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*An encultured imperialism: British travel writing from the post-Napoleonic Atlantic periphery*

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**An Encultured Imperialism:**  
**British Travel Writing from the post-Napoleonic Atlantic Periphery**

**Steven John Burke**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines two selections of published travel writings produced between 1816 and 1831, analysing the encultured attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and agendas of eight aspiring careerist white British men as they travelled and served in regions on the Atlantic peripheries of British influence. The theatres in question were the Gold Coast in West Africa and the neighbouring Asante Empire, all encountered under the aegis of official or quasi-official British authority, and the region of New Spain encompassing Venezuela and Columbia in South America, all conducted privately as mercenaries on the part of the revolutionary Patriot cause against Imperial Spain. Whether serving in the uniforms of British state institutions or the Venezuelan Republic, these individuals produced accounts of their experiences that more effectively reflected their encultured British National-Imperial worldview than any objective description of the transitional cultures they encountered.

I begin the thesis by exploring the cultural context of their travels and publications, the relationship of these to the wider issues of an emerging British Imperial worldview, and a conceptual definition of encultured imperialism as a form of pre-eminent performative engagement with the wider world. Chapter 1 expands on the backgrounds and motivations of the authors in pursuing their service or adventures, within the context of British domestic understandings of the two theatres they visited. Chapter 2 discusses their use of trends and conventions of engagement with landscape and environment, including their efforts to familiarise the exotic as a step towards imagining its subordination to British knowledge. Chapter 3 considers the authors' evaluations of human geographies, with the further imperative of subordinating other infrastructural and geographical cultures to a projection of British 'improvement'. In Chapter 4, the focus turns fully on people and these authors' uses of established and developing hierarchies of difference including tropes of savagery and civilisation, and emergent concepts of scientific racism. Chapter 5 incorporates the influence of encultured conceptions of gender on human difference to complete the analysis of the exclusionary practices of the authors' self-confident National-Imperial worldview.



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S.J. Burke, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021



## Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.
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5. The word count of the thesis is **87,167**.

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## **An Encultured Imperialism:**

### **British Travel Writing from the post-Napoleonic Atlantic Periphery**

#### **Introduction**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1825, *The Morning Chronicle* printed an account of General Charles Turner's 'Proclamation' to 'the people of Cape Coast', the other British Gold Coast settlements, their 'allies and friends'. 'England', Turner declared, 'does not wish for any wars, she wishes the nations of Africa to be free, happy, and rich', and for 'nothing in this country but lawful trade and commerce'.<sup>1</sup> Turner was in charge of the campaign against the forces of Asante, the imperial state north of the Gold Coast whose wealth, influence, military strength, and centralised structure was at odds with informal British efforts to influence decentralised politics and trade near the coast. He implied that the Asante Empire, as the enemy of the British and their declared friends, was committed to the counterpoint position. That the unwished-for war was well underway, and had begun with a jarring British defeat, could not have been lost on the paper's readership.

The idea that Britain's agenda for change at the frontiers of British influence was informed by recognisable characteristics of a National-Imperial identity appears to be clearly developed by

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<sup>1</sup> 'General Turner's Proclamation', *Morning Chronicle*, 27 June 1825.

the 1820s, according to General Turner. It was disseminated through channels of public discourse, including newspapers, periodicals, and books. Turner's proclamation and its context demonstrated several recognisable characteristics extant today in British media discourse. 'England' defined the executive core of his British authority and national character. Conflict was both undesirable and enthusiastically utilised where necessary, the freedom and happiness of subordinate 'nations' was (relatively) desirable, and 'lawful' commerce was a benign imperial force for mutual good.

During the course of my research this worldview, popularly believed to be dormant for a long time, has again become achingly relevant to public discourse about Britain's place in the world. The idea that leaving the European Union might express a return to the primacy of British global pre-eminence, 'like some slumbering giant' that will 'rise and ping off the guyropes of self-doubt and negativity', suggests the performative confidence, indeed, sheer arrogance, of a British Imperial identity is alive and well.<sup>2</sup> An historically desirable tool in the armoire of the Imperial British agent, its waning power in postcolonial geo-politics is not always admitted. This has, inevitably, sparked renewed interest both in myths of Imperial Britishness and in the complex ongoing processes of this imagined community's postcolonial identity crisis. Daniel Dorling and Sally Tomlinson recently attributed the Brexit vote and its outcome to 'a small number of people in Britain' who have 'a dangerous misconception of our standing in the world', while the historical view of the 2016 EU Referendum will be that it was 'part of the last vestiges of empire working their way out of the British psyche'.<sup>3</sup> This raises

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<sup>2</sup> Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, in victory speech at the Conservative Party leadership election results announcement, quoted in G. Falconbridge and E. Piper, 'Britain's new leader Johnson – "We are going to get Brexit done"', *Reuters*, [www.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-leader/britains-new-leader-johnson-vows-to-get-brexit-done-idUSKCN1UH2JS](http://www.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-leader/britains-new-leader-johnson-vows-to-get-brexit-done-idUSKCN1UH2JS) accessed 23 June 2019.

<sup>3</sup> D. Dorling, and S. Tomlinson, *Rule Britannia: Brexit and the End of Empire* (London, 2019), eBook, Introduction.

questions of how and why the worldview that underpins it became so entrenched that it could survive dismantlement of the 'physical empire' in the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> To understand that we need to revisit the processes of formation and reformation of imperial networks, relationships, formal colonies and subjected communities through which an imagined British Imperial identity was tested and honed, prescribed and performed. Given the extent and range of British Imperial ambitions imagined and realised, carefully scaled case studies are the most effective way of exploring this long development.

This thesis will consider the encultured imperial gaze of British men as travellers and travel writers, looking at continuities and differences across official and unofficial boundaries of British influence. I examine two selections of travel writing publications covering events between 1815 and 1830, focussed on two theatres either side of the Atlantic Ocean. They cover formal British involvement on the Gold Coast and contact with the Asante Empire, and mercenary adventures in Venezuela with the Patriot forces of Simón Bolívar fighting against Imperial Spain. My analysis of these case studies discusses the idea of an active and solidified British National-Imperial identity, usually attributed to the height of later Victorian imperialism, arguing that it was widely understood and engaged with in a recognisable form in the years immediately after the Napoleonic Wars. This version of National-Imperial identity not only began before the 1830s or 40s – stated as the period of its rebirth by Patrick Brantlinger, Antoinette Burton, Catherine Hall and others – but was demonstrated in self-conscious and consistent ways by these earlier British travellers, agents and adventurers

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<sup>4</sup> S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 'Metaphysical Empire, Linguicides and Cultural Imperialism', *English Academy Review*, 35:2 (2018), pp. 96-115.

whether they officially represented Crown or agency, or acted as private individuals.<sup>5</sup> It was then fed back into British public discourse to become a tenet of British cultural evolution long before the Victorian soldier hero, famous explorer, or fictional evocations of 'dark continents', exotic despotic antagonists, and heroes of manliness provided the lasting imagery and cultural memory of Imperial 'greatness'.<sup>6</sup> I will argue that travel writers of the post-Napoleonic era, while lacking the fame of their successors, firmly established a method for taking their already firmly encultured British National-Imperial identity with them, justifying it at the frontiers of imperial adventure, and then returning those experiences to British culture strengthened by the convictions of their encounters with other people and places. Throughout the process of this examination, I will explore and assess the current state of the literature in a wide range of fields related to my project, suggesting how this wide variety of approaches might illuminate the historical investigation of the British Imperial imagination.

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<sup>5</sup> P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (New York, 1990), pp. 7-10. S. Ward, 'Transcending the Nation: A Global Imperial History?' in A. Burton, Ed. *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham and London, 2003), pp. 45-46. A. Burton, 'Introduction: On the Inadequacy and the Indispensability of the Nation', in A. Burton, Ed. *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham and London, 2003), p. 3. C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (London, 2002), pp. 1-27, 82-84, 140-145, 174.

