulgar preju-

dice, confuted by numberless instances, and particularly by the celebrated father Fr. Benito Feyjoo, *Têatro Critico*, vol. iv. essay 6. All who have travelled with any attention through these countries, have observed in the natives of every age a permanent capacity, and uniform brightness of intellect; if they were not of that wretched number, who disorder both their minds and bodies by their vices. And indeed one often sees here persons of eminent prudence and extensive talents, both in the speculative and practical sciences, and who retain them, in all their vigour, to a very advanced age.



EVERY town of the missions of Paraguay, like the cities and great towns of the Spaniards, are under a governor, regidores, and alcaides. That the important office of governor may be always filled by a person duly qualified, he is chosen by the Indians, with the approbation of the priests. The alcaides are annually appointed by the regidores, and jointly with them, the governor attends to the maintenance of good order and tranquillity among the inhabitants; and that these officers, who are seldom persons of the most shining



parts, may not abuse their authority, and either through interest, or passion, carry their revenge too far against other Indians, they are not to proceed to punishment without previously acquainting the priest with the affair, that he may compare the offence with the sentence. The priest, on finding the person really guilty, delivers him up to be punished, which generally consists in imprisonment for a certain number of days, and sometimes fasting is added to it; but if the fault be very great, the delinquent is whipt, which is the most severe punishment used among them; these people being never known to commit any crime that merits a greater degree of chastisement; for immediately on being registered as converts, the greatest care has been taken in these missions, to imprint on the minds of these new Christians, a detestation of murder, robbery, and such atrocious crimes. The execution of the sentence is preceded by a discourse made by the priest before the delinquent, in which he represents to the offender, with the greatest softness and sympathy, the nature of his crime, and its turpitude; so that he is brought to acknowledge the justness of the sentence, and to receive it rather as a brotherly correction, than a punishment; so that though nature must feel, yet he receives the correction with the greatest humility and resignation, being conscious that he has brought it upon himself. Thus the priests are in no danger of any malice being harboured against them; indeed the love and veneration the Indians pay them is so great, that could they be guilty of enjoining an unjust punishment, the suffering party would impute it to his own demerits, being firmly persuaded that the priests never do any thing without a sufficient reason.

EVERY town has a particular armory, in which are kept all the fire-arms, swords, and weapons used by the militia, when they take the field, whether to repel the insults of the Portuguese, or any heathen In-

dians inhabiting on their frontiers. And that they may be dexterous in the management of them, they are exercised on the evening of every holiday in the market-places of the towns. All persons capable of bearing arms in every town, are divided into companies, and have their proper officers, who owe this distinction to their military qualifications: their uniform is richly laced with gold and silver, according to their rank, and embroidered with the device of their towns. In these they always appear on holidays, and at the times of exercise. The governor, alcaldes, and regidores, have also very magnificent habits of ceremony, which they wear on solemn occasions.

No town is without a school for teaching reading, writing, dancing, and music: and in whatever they undertake they generally excel, the inclination and genius of every one being carefully consulted before they are forwarded in any branch of science. Thus many attain a very good knowledge of the Latin tongue. In one of the courts of the house belonging to the priest of every town, are shops or workhouses for painters, sculptors, gilders, silversmiths, locksmiths, carpenters, weavers, watchmakers, and all other mechanic arts and trades. Here every one works for the benefit of the whole town, under the inspection of the priests coadjutors; and boys are there also instructed in those trades and arts, to which they have the greatest inclination.

The churches are large, and well built: and, with regard to decorations, not inferior to the richest in Peru. Even the houses of the Indians are built with that symmetry and convenience, and so completely and elegantly furnished, as to excel those of the Spaniards in many towns in this part of America. Most of them however are only of mud walls, some of unburnt bricks, and others of stone; but all, in general, covered with tiles. Every thing in these towns is on such good footing, that all private houses make

gunpowder, that a sufficient quantity of it may not be wanting, either on any exigency, or for fireworks on holidays, and other anniversary rejoicings which are punctually kept. But the most splendid ceremony is on the accession of the new monarch to the Spanish throne, when the governor, *alcaldes*, *regidores*, together with all the civil and military officers, appear in new uniforms, and other ornaments, to express the ardent affection they bear their new sovereign.

Every church has its band of music, consisting of a great number both of vocal and instrumental performers. Divine service is celebrated in them with all the pomp and solemnity of cathedrals. The like is observed in public processions, especially that on Corpus Christi day, at which the governor, *alcaldes*, and *regidores*, in their habits of ceremony, and the militia in their uniforms, assist: the rest of the people carry flambeaux: so that the whole is conducted with an order and reverence suitable to the occasion. These processions are accompanied with fine dancing, but very different from that in the province of Quito, described in the first volume; and the performers wear particular dresses, extremely rich, and well adapted to the characters represented. In short, a missionary town omits no circumstance either of festivity or devotion, practised in opulent cities.