<sup>6</sup> P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, pp. 9-11. D. Kennedy, *The Highly Civilised Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (London, 2007), p. 93. D. Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (London, 2013) pp. 235-237. G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 5-25, 40-53, 233-240.

## Post-Napoleonic Careers: Writing Imperial Britishness in the Nineteenth Century

John Darwin tracks the origin of an Imperial Britishness to a pre-Columbian model of English sovereignty where loyalty and allegiance were ‘ruthlessly centralised’ but the machinery of running a society and economy had a vital devolved element which allowed effective operation under subordinates at a distance.<sup>7</sup> Studies into a British imperial system and world-view have thrown out several counter-arguments. According to Tom Tölle, for the early modern period it is ‘important to eschew identifying the nation-state with an alleged imperial centre and empire with an imagined periphery’.<sup>8</sup> As Tölle points out, Frederick Cooper has expressed similar concerns when describing the ‘space of empire’ as existing within political frameworks of its own, while Jennifer Pitts cites the centrality of ‘centuries-old imperial rivalries’, making national-imperial identities as much a product of competition between agents at the intersections of imperial networks, as it was *between* metropolises of empire, or metropole and periphery.<sup>9</sup> Christopher Bayly’s *Imperial Meridian* emphasises shifting values of British imperial power related to changing ideologies within British politics – the transition from a white settler dominated imperial domain with Whig libertarian ideas at heart, to ‘a more authoritarian conservative nationalism’ based on notions of racial superiority and imperial ‘trusteeship’; Peter Marshall characterises this as an uneven transition, making the move from ‘First’ to ‘Second Empire’ a rather chronologically uncertain thing to trace, but still

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<sup>7</sup> J. Darwin, *Unfinished Empire, The global expansion of Britain* (London, 2013), pp. 13-14.

<sup>8</sup> Tölle uses the economic centrality of Mexico to the Spanish-American Empire to illustrate this point, a paradigm whose legacy will be recognisable in some of my sources. T. Tölle, ‘Early Modern Empires: An Introduction to the Recent Literature’, in: *H-Soz-Kult*, 20.04.2018, [www.hsozkult.de/literaturereview/id/forschungsberichte-2021](http://www.hsozkult.de/literaturereview/id/forschungsberichte-2021), accessed 16 December 2020.

<sup>9</sup> T. Tölle, ‘Early Modern Empires’. F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (London, 2005), pp. 153-154. J. Pitts, ‘Republicanism, Liberalism, and Empire’, in M. Sankar, ed. *Empire and Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 287-289. A. Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire* (Manchester, 2006), p. 70.

attempts to characterise this within the euphemistic terms of 'self-confidence', 'diffusion' of religion, or cultural 'dynamism'.<sup>10</sup> I would argue that a far more pervasive pattern of attitudes emerged to construct a 'Second Empire' mindset; for self-confidence we can read applied racialised arrogance, while for diffusion and dynamism we can read encultured worldview and cultural imperialism. Ideas of imperial superiority, destiny, potential and right, in the English and then British cases, lay in conventions of metropolitan authority and sovereignty, in peripheral motives and actions, and in exchanges between them. They were complex, but something in the way of a shared project in national identity developed to underpin them.

The emergence of such strident and overreaching characteristics can be traced to several strands of fragility that run through the period of Britishness's forging – weaknesses that were circumstantial, cultural and political, and which faced successive international crises in the eighteenth century. Challenges to 'First Empire' colonial securities – most obviously the American Revolution – were among them, as were competitive confrontations with emerging European imperial protagonists. These crises interacted. French support for American independence encapsulates this. Linda Colley notes that this 'forced the British to look anxiously and inquiringly inwards', challenging the basis for an Anglo-centric global self-conception of Britishness that was now reflected more strongly by the independent former colonies.<sup>11</sup> A succession of major wars in which French antagonism and opportunism was a constant, whatever France's own internal crises, challenged the political, economic and religious foundations of Great Britain, as well as presenting a series of immediate threats to

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<sup>10</sup> C. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: the British Empire and the world 1780--1830* (London, 1989), pp. 8-9. P.J. Marshall, 'The First British Empire', in R. Winks, Ed. *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Historiography* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 43-53. P.J. Marshall, 'Britain and the World in the Eighteenth Century: I, Reshaping the Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 8 (1998), pp. 1-18.

<sup>11</sup> L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation* (London, 2003), p. 4.

internal, commercial and colonial security. Forging a patriotism, as Colley describes it, or National-Imperialism, as I would suggest emerged by the 1810s in the writings of British global travellers, was a response to the constant anxiety of identity experienced by a 'young' National-Imperial project under repeated challenge. Colley considers that this was best achieved under the existential threats and extreme pressures of war.<sup>12</sup> Eliga Gould marshals some evidence to challenge that, at least to suggest that 'the ties that bound men and women', whether commercial or religious, around the networks of a British Atlantic, 'currently loom far larger in the scholarly literature than the sorts of schismatic tendencies that resulted in the Declaration of Independence.'<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the 'metrocentric' Anglicising tendencies that Gould observes in the abundance of British patriotic material culture into the nineteenth century, and in the performative practices of provincial Britishness allowed room within Imperial projects, further suggest that acting and reflecting British signifiers presented well-understood advantages for agents hailing from the home nations, established colonies and frontiers of political-commercial opportunity.<sup>14</sup>

Whether in war, trade, performative regional assimilation or 'patriotic paraphernalia', the enduring fragilities remained beneath the 'virtual nation' of Britain. Nevertheless, adherence to representations of Britishness were encultured into the identity and worldview of successive generations, reinforced by social expectation, widespread symbolic engagement, and both intellectual and political trends. For the latter, those shifts towards an authoritarian nationalism, and away from the Whiggish principles that became problematic through the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pp. 4-6.

<sup>13</sup> E. Gould, 'A Virtual Nation: Greater Britain and the Imperial Legacy of the American Revolution', *The American Historical Review*, 104:2 (April 1999), pp. 476-489.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

dissent of the North American colonial elites, corresponded with the exploration of new and replacement opportunities for expansion and exploitation following the loss of those colonies (and other outlets), as well as with the imperative to consolidate and more effectively assimilate other peripheral identities under the British umbrella.<sup>15</sup> As David Armitage says, a 'unifying concept of the British Empire' in existence by the mid eighteenth century 'left generous room for different conceptions of that Empire'.<sup>16</sup> 'Empire's' cultural legitimacy as a term for imagining and understanding a web of hierarchical relationships between members of this political body, however flexible its definitions in response to agendas and external pressures, meant that distinctly imperial conceptions of naturally unequal exchange with others were able to prevail repeatedly as the horizons for opportunity and exploitation expanded globally over the following century.

This mutability of meaning, based on motivation and circumstance, continued as an effective strand through the defining characteristics of British Imperial worldviews into the nineteenth century and beyond. Some of those generous conceptual differences were defined and justified through repeated reiteration of certain key principles of superiority. Phillipa Levine notes that this took on the character of a firmly believed 'national destiny', and that this increasingly pervaded public discourse in Britain through politics, publishing and education, utilising a 'patriotic reading of expansion and colonisation' which saw 'British law and governance as the firmest and noblest expression of humanity'. This was bolstered or sometimes superseded by an assertion of imperial dominance that was more pragmatic than

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<sup>15</sup> D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 11-13. C. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, pp. 8-9. L. Colley, *Britons*, pp. 134-135, 145. E. Gould, 'A Virtual Nation', *The American Historical Review*, pp. 476-489.

<sup>16</sup> D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, pp. 7-8.

moral, 'less concerned with Britain's duties than with its political and economic success', but similar to the idealist's stance in that it shared 'a strong belief that those colonised by the British were weaker and inferior'.<sup>17</sup> These were the terms of both the secular and spiritual, or the pragmatic and moral, strands of what was termed the 'Civilising Mission'. They were also contributory and reinforcing in the emergence of what John MacKenzie has called the 'ideological cluster of monarchism, militarism, and Social Darwinism' that came to define an imperial patriotism, to evidence its cultural pre-eminence, and to continually inject public discourse and popular culture with the ideology of Empire.<sup>18</sup> Levine and MacKenzie both note the exploitation of children's literature, among other cultural outlets, in disseminating such a worldview within British public discourse. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, as MacKenzie establishes, official and military identities and narratives became critically influential and war was central to the dissemination of a unified National-Imperial identity, much as Colley argues that war was definitively effective for unifying a conception of Britishness over a century earlier.<sup>19</sup> In this thesis I will explore the precedents set for such a feedback loop of encultured British National-Imperial ideology through the genre of travel writing in the period of imperial re-imagination that occurred earlier in the nineteenth century, with adventure, conflict, militarism and inherent superiority also available to authors of a British Imperial worldview during this middle period.

Interaction with or from a centre remained a feature at least in the principle and imagination of imperial endeavours, wherever at least a veneer of Darwin's sovereign allegiance was

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<sup>17</sup> P. Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to sunset* (London, 2013), pp. 113-116.

<sup>18</sup> J.M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 6-9.

<sup>19</sup> L. Colley, *Britons*, pp. 4-6.

maintained. There was a trope of 'Victorian' culture here, actually developed in the British national and imperial imagination since the 1750s. This was lip-service to Crown, country, or nation, often engaged with the idea of Empire and even in the problems of running an empire 'on the spot'.<sup>20</sup> Feedback into public discourse effectively turned such lip-service into a documented conviction. From victory at Quiberon Bay through Clive's actions in India to the loss of the American colonies, celebration, confidence, crisis, and reconstruction were experienced, contributing to the honing of a British National-Imperial identity. For Huw Bowen, the 'realities of this situation were such that private trade existed within and, at times, beyond the formal imperial structures', ensuring that private and official actions would both continue to play important and closely linked roles, and would 'ensure that Britain's empire long continued to be defined by trade as well as conquest, and by "maritime" as well as territorial characteristics.'<sup>21</sup> Although the metropole-periphery model can indicate the limitation of authority by distance and immediacy of events, it can also remind scholars considering imperial networks independently of their metropolises that it remained in the consciousness of the British agent, entrepreneur or adventurer abroad.<sup>22</sup> One of the reasons why this continued to be the case throughout the nineteenth century is that a significant option of the British career abroad was, frequently, the return to the metropole to reap any

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<sup>20</sup> Examples of this contemporary to my study included various attempts at 'internal diplomacy' where colonial governors such as those in Australia used envoys to London in order to defend and further their agendas 'on the spot'. See Z. Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815-45: patronage, the information revolution and colonial government* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 66-69.

<sup>21</sup> H.V. Bowen, 'British Conceptions of Global Empire, 1756-83', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 26:3 (1998), pp. 1-27.

<sup>22</sup> A.F. Madden, D. Fieldhouse, *The Dependent Empire in Ireland, 1840-1900: Advance and Retreat in Representative Self-Government* (London, 1991), pp. 1-3.

domestic social benefits. Using case studies from this vital career stage, I will examine British Imperial Identity in its development, consolidation, and justification.

The end of a major war leaves a void. The final Hundred Days of Napoleon in Europe were followed by substantial social and political upheavals and transformations. Recession, absence of capital for rebuilding economies, demobilisations and new political alliances all required adjustments of scope and expectation.<sup>23</sup> The end of an era of military campaigning, career, employment, and adventure created the circumstances for a shift to the exploratory, a globalisation of the search for opportunity, and the contributions of British travellers to identities and agendas of domestic public discourse. Between 1815 and 1818 British military forces underwent a demobilisation required to reduce army and navy from peaks reached after nearly thirty years of steady growth, to forces that were suited to the straitened economic aftermath of the war and the shift in focus from engagement in Europe to global colonies and frontiers of British influence.<sup>24</sup> Many aspirational middle-class career opportunities went the same way.

Those pursuing military or diplomatic careers, or hoping to, found themselves in challenging circumstances in a society where their skills, experience, or ambitions were not conducive to a domestic peacetime career, especially where private means were not sufficient amidst

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<sup>23</sup> This is illustrated effectively by the British involvement in the occupation and reconstruction of France, and the influence of several extraordinary events from 1814; see C. Haynes, *Our Friends the Enemies: The Occupation of France after Napoleon* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 211-244. On the political reordering and justification of intervention in other European states in the aftermath of Napoleon's rule, see R. Stauber, 'The Reorganisation of Europe in 1815', in U. Planert, J. Retallack, eds. *Decades of Reconstruction* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 94-102.

<sup>24</sup> From nearly 250,000 in 1813, the army consisted of some 102,000 by 1828. See P. Burroughs, 'An Unreformed Army? 1815-1868', in D. Chandler, I. Beckett, eds. *The Oxford History of the British Army*, (Oxford, 1994), p. 164. The Royal Navy mustered some 138,000 officers and men in 1812, facing war with France and the USA concurrently; the available figures for the total borne on ships' books as soon as 1815 had already dropped to 78,000. N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (New York, 2005), p. 639.

widespread change in occupations and livelihoods across Britain's economy.<sup>25</sup> Not all who were ready and willing to go out into the wider world seeking fortune, adventure or a better life were veterans, or bent on careers in military or diplomatic service; examining a specific theatre such as the South American revolutionary wars reveals the difficulty of making such assertions. The partial evidence of the participation of Napoleonic veterans was that at most 1 in 3 had wartime service experience, as Matthew Brown has explored.<sup>26</sup> A quantitative analysis of Napoleonic veterans following demobilisation is destined to be problematic. Looking at specific examples can be more revealing, especially through engagements with the conventions of travel writing as a broadly defined literary genre popular at the time.<sup>27</sup> This is the context in which many middle-class men sought to develop their careers, follow the examples of forebears, maintain their independence and define their masculine British identities in the contexts of 'the Empire' (as imagined in 1815), 'blank space', foreign lands and adventures.<sup>28</sup> I look here at careerists who were prepared to take risks and travel great distances but who had an expectation that their experiences would be of interest to their home society. Those who published contemporary accounts of travels and adventures wished to nurture positions within this domestic society through leaving it, with the intention of returning.

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<sup>25</sup> For a breakdown of the shifting employment roles and population changes of the period, see L. Shaw-Taylor, E.A. Wrigley, 'Occupational Structure and Population Change', in R. Floud, J. Humphries, P. Johnson, eds. *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain: Volume I, 1700-1870*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 53-88.

<sup>26</sup> M. Brown, *Adventuring Through Spanish Colonies: Simón Bolívar, Foreign Mercenaries, and the Birth of New Nations* (Liverpool, 2006), pp. 22-27.

<sup>27</sup> R. Bridges, 'Exploration and travel outside Europe (1720-1924)' in P. Hulme, T. Youngs Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 56-58.

<sup>28</sup> For the economic drivers of overseas projection, leading to expansion later in the century, see P.J. Cain, *Economic Foundations of British Overseas Expansion, 1815-1914* (London, 1980), pp. 17-20.

Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff explore the relationship between masculinity, domesticity, and independence in the period in *Family Fortunes*, with Hall building on this work further in *Civilising Subjects*, considering the relationship between individuals navigating British society and its Empire. Hall sees the narrative of this exchange as an elaboration of the ‘anatomies of difference.... Across the axes of race, class and gender.’<sup>29</sup> Her case study in *Civilising Subjects* examines blurring boundaries between colony and metropole, and the resultant complexity of cultural exchange. Hall’s focus leaves a lot of room for further studies exploring wider implications of this exchange. The periodisation of *Civilising Subjects* from 1830 indicates the importance of exploring earlier developments in this experiential feedback relationship between metropole, periphery, frontier, and individual.<sup>30</sup> Matthew Brown points out the lack of exploration of informal empire in Hall’s work, citing Robinson and Gallagher.<sup>31</sup> Brown’s study of British and Irish mercenaries in Bolívar’s revolutionary war against the Spanish Empire tracks the formation and involvement of the legions in question, their cultural exchanges, and often successful integration with, their Spanish colonial hosts and allies, exploring some British mercenaries’ narratives within this context. Having pointed to the limitations of Hall’s intentionally restricted work however, he does not bridge that gap himself; feedback to the metropole and the informally imperial perspectives of those returners is not addressed as relevant sources are examined primarily for ‘on the spot’

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<sup>29</sup> L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (Abingdon, 2019), pp. 13-30, 416-449. C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 1-17, 27.

<sup>30</sup> C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> M. Brown, *Adventuring Through Spanish Colonies*, pp. 3-4.

relevance.<sup>32</sup> This leaves space for a study in the experiences of those more interpretively imperial British actors, as they presented them to a British readership.

Work on relationships between British identity, discourse and imperialist ideas has frequently focused on a 'long Victorian' periodisation, omitting the period between 1815 and the 1830s. Patrick Brantlinger draws on the chronological structure of an appealing metaphor; '...three groups, "Dawn," "Noon," and "Dusk," representing the broad lineaments of a widespread, evolving ideology in British culture.' Writings of the 1830s and 1840s, the "Dawn", are traced to a paradigmatic reflection on the great thesis of high imperialist dilemma of the 1890s, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, at the "Dusk" of British Imperialist ideology.<sup>33</sup> David Spurr reflects on non-fiction forms in writing about Empire, tracking a range of complexities often attributed to Victorian novelists through the works of journalists, travel writers and administrators, within a Victorian periodisation. Again, *Heart of Darkness* encapsulates many of the discursive tropes of prejudicial imperialist imagery.<sup>34</sup> Like Hall, Brantlinger acknowledges the value of tracing origins back beyond the defined chronology of his own study with his 'genealogy of the myth of the "Dark Continent,"' originating in campaigns to abolish the slave trade in Africa. There are, however, only brief nods to 'sympathy in writing about Africa between 1790 and 1830': Mungo Park, Enlightenment and abolitionist poetry, and Thomas Bowditch's *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* in 1819, which I will pay closer attention to. He does not track intervening developments, moving swiftly to Thomas Fowell Buxton's work in 1840. He addresses the narrative of the explorer as a crucial development in his genealogy, jumping to

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<sup>32</sup> M. Brown, *Adventuring Through Spanish Colonies*, pp. 110-124.

<sup>33</sup> P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>34</sup> D. Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham, 1993), p. 10.

Burton and Speke, Baker, Livingstone and Stanley, from 1857.<sup>35</sup> Laura Franey also highlights this as the starting point in a chronology of burgeoning social significance for many issues and intellectual developments of the nineteenth century, emphasising uses of scientific identities ('a botanist, a geologist, a mineralogist, a zoologist, and a "collector of plants"'), and the socio-political agendas of the 1841 government sponsored Niger expedition (promotion of Christianity, trade, suppression of slave trade).<sup>36</sup> Brantlinger and Spurr both explore links between fiction and journalistic or life writings in the development of Victorian British Imperial identities and discourses, touching on 'public' opinion, popularity, readerships and social debates, but public discourse and intellectual trends are not fully examined and neither they, nor those who have built on their approaches have paid more than cursory attention to developments before 1830.

Explorations of these facets of British literary discourse have broadly focused on a limited range of later 'African' encounters, treating them as representative of peripheral exchanges in the nineteenth century. Many of the commonly analysed tropes of Victorian Africa have a considerably longer history; a complex evolution, such as that of the relationship between the imaginary *tabula rasa* of the African interior apparent by the end of the eighteenth century and the 'Dark Continent' myth emerging in recognisable form from the 1850s. Much of Phillip Curtin's analysis in *The Image of Africa* provides a grounding for the background and the broadening of the discussion on 'Africa' in the British imagination that literary studies on Victorian Imperialism in the continent fail to acknowledge.<sup>37</sup> Curtin deals with the rise of

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<sup>35</sup> P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, pp. 173-184.

<sup>36</sup> L. Franey, *Victorian Travel Writing and Imperial Violence: British Writing on Africa, 1855-1902* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 115.

<sup>37</sup> P. Curtin, *The Image of Africa, British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (London, 1965), pp. 65, 115-118.

stereotypes that coalesce in the era of high imperialism; barbarian, savage, violent climate, indolence, impossibility of African civilisation under such conditions. His work also positions this development of attitudes and comparative identity within wider European experiences. Completing that triangulation by looking at how the British represented their encounters with other places and people offers to widen that understanding. Examining a theatre with a different human geography and geopolitical history would contribute to broader understandings of the development of Imperial identities across the wider chronology of British Imperialism. The Atlantic world of the post-Napoleonic period offers a broader locus of both connections and vital differences, as seen by the literate British careerist as travel author.

### **British Travel Writings and Readers in the post-Napoleonic Era**

Published travel narratives offered opportunities for aspirational men to publicly establish their character and authority. Empirical experience gained through travel, adventure, and service could be used to increase domestic social capital. This was rarely an explicitly stated motive for travelling or writing but it underpinned many authors' agendas. Focusing on travel writing from the publisher John Murray, Charles Withers, Innes Keighren, and Bill Bell find that authors' justifications ranged from the scientific and geographical – officially sanctioned or shaped by domestic public discourse – to more personal motives of 'curiosity about a place or

people', 'novelty', desire for empirical experience, or even to 'heed the call to adventure'.<sup>38</sup> Many of these overlapped, 'not easily reducible' but showing 'a clear difference in motive between those who explored or travelled on the basis of others' official sanction or government instructions and those whose motive lay in a mixture of personal interest, a desire to test others' texts, or simple curiosity'.<sup>39</sup> It was an acknowledged and useful if precarious career move in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Travel writing is a broadly defined genre. By the 1810s it encompassed a range of styles and subject matter, different types of travel, and self-described roles for authors. Accounts of exploration and discovery, tales of adventure, official missions, and personal journeys were all common. Authors included army and navy officers, gentlemen, diplomats, merchants, and aspiring scholars.<sup>40</sup> Even as scholarly disciplines emerged, catching up with Alexander von Humboldt's call for 'epistemological objectivity' in place of personal and anecdotal accounts, 'imperial' travels and 'popular curiosity' among widening readerships also reinforced demand for ideologically founded narratives. Many authors sought to fulfil both purposes.<sup>41</sup> Women wrote as companions, upper-middle-class observers, and independent travellers who revealed a perspective that was sometimes but not always distinct from male counterparts operating within the same networks and conventions.<sup>42</sup> Tim Youngs highlights the sometimes contentious debate among feminist and postcolonial scholars about how to characterise this

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<sup>38</sup> C. Withers, I. Keighren, B. Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773–1859* (Chicago, 2015), pp. 35, 47.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-47.

<sup>41</sup> N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: From an Antique Land* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 6-7.