Every town has a kind of beaterio, where women of ill fame are placed, it also serves for the retreat of married women who have no families, during the absence of their husbands. For the support of this house, and also of orphans and others, who by age or any other circumstance are disabled from earning a livelihood, two days in the week are set apart; when the inhabitants of every village are obliged to sow and cultivate a certain piece of ground, called *Labor de la Comunidad*, the labour of the community; and the surplus of the produce is applied to procure furniture and decorations for the church, and

to clothe the orphans, the aged, and the disabled persons. By this benevolent plan all distress is precluded, and the inhabitants provided with every necessary of life. The royal revenues are punctually paid; and by the union of the inhabitants, the uninterrupted peace they enjoy, and the wisdom of their policy, which is preserved inviolable, these places, if there are any such on earth, are the habitations of true religion and felicity.

THE jesuits, who are the priests of these missions, take upon them the sole care of disposing of the manufactures and products of the Guaranies Indians, designed for commerce; these people being naturally careless and indolent, and doubtless without the diligent inspection and pathetic exhortations of the fathers, would be buried in sloth and indigence. The case is very different in the missions of the Chiquitos, who are industrious, careful, and frugal; and their genius so happily adapted to commerce, as not to stand in need of any factors. The priests in the villages of this nation are of no expence to the crown, the Indians themselves rejoicing in maintaining them; and join in cultivating a plantation filled with all kinds of grain and fruits for the priest; the remainder, after this decent support, being applied to purchase ornaments for the churches.

THAT the Indians may never be in any want of necessities, it is one part of the minister's care to have always in readiness a stock of different kinds of tools, stuffs, and other goods; so that all who are in want repair to him, bringing by way of exchange wax, of which there are here great quantities, and other products. And this barter is made with the strictest integrity, that the Indians may have no reason to complain of oppression; and that the high character of the priests for justice and sanctity may be studiously preserved. The goods received in exchange are by the priests sent to the so-

perior of the missions, who is a different person from the superior of the Guaranies: and with the produce, a fresh stock of goods is laid in. The principal intention of this is, that the Indians may have no occasion to leave their own country, in order to be furnished with necessaries; and by this means are kept from the contagion of those vices, which they would naturally contract in their intercourse with the inhabitants of other countries, where the depravity of human nature is not corrected by such good examples and laws.

If the civil government of these towns be so admirably calculated for happiness, the ecclesiastical government is still more so. Every town and village has its particular priest, who in proportion to its largeness, has an assistant or two of the same order. These priests, together with six boys who wait on them, and also sing in the churches, form in every village a kind of small college, where the hours are under the same regulation, and the exercises succeed each other with the same formalities as in the great colleges of cities. The most laborious part of the duty belonging to the priest, is to visit personally the chacaras or plantations of the Indians; and in this they are remarkably sedulous, in order to prevent the ill consequences of that slothful disposition so natural to the Guaranies; who, were they not frequently roused and stimulated by the presence of the priest, would abandon their work, or, at least, perform it in a very superficial manner. He also attends at the public slaughter-house, where every day are killed some of the cattle; large herds of which are kept for the public use by the Indians. The flesh of these beasts are dealt out by the priest, in lots proportionable to the number of persons each family consists of; so that every one has a sufficiency to supply the calls of nature, but nothing for waste. He also visits the sick, to see that they want for

nothing, and are attended with that care and tenderness their state requires. These charitable employments take up so great a part of the day, as often to leave him no time for assisting the father coadjutor in the services of the church. One useful part of the duty of the latter is to catechize, and explain some portion of scripture in the church every day in the week, Thursdays and Saturdays excepted, for the instruction of the young of both sexes; and these in every town are not less than two thousand. On Sundays all the inhabitants never fail to attend divine service. The priest also visits the sick to confess them; and if the case requires it, to give them the viaticum; and to all these must be added the other indispensable duties of a priest.

By the strictness of the law these priests should be nominated by the governor, as vice-patron, and be qualified for their function by the consecration of the bishop; but as among the three persons recommended on such occasions to the governor, there will of consequence be one, whose virtues and talents render him most fit for the office; and as no better judges of this can be supposed than the provincials of the order, the governor and bishop have receded from their undoubted rights, and the provincials always collate and prefer those whose merits are most conspicuous.

THE missions of the Guaranies are also under one superior, who nominates the assistant priests of the other towns. His residence is at Candelaria, which lies in the centre of all the missions; but he frequently visits the other towns, in order to superintend their governments; and at the same time, concert measures that some of the fathers may be sent among the heathen Indians, to conciliate their affections, and by degrees work their conversion. In this important office he is assisted by two vice-superiors, one of whom resides at Parana, and the other on the river Uruguay.

All these missions, though so numerous and dispersed, are formed as it were into one college, of which the superior may be considered as the master or head; and every town is like a family governed by a wise and affectionate parent, in the person of the priest.

In the missions of the Guaranies, the king pays the stipends of the priests, which, including that of the assistant, is three hundred dollars per annum. This sum is lodged in the hands of the superior, who every month supplies them with necessary food and apparel, and on any extraordinary demand, they apply to him, from whom they are sure of meeting with a gracious reception.

THE missions of the Chiquito Indians have a distinct superior; but with the same functions as he who presides over the Guaranies; and the priests also are on the same footing, but have less anxiety and labour; the industry and activity of these Indians, saving them the trouble of coming among them to exhort them to follow their employments, or of being the storekeepers and agents in disposing of the fruits of their labours; they themselves vending them for their own advantage.

ALL these Indians are very subject to several contagious distempers; as the small-pox, malignant fevers, and others, to which, on account of the dreadful havoc attending them, they give the name of pestilence. And to such diseases it is owing, that these settlements have not increased in a manner proportional to their numbers, the time since their establishment, and the quietness and plenty in which these people live.

THE missionary fathers will not allow any of the inhabitants of Peru, whether Spaniards, or others, Mestizos, or even Indians, to come within their missions in Paraguay. Not with a view of concealing their transactions from the world; or that they are afraid lest others should supplant them of part of the

products and manufactures; nor for any of those causes, which even with less foundation, envy has dared to suggest; but for this reason, and a very prudent one it is, that their Indians, who being as it were new born from savageness and brutality, and initiated into morality and religion, may be kept steady in this state of innocence and simplicity. These Indians are strangers to sedition, pride, malice, envy, and other passions, which are so fatal to society. But were strangers admitted to come among them, their bad examples would teach them what at present they are happily ignorant of; but should modesty, and the attention they pay to the instructions of their teachers, be once laid aside, the shining advantages of these settlements would soon come to nothing; and such a number of souls, who now worship the true God in the beauty of holiness, and live in tranquillity and love (of which such slender traces are seen among civilized nations), would be again seduced into the paths of disorder and perdition.

THESE Indians live at present in an entire assurance, that whatever their priests advise them to is good, and whatever they reprehend is bad. But their minds would soon take a different turn, by seeing other people, on whom the doctrine of the gospel is so far from having any effect, that their actions are absolutely repugnant to its precepts. At present they are firmly persuaded, that in all bargains and other transactions, the greatest candour and probity must be used, without any prevarication or deceit. But it is too evident, that were others admitted among them, whose leading maxim is to sell as dear, and buy as cheap as they are able, these innocent people would soon imbibe the same practice together with a variety of others which seem naturally to flow from it. The contamination would soon spread through every part of their behaviour, so as never more to be reclaimed. I do not here mean to lessen the charac-



ters of those Spaniards or inhabitants of other nations, whose countries are situated conveniently for trading with Paraguay, by insinuating that they are universally fraudulent and dissolute: but, on the other hand, among such numbers, it would be very strange if there was not some; and one single person of such a character would be sufficient to infect a whole country. And who could pretend to say, that, if free admission were allowed to foreigners, there might not come in, among a multitude of virtuous, one of such pestilent dispositions? Who can say that he might not be even the very first? Hence it is that the Jesuits have inflexibly adhered to their maxim of not admitting any foreigners among them: and in this they are certainly justified by the melancholy example of the other missions of Peru, whose decline from their former happiness and piety is the effect of an open intercourse.

THOUGH in the several parts of Paraguay, where the missions have been always settled, there are no mines of gold and silver; several are to be found in some adjacent countries under the dominion of the king of Spain; but the Portuguese reap the whole benefit of them: for having encroached as far as the lake Xarayes, near which, about twenty years ago, a rich mine of gold was discovered; they without any other right than possession, turned it to their own use: the ministry in Spain, in consideration of the harmony subsisting between the two nations, and their joint interest, forbearing to make use of any forcible methods.

## Dobrizhoffer: Account of the Abipones

Martin Dobrizhoffer, *An Account of the Abipones, an Equestrian People of Paraguay, from the Latin of Martin Dobrizhoffer, 18 years a Missionary in that Country*, trans. Sara Coleridge, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1822), vol. II, pp. 110–26, 233–7; vol. III, pp. 394–402.