<sup>42</sup> S. Mills, *Gender and Colonial Space* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 17-19.

role; are they agents of imperial power, subjects, or both? This question is relevant to the male traveller too when considering, as Mary Louise Pratt illustrates, the degree to which authors characterised themselves as passive and subjective observers who dealt with events as they occurred, like Mungo Park, or as active agents of their own agendas.<sup>43</sup> Sidonie Smith addresses a 'repertoire of meanings' which women as travellers had to negotiate that formed an 'itinerant masculinity' which was developed through narratives of travel, a train of thought which Youngs uses to raise the question of difference between men's and women's representations, but which is equally as applicable to differences between narratives of male travellers as they negotiated a web of enculturated norms and values concerning 'civilised' man and his mobility.<sup>44</sup>

In 1819 the forum of public discourse was widening, raising challenges to laws and conventions that governed exchanges in published media from the late eighteenth century. Readerships increased, as did the numbers of publications competing for their attention. Perpetual copyright was found to be illegal in Scotland in 1773, then England in 1774, something that William St. Clair describes as 'a decisive moment for the whole subsequent development of notions of intellectual property, for the price of books and of access to texts, for the progress of reading, and for the subsequent course of the intellectual culture widely defined'.<sup>45</sup> Rows about libel, freedom of speech, identities of authors and political leanings changed in tone from issues of innuendo and the intentions of the publisher that characterised the 1790s, to those of intended audiences and their competence as readers by the 1820s. Paul

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<sup>43</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 2003), p. 80. T. Youngs, 'Introduction: Filling in the blank spaces', in T. Youngs, ed. *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling in the blank spaces* (London, 2006) pp. 8-20. N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, pp. 5-9.

<sup>44</sup> S. Smith, *Moving Lives: Twentieth century women's travel writing* (Minneapolis, 2001) pp. IX, XVI, 1-6.

<sup>45</sup> W. St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 111.

Magnuson gives Richard Carlile's prosecution for publishing the works of Thomas Paine in 1819, and the trial of Sir Francis Burdett for seditious libel following the Peterloo Massacre, as examples of a government belief in the lack of judgement of the 'lower classes' of readers.<sup>46</sup> They were now worth paying some mind to, as consumers of knowledge. The commercial challenges also proved influential. While publishing books needed little investment – John Murray initially operated from his own home – the trend for publishers to diversify into periodicals by the 1820s exposed them to market pressures they had avoided before. Periodicals cost much more, particularly in personnel, and took longer to generate income than books, while banking crises and credit squeezes exacerbated the problems. Publishing is thought to have 'collapsed' in 1826, ruining Sir Walter Scott's commercial 'empire' and nearly taking John Murray down due to a failed periodical.<sup>47</sup> The politics of public discourse were also therefore a commercial battleground where partisan debates and criticisms affected the market.

The 'explosion of reading' that occurred in this half-century was many things to many more people than before. It was personal, political, and legal. It was increasingly tied up with 'emerging narratives of national history and identity', through travel and exploration writings in books and periodicals, especially the 'connected narratives' of Arctic exploration, as well as in fiction, from Scott's *Waverley* novels to those that were serialised in successful periodicals by the late 1820s. St. Clair notes a doubling of the rate of publication of novels in prose.<sup>48</sup> Richard Sher has pointed to the significance of the 'national lens' through which Scottish

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<sup>46</sup> P. Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 18-20.

<sup>47</sup> W. St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, pp. 169-171. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>48</sup> J. Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative: Arctic Exploration in British Print Culture, 1818-1860* (Toronto, 2008), pp. 14-15. J.A. Downie, 'Epilogue: The English novel at the end of the 1820s', in J.A. Downie, Ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 582-585.

Enlightenment authors were viewed, which incorporated affiliation and credibility into individual author identities, tying reputation to cohesive recognition on national terms.<sup>49</sup> The frequency of travel writing publications, broadly defined, also rose considerably. Publishers such as John Murray sought to maintain a turnover through a genre that was quick and easy to publish, and popular.<sup>50</sup> By Benjamin Colbert's calculation, in 1813 there were 61 new travel writing publications and 137 in 1818. The proportion of those about places beyond Europe increased from 17 to 39. Colbert describes over 75% of these as 'personal witness narratives, including letters, journals, and "notes" on tours actually conducted by the named or implied author,' rather than guide-books or itineraries.<sup>51</sup>

The opportunities presented by this explosion of travel narratives for testing and reflecting a model of British National-Imperial identity also increased. Travel books became what John McAleer calls 'cultural reference points' for broader readerships, representative of a British Imperial project of encountering and collating knowledge, as well as a reading culture that elevated both romantic adventure and intellectual belonging – for those who read, and read the correct books.<sup>52</sup> Books became the 'mundane' technology (more widespread and less specialist than much other technological innovation in travel and exploration into the nineteenth century) by which knowledge and experience could travel, 'home' to British domestic society and into public discourse, as well as out on journeys of exploration, speculation and consolidation within and beyond boundaries of imperial expansion. They

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<sup>49</sup> R.B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors & Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, & America* (Chicago, 2006), pp. 190-194.

<sup>50</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 30-32.

<sup>51</sup> B. Colbert, 'Bibliography Of British Travel Writing, 1780-1840: The European Tour, 1814-1818 (excluding Britain and Ireland)', *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text*, Cardiff University, Issue 13 (Winter 2004), pp. 5-17.

<sup>52</sup> J. McAleer, 'The Empire Reads Back: Travel, Exploration and the British World in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in M. Lhati *The Edinburgh History of Reading: Modern Readers* (Edinburgh, 2020), pp. 124-144.

were also produced through transforming technologies and processes of mediation such as in John Murray's 'regime of regulatory practices' facilitated by the advancement of print technology.<sup>53</sup> Travellers took books with them on their travels, exploratory expeditions shipped whole libraries of reference works and relevant witness accounts, and colonial or diplomatic appointees read into the contexts and histories of their destinations, subjects, or hosts, as mediated by the culturally consistent gaze of published authors.<sup>54</sup> To travel correctly, it became necessary first to read, and this in turn influenced the production and dissemination of fresh accounts, while interest and attention in British public discourse also helped to ensure a market for travel books specific to regions and events as they became relevant, such as at the points of crisis in Spanish colonial South America and European bridgeheads in post-1807 West Africa after 1815.

The focus of this research dissertation is a selection of eight travel narratives published as books between 1819 and 1832. I have examined four accounts of British official and quasi-official dealings with the Gold Coast and Asante Empire in the period leading up to and during the First Anglo-Asante War from 1823. They cover issues around the British presence on the Gold Coast, characters and potentials of landscape and environment, ambitions regarding Asante, and ethnographic evaluations of people of the region. I also examine four accounts by British mercenaries and adventurers in service with the revolutionary armies of South America during their wars against Imperial Spain, specifically concentrating on voices from the British-

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<sup>53</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 175-182. For the broader technological and structural transformation of publishing in the period, see J. Raven, 'The industrial revolution of the book', in L. Howsam, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 143-161.

<sup>54</sup> J. McAleer, 'The Empire Reads Back', in M. Hammond, ed. *The Edinburgh History of Reading*, pp. 124-144. C. Warrior and J. McAleer, 'Objects of Exploration: Expanding the Horizons of Maritime History', in F. MacDonald and C.W.J. Withers, eds. *Geography, Technology and Instruments of Exploration* (Farnham, 2015), pp. 98-118.

raised mercenary forces that entered the continent via the Orinoco river in 1817 and 1818. These authors also constructed encultured representations of landscape, environment, potential, and cultures of difference. Each of these accounts and their authors shares a range of characteristics which make it appropriate to examine them together, as well as demonstrating a range of individual differences and variations of personality, insight, self-awareness, agenda, and conviction. I interrogate whether the imperial nature of their worldview is heightened, lessened or of comparable clarity and intent, whether the authors formally represented British interests or acted as private individuals. In doing so, I explore Nigel Leask's contention that travel writing began to 'privilege authorial "egotism" and entertaining reflections, often motivated by pious, patriotic, and imperialistic ideologies', along with a concomitant compromise of scientific observation and objectivity.<sup>55</sup>

The four sources on South America were written by British mercenaries in Simón Bolívar's Venezuelan forces in 1817-1819, following the active recruitment of British and Irish men to the revolutionary cause, intended to bring military experience to their army but in reality attracting more volunteers who were actively seeking it instead.<sup>56</sup> The eldest of these four individuals was Colonel Gustavus Hippisley, a former regular army officer who served as a lieutenant in various administrative roles, before being decommissioned due to ill health and resurfacing in a more senior rank in the militia in England.<sup>57</sup> Dr John H. Robinson qualified as a medical doctor in Edinburgh and evidently spent much of his time before this adventure

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<sup>55</sup> N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>56</sup> M. Brown, *Impious Adventurers? Mercenaries, Honour and Patriotism in the Wars of Independence in Gran Colombia* (PhD, University of London, 2004), pp. 46-77.

<sup>57</sup> G. Hippisley, *A Narrative of the Expedition to the Rivers Orinoco and Apuré in South America; which sailed from England in November 1817, and joined the Patriotic forces in Venezuela and Caraccas* (London, 1819).

engaging with that vibrant but self-congratulating intellectual society.<sup>58</sup> Of these four men, the least is known of Charles Brown, whose short self-justifying account seemingly reflects a relative youthful arrogance.<sup>59</sup> Finally, Richard Vowell stayed the longest in South America and his memoir has the most developed literary style of the eight, but his identity is less immediately apparent.<sup>60</sup> These accounts share variations on a common set of tropes including, for example, untamed and dangerous landscape and environment, the 'unmilitary' organisation and conditions of the Venezuelan forces, and interpretations of the racialised characteristics of social groups in Spanish America. The four accounts I have analysed from the British Gold Coast and the adjacent Asante Empire cover two diplomatic missions and the First Anglo-Asante War, with the latter published in 1832, written by Major Henry Ricketts. He had begun the conflict as a lieutenant in the West India Regiment; by the conclusion he had the thankless task of Acting Governor of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast. This is the only published account of the war by a protagonist that made it to a British readership.<sup>61</sup> The three earlier publications from this theatre cover the years leading up to the start of the war with Asante and deal with two successive diplomatic missions to the Asante capital, Kumasi. The first of

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<sup>58</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal of an Expedition 1400 Miles up the Orinoco and 300 up the Arauca; with an account of the country, the manners of the people, military operations, &c.* (London, 1822). For an account of Edinburgh's character as a city 'of' the Enlightenment, see M. Pittock and C. Lamont, 'Spatial Humanities and Memory Studies: Mapping Edinburgh in the First Age of the Enlightenment', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 42:2 (2016), pp. 151-163.

<sup>59</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative of the Expedition to South America, which sailed from England at the close of 1817, for the service of the Spanish Patriots: including the military and naval transactions, and ultimate fate of that expedition: Also the arrival of Colonels Blosset and English, with British troops for that service, their reception and subsequent proceedings, with other interesting occurrences* (London, 1819).

<sup>60</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises in Venezuela and New Granada, and in the Pacific Ocean; from 1817 to 1830: With the narrative of a march from the river Orinoco to San Buenaventura on the coast of Chocò and sketches of the west coast of South America from the Gulf of California to the archipelago of Chilöe. Also Tales of Venezuela: Illustrative of revolutionary men, manners, and incidents. In the volumes. Vol. I.* (London, 1831). M. Brown, 'Richard Vowell's Not-so-Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Adventure in Nineteenth-Century Hispanic America', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 38:1 (Feb. 2006), pp. 95-122.

<sup>61</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative of the Ashantee War: with a view of the present state of the colony of Sierra Leone* (London, 1831).

these, by Thomas Bowdich, was published in 1819. It was an extensive attempt to justify his own diplomatic actions and produce the kind of polymathic monograph that, he hoped, would qualify him as a philosophical authority. Bowdich was employed as a junior member of the mission to the Asantehene (the 'king' or 'emperor' of Asante), an ostensibly private employee of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, but under the authority of the company's Royal Charter.<sup>62</sup> He would seize the opportunity to take control of proceedings. His successor was appointed by the Foreign Office, who chose a man of experience in diplomatic affairs, Joseph Dupuis. His previous posting as Vice-Consul in Mogador (Essaouira, now in western Morocco) led to his involvement in the publication of Robert Adams' questionable account of his experiences as a 'white slave' in North Africa.<sup>63</sup> Dupuis was highly critical of Bowdich's account but both men were able to successfully negotiate and sign treaties with the Asantehene Osei Bonsu. Dupuis' assistant, William Hutton, was a businessman trading in the region and an African Company Officer. He published his own account in 1821 (three years before Dupuis), blending ethnographic observations with a deliberate case for increased British involvement in West Africa.<sup>64</sup>

One from each theatre is a memoir covering a longer period and published later than the others. The other six were all published relatively quickly to attempt to contribute to

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<sup>62</sup> The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, known as the African Company, replaced the Royal African Company in 1752. On the close ties between the African Company, the Gold Coast economy, and the slave trade, see T.M. Reese, 'The Drudgery of the Slave Trade: Labor at Cape Coast Castle, 1750-1790', in P.A. Coclanis, ed. *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel* (Columbia, 2005), pp. 277-293.

<sup>63</sup> R. Adams, *The Narrative of Robert Adams* (London, 1816).

<sup>64</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a statistical account of that kingdom, and geographical notices of other parts of the interior of Africa* (London, 1819). J. Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (London, 1824). W. Hutton, *A Voyage to Africa: Including a narrative of an embassy to one of the interior kingdoms, in the year 1820; with remarks on the course and termination of the Niger, and other principal rivers of that country* (London, 1821).

immediate public discourse in Britain on each region, although in the case of Joseph Dupuis, they were not all prompt enough to do so. These texts display a clearly formed, self-conscious British National-Imperial identity and worldview. The precise understanding of this nebulous 'Imperial Britishness' does vary between them, which probably owed much to pragmatic assessments of the value of a 'British' allegiance rather than separate national or regional identities, as to any heartfelt national feeling. With the right badges of belonging, it could be shaped to mean many things.<sup>65</sup> Intersecting personal influences such as age, upbringing, experience, employment, authority, and intellectual background all mark differences between the authors' conceptions of their British perspective on the other, the periphery, the right and the opportunity for British involvement and pre-eminence. They did however invoke broadly held *encultured* intellectual commitments and fashions which characterised National-Imperial identity in this period. They drew on Romantic and Enlightenment tropes and concepts frequently. They used the rhetoric of progress, improvement, beneficence, civilisation, commerce, and responsibility. They engaged with popular public issues of anti-slavery, suppression of the slave trade, benefits of British governance and trade to the world, and the nature of British involvement in or 'exploration' of places on the Atlantic periphery. They bought into – and sold on – the illusion that 'liberty' was a British thing.

In this thesis I use a definition of imperialism described in broadly socio-cultural terms. Within this, I use a broad definition of 'culture' which encompasses the authors' upbringing and constructed identities. These combine to describe something I will call *encultured imperialism*,

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<sup>65</sup> With thanks to Alan Malpass for the description of British national identity as a 'nebulous concept'. See also L. Colley, *Britons: forging the nation* (London, 2003), pp. 337-339. J. Darwin, *Unfinished Empire, The global expansion of Britain* (London, 2013), pp. 13-14. K. Cameron, 'Introduction', in K. Cameron, ed. *National Identity* (Exeter, 1999), pp. 1-6.

which consists of a set of attitudes and perspectives that are embedded in the mindset of the actor-author, and which come from their education and socialisation in British society in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The point is not to definitively declare where these attitudes came from, but to demonstrate how well established they were in discourses of travel writing from the peripheries of British Imperial influence before 1830.