Father Martin Dobrizhoffer (1717–91), an Austrian Jesuit missionary, was born in Gratz in Styria in 1717 and entered the Jesuit order in 1736. In 1749 he arrived in South America to work in the Jesuit missions of Paraguay, isolated areas of the interior where the native Guarani Indians were concentrated into planned villages, each dominated by a parish church, where they were trained to work as artisans and subjected to a strict disciplinary regime. The fact that Spanish settlers were excluded from the missions, each of which was defended by a Jesuit-led indigenous militia, caused bitter rivalry between Spanish *encomenderos* and the Jesuit order. In Europe the missions were alternately idealised as utopian settlements and castigated as collective prisons, most famously in Voltaire's 1758 novel *Candide*. Dobrizhoffer worked first in the Guarani 'reductions' (as these settlements were called), subsequently in the more difficult and dangerous circumstances of the mission to the warlike equestrian Abipones, who for many years actively resisted Spanish colonial expansion in their native land.

Upon the expulsion of his order from Spanish America in 1767, Dobrizhoffer returned to Austria, residing in Vienna until his death in 1791. His skill in narrating his experiences during his long sojourn on Europe's colonial frontier earned him the patronage of the Empress Maria Theresa, who frequently called upon him to relieve the tedium of court life. In 1784 he published an account of the Abipones, combined with a spirited defence of the much maligned Jesuit missions, entitled *Historia de Abiponibus, equestri, bellicosaque paraguayae natione*; allegedly he preferred to write in Latin as his long residence in Paraguay had caused him almost to forget his native German. The work was quickly recognised as not only a masterpiece of modern Latin composition (Robert Southey commented on the 'lively singularity of the old man's Latin'), but also a unique record of the culture of the Abipones and other nomadic indigenous societies in Paraguay, who were rapidly being decimated by contact with Europeans. In the German-language version pub-

lished in the same year, the translator estimated that 'there is no other work which contains so full, so faithful, and so lively an account of the South American tribes'. Dobrizhoffer prided himself on his style, although he wrote apologetically in the book's introduction 'who can expect the graces of Livy, Sallust, Caesar, Strada, or Maffeus, from one who, for so many years, has had no commerce with the muses, no access to classical literature? Yet in writing of savages, I have taken especial care that no barbarisms should creep into my language' (vol. I, p. vi).

While researching his *History of Brazil*, the poet Robert Southey first encountered Dobrizhoffer's narrative via John Pinkerton's *Modern Geography*. In 1818 he recommended that his charge, Derwent Coleridge (the poet's son), should translate it into English to pay his university fees. Derwent reluctantly began to translate the first volume, delegating work on the third volume to his teenage sister Sara Coleridge, later to achieve renown as a writer and editor of her father's works, and wife of H. N. Coleridge. When Derwent abandoned the project, Sara single-handedly took it over, and *An Account of the Abipones, an Equestrian People of Paraguay, from the Latin of Martin Dobrizhoffer* was published in January 1822, in three volumes, shortly after Sara's nineteenth birthday. In the same year the poet S. T. Coleridge read through the work, later opining that 'I hardly know anything more amusing than the honest German Jesuitry of Dobrizhoffer', adding proudly 'My dear daughter's translation of this book is, in my judgement, unsurpassed for pure mother English by anything I have read for a long time' (Coleridge, *Table Talk*, p. 191). An incident related in Dobrizhoffer's book inspired one of Southey's least-read poems, *A Tale of Paraguay*, published in three cantos in 1825. A family of Guarani Indians, survivors of the smallpox epidemic that ravaged native Americans after contact with Europeans, are rescued from a 'state of nature' in the wilderness by Martin Dobrizhoffer and resettled in the Jesuit mission of St Joachin. Mother, daughter and son all quickly succumb to the disease once they have been 'civilised', but their death is amply compensated (in Southey's view) by the fact that their souls are saved. Dobrizhoffer is cast as the Jesuit hero who feels no need to justify his action in 'reducing' this Guarani family with such fatal consequences. *A Tale of Paraguay* is based on an anecdote in the first volume of Dobrizhoffer's book; the passages excerpted here are from the second and third volumes, which describe the harsh life and 'savage' customs of the Abipones, who unlike the Guarani refused to relinquish easily their nomadic life and the rigorous freedom of the Pampas.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### OF THE FOOD, JOURNEYS, AND OTHER PARTICULARS OF THE ECONOMY OF THE ABIPONES.

**T**HE wild Abipones live like wild beasts. They neither sow nor reap, nor take any heed of agriculture. Taught by natural instinct, the instructions of their ancestors, and their own experience, they are acquainted with all the productions of the earth and the trees, at what part of the year they spontaneously grow, what animals are to be found in what places, and what arts are to be employed in taking them. All things are in common with them. They have no proprietors, as with us, of lands, rivers, and groves, who possess the exclusive right of hunting, fishing, and gathering wood there. Whatever flies in the air, swims in the water, and grows wild in the woods, may become the property of the first person that chooses to take it. The Abipones are unacquainted with spades, ploughs, and axes; the arrow, the spear, the club, and horses, are the only instruments they make use of in procuring food, clothing, and habitation. As all lands do not bear all things, and as various productions grow at various