### **Encultured Imperialism**

The projection of British Imperial fantasies, ambitions, and opportunities into the territory of another Empire (Spain) or a 'sub-civilised' human geography (inland from the Gold Coast) allowed imaginers of British Imperial expansion to speculate on the possibilities *as* formal and official projects of empire, *beyond* such legitimating authorities, or by the exercise of control through beneficiaries or intermediaries. It also encouraged individuals to move fluidly between them and across imagined frontiers of formal control, even between empires and their jurisdictions.<sup>66</sup> Historiographical debates around the form and function of Britain's 'informal empire' have been preoccupied with examples from South America during the same period of decolonisation I am concerned with here. Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher's thesis concerning the 'imperialism of free trade' dominated debates and critiques of 'informal empire' for several generations of scholars, but those contentious responses did not resolve

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<sup>66</sup> B. Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 8-11. J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven, 2006) pp. x-xv.

several significant questions around the extent or effectiveness of British motivations toward exerting influence in South America. Nor did they suppress the use of the term 'informal empire', its conceptual fluidity, or its adaptation within critical examinations of cultural imperialisms, as Matthew Brown points out.<sup>67</sup>

M.P. Knox defines informal empire by the absence of an official, central controlling imperial authority governing the actions of imperial agents or subjects. While lacking *official* oversight or ideology of expansion and exploitation, it became imperial through manipulation of power relationships as unequal, hierarchised exchanges, pursuing mutually supported objectives of political influence and economic expansion.<sup>68</sup> This gives us a clear outline of what might constitute formal empire too – the presence of such an authority and its official status. However, in many cases of British Imperial fantasy and projection, the boundaries of such definitions were unclear in practice, and highly fluid in the hands of participants. The acts of casting an 'imperial eye' over the Spanish Empire during severe crisis, or travelling and observing beyond the narrow confines of established British control on the Gold Coast at the crisis of transference from Company to Crown authority, demonstrate that the existing borders of British command and exploitation were never the limits of potential for further gain. Expansion and exploitation were key; they were present in the ambition and worldview of consciously British agents in the 1810s.

According to Gregory Barton, as a characterisation of current global power dynamics, informal empire has much to recommend it; 'massive' foreign investment, settlers or guest workers in

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<sup>67</sup> M. Brown, Introduction, in M. Brown, ed. *Informal Empire in Latin America: Culture, Commerce and Capital* (London, 2008), pp. 1-22. I discuss the fluidity of definitions of 'imperial' further below.

<sup>68</sup> M.P. Knox, 'Imagining informal empire: Nineteenth-century British literature and Latin America', *Literature Compass*, 16:1 (2019), pp. 1-13.

positions of economic power or as a critical exploited labour mass, elite relationships and outside interventions are all prevalent and overwhelming determinants of economic and political subordination.<sup>69</sup> However diverse and amorphous these components may appear in action (now or at any other stage in their enactment), they have as a driving cultural force an attitude, ideology, or worldview of imperialism in the broad sense – the expansionist party must begin from an encultured position of believing they have the right and the means to assume the upper hand in an unequal relationship of exchange. This makes the formal or informal approach a question of means, after the established principle of imperialism as a facet of identity is firmly encultured in the agents of a prospectively imperial power.

A fluidity between the means for exploring imperialistic ambition, between formal (official) and informal (private) enterprises in expansion and exploitation, was a reality for British interactions with the wider world by the 1810s. Stephen Conway notes that an array of unofficial or decentralised relationships of dominance were exercised by representatives of British interests in the eighteenth century, on a global scale. These ranged from commercial dominance on the rise across autonomous Indian states and in continuation in North America after US independence, to geo-strategic preoccupation with the Dutch colony at the Cape of Good Hope, and substantial commercial and diplomatic influence over other nominally sovereign territories such as those of the Portuguese Empire.<sup>70</sup> Just as there were shifts in the formal or informal character of these relationships over time, there were also developments in the attitude of self-confidence and authority that underpinned the emergent British ambition to dominance in one form or another. A culture, that is an attitude and worldview,

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<sup>69</sup> G.A. Barton, *Informal Empire and the Rise of One World Culture* (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 13-18.

<sup>70</sup> S. Conway, *Britannia's Auxiliaries: Continental Europeans and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 11-13.

of imperialism became a signifying characteristic of British national identity through relationships such as those Conway lists, both formal and informal, both imagined and realised. As Ann Laura Stoler argues, those 'formal' imperial forms with distinct boundaries and clear distinctions between coloniser and colonised, 'represent only one end of the spectrum and a narrow range of their orientations'; for historians to properly consider the full scope of empire in concept and practice, then and now, "'indirect rule" and "informal empire" are unhelpful euphemisms, not working concepts.'<sup>71</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century, expansion and exploitation in practice was facilitated with at least performative confidence by a discourse of imperialism that posited an imagined British culture as superior to that of any polity subordinated through an imperial power exchange – 'our' way of doing things, of thinking, of organising, was part of the unequal deal that British agents endorsed and offered, even when those clear distinctions of colonial occupation were absent.

Recognisable forms of a culture of imperialism *and* a cultural imperialism were therefore already highly developed in relation to contact zones at peripheries of British imperial power in the 1810s.<sup>72</sup> I will test the assertion that this was already evident in travel writing and ancestral to the world-view of the Victorian Empire. John Tomlinson defines cultural imperialism as 'the exercise of domination in cultural relationships in which the values, practices, and meanings of a powerful foreign culture are imposed upon one or more native cultures'.<sup>73</sup> However, this raises a series of problems concerning the boundaries and influences of 'foreign' and 'native' cultures it places in its power relationship. It cannot do

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<sup>71</sup> A.L. Stoler, 'On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty', *Public Culture*, 18:1 (2006), pp. 125-146.

<sup>72</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>73</sup> J. Tomlinson, 'Cultural Imperialism', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Globalization* (Chichester, 2012).

justice to the slippery work of defining this amorphous concept, which contains two of the most avowedly indefinable terms in common use in the English language, 'culture' and 'imperialism'.<sup>74</sup> The term cultural imperialism belongs to a globalised, polarised mass media age, and is inherently, radically critical. It is contemporary to its critical focus, the cultural economies of Cold War US globalism. It '*must be assembled out of its discourse*' (Tomlinson's emphasis), tackling the multiplicity of meanings in order to highlight the mutability of the unified concept. Discursive context is therefore essential to any understanding of 'culture' or 'imperialism'.<sup>75</sup>

The active use of these terms and the agenda driving usage incorporate layers of meaning, overlapping in different contexts. Engaging with Raymond Williams, Tomlinson agrees on a working meta-definition of culture, the "“signifying processes” of a society, “from language through the arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion and advertising”".<sup>76</sup> It then reaches out to include the 'mundane practices'; consumption within the market or, I would suggest, the daily routine as shaped by time, place, class, difference, relative wealth, and opportunity.<sup>77</sup> Les Beldo points to the criticisms from within anthropology of the anthropological concept of culture – 'symbolic systems of beliefs, values, and shared understandings that render the world meaningful and intelligible for a particular group of people' – that this treats societies in simplistic and reductive ways, underplaying individuality and diversity. Beldo argues that it has 'never entailed such assumptions' in reality, but that ideology and misunderstanding both play roles. There is a tendency to reduce the flexibility of 'culture' into a manageable form for

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<sup>74</sup> J. Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism: A critical introduction* (London, 1991), pp. 2-3.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, pp. 6-7.

<sup>77</sup> R. Williams, 'Culture', in *Keywords* (London, 1983), Kindle Edition. J. Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism*, pp. 6-7.

critique, but it remains 'indispensable' for analysing social life, while even its fiercest critics can recognise its 'centrality and pervasiveness'.<sup>78</sup> As I will explore in Chapter 2, this applies aspects of domestically learned cultural routines to the exotic environment in familiarising ways, such as shooting monkeys from trees as sport.<sup>79</sup> The importance of these contexts now raises the question of where the cultural drivers are coming from and, in a pre- or extra-colonial space and time, where they are being fed into by their authors. I argue that the more significant element at this stage, the imperial side of the relationship, is not the colonised subject, as they have not yet been colonised; it is rather the *colonising* society.<sup>80</sup>

Moving to the term 'imperialism', Williams again notes its disputed modern definition, in use since the 1870s, 'as different justifications and glosses' were placed on imperial/colonial systems and processes. Political and economic understandings exclude a wider definition but the full range of 'historical and contemporary variations of meaning' require their own working definitions.<sup>81</sup> These meanings unfold between the discursive context of the source and the point of view of the historian. For the latter, it has always been an issue of some contention. In 1964, Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt attempted to deal with the evolution of the term 'imperialism' and its binary political resonances, with a 'biography of a political word and its rise to world power status', ascribing twelve changes of meaning.<sup>82</sup> Williams, Tomlinson, and successive generations of imperial historians would increase that

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<sup>78</sup> L. Beldo, 'Concept of Culture, in J. Birx, ed. *21<sup>st</sup> Century Anthropology: A reference handbook, Volume one* (London, 2010), pp. 144-152.

<sup>79</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, p. 55.

<sup>80</sup> I use the terms 'colonised' and 'colonising' here with their postcolonial meanings, but I do so advisedly, as I am about to indicate.

<sup>81</sup> R. Williams, 'Imperialism', in *Keywords*.

<sup>82</sup> R. Koebner, H. Schmidt, *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960* (Cambridge, 1964), p. xiii.

figure many times. They recognised that it can be widely applied to ‘systems of rule and interests of dominance’, going beyond policy and agenda into the realms of more visceral and emotional facets of power relationships. These might include the ‘obstinacy’ of control, ‘high-handed action and the reckless use of brute force’, subtle ingratiation or a series of further ambiguities.<sup>83</sup> Prophetic of a multiplicity of methodologies that came after their work on the term, we can see the necessity for (re)assembling the term ‘out of its discourse’.

Roy Bridges, in addressing the subject of travel outside Europe, and travel writing about it, notes that ‘various kinds of relationships stopping short of direct administration’ have posed problems of definition for historians – those uncertain definitions like ‘informal empire’.<sup>84</sup> A redevelopment of ‘cultural imperialism’, separated from its contemporary prescriptive implications, may become more widely applicable. Bridges refers to much-reviewed arguments, most notably the responses to Robinson and Gallagher’s ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’ (1953), which conceives, without using the phrase, a culture of imperialism in a range of fields of British interest in and engagement with the wider world, decades before Victorian High Imperialism and including the pursuit of ‘free trade’ itself.<sup>85</sup> D.C.M. Platt, using a narrow imaginary of British global trade cultures in practice, seems convinced that because the examples relied upon to support the argument were either ultimately unsuccessful (as in South America), faced effective resistance, or where free-trade advocates with public platforms and private agendas declared themselves non-imperial in their intentions, that

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. xviii.

<sup>84</sup> R. Bridges, ‘Exploration and travel outside Europe (1720-1914)’, in P. Hulme and T. Youngs, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 53.

<sup>85</sup> J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’, *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1953), pp. 1-15.

imperialism was not at work here.<sup>86</sup> However, while disputable arrangements of evidence can be found in Robinson and Gallagher's thesis, it contains in embryonic form a valuable principle for my methodology. Imperialism, in its broadest sense, is the process of making and driving *unequal* power relationships between groups of people, with the express intention of gain accreting to the side that holds advantage.<sup>87</sup> This is imperialism *as a culture*, at work. The relationships of dominance, and their strange mix of arrogance with rhetoric of benevolence, remained.

Historians have exhaustively remodelled the term 'imperialism' constituent to its discursive contexts, drawing on a huge and amorphous tradition ranging beyond a mere twelve reinventions and throwing down many more challenges since 'The Imperialism of Free Trade'. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni synthesises several treatises on imperialism to produce a triptych consisting of 'physical empire', 'commercial-non-territorial-military empire', and 'metaphysical empire'.<sup>88</sup> He declares 'physical empire' to be 'successfully dismantled in the twentieth century', although he acknowledges the importance of the colonial intermediary and structures of legitimation that allowed for the physical empire to be established and maintained, suggesting some form of afterlife in residual structures of inequality that are themselves 'physical' and real.<sup>89</sup> The second type, 'commercial-non-territorial-military empire', draws from work by David Nugent which describes the US model of 'military-commercial empire rather than territorially-based colonies'. Ndlovu-Gatsheni engages with

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<sup>86</sup> D.C.M. Platt, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade: Some Reservations', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Aug. 1968), pp. 296-306.

<sup>87</sup> J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', pp. 1-15.

<sup>88</sup> S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'Metaphysical Empire, Linguicides and Cultural Imperialism', *English Academy Review*, 35:2 (2018), pp. 96-115.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 96-115.

Kwame Nkrumah's critique of neo-colonialism, and the 'distortion of the character of empire' put forward through liberal arguments for the beneficial effects of global US hegemony. He does not declare this type to be dead or dying but implies that it came from the ashes of the 'physical empire'.<sup>90</sup> I think it has a longer genealogy and models itself quite effectively on practices that were fully realised in the 'Second British Empire' between 1780 and 1850.<sup>91</sup> The third, 'metaphysical empire', 'survived the dismantlement of the "physical empire"' and, presumably, has enabled the postcolonial version of the 'commercial-non-territorial-military empire' outlined here. It has realised the 'submission of the colonized world to European memory.'<sup>92</sup> Referring to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's metaphor of the detonation of a 'cultural bomb' which served to 'annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their language, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves', Ndlovu-Gatsheni points to invented colonial identities such as 'native' as tools of a remodelling of African people 'in the image of the colonial conqueror'.<sup>93</sup>

Considering the sweeping process of the chronology of imperialism, is there a need for a fourth empire? The 'imagined empire', coming first, would incorporate colonial fantasy as a prerequisite for later conquest and control. Susanne Zantop explores this preliminary cultural process in German-speaking Europe, defining intellectual interest in connections and differences between 'over there' and 'over here' from the late eighteenth century, mirroring social anxieties and projecting ambitions that imagine both a unified 'over here' – a united

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, pp. 96-115.

<sup>91</sup> C. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the world, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), pp. 136, 197.

<sup>92</sup> S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'Metaphysical Empire', pp. 96-115.

<sup>93</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: the politics of language in African literature* (London, 1986) p. 3. S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'Metaphysical Empire', pp. 96-115.

German state not yet in existence – and an expansive ‘over there’, projecting colonial ambitions.<sup>94</sup> The ‘imagined empire’ creates space for imagined communities and national-imperial identities to be developed in a ‘pre-colonial’ stage of imperial-minded travel, networking and knowledge gathering. After decolonisation, it would also be able to accommodate another ongoing process whereby a national-imperial identity continued integrating its historical exceptionalism and rhetoric of superior civilisation, both in its own domestic public discourse, and in the exported mindset of contemporary globalised networks of influence and exchange – the cultural imperialism of the mass media age.<sup>95</sup>

Imperialism, then, is at its core a process and system of relationships, where one subject in that relationship has a much greater and entirely dominant share of the agency and power than the other. So, returning to the two threads of ‘cultural imperialism’ and ‘culture of imperialism’, we can use these models of their constituent parts to apply them in practice in contexts outside those in which they developed. The former refers to a particular process of imposition of a culture, developed in the second half of the twentieth century for a radical critique of the USA, and the latter to the entire network of systems and processes that socialises the people of a society with the mindset of an imperial identity. For Edward Said, ‘neither culture nor imperialism is inert, and so the connections between them as historical experiences are dynamic and complex’.<sup>96</sup> Drawing on V.G. Kiernan’s description of ‘modern imperialism’ as an ‘accretion of elements’ of varying importance that may have less to do with material desires than with the ‘uneasy tensions of societies distorted by class division’, Said

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<sup>94</sup> S. Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (London, 1997), pp. 1-17.

<sup>95</sup> J. Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism*. D. Dorling, and S. Tomlinson, *Rule Britannia: Brexit and the End of Empire* (London, 2019), eBook, Introduction.

<sup>96</sup> E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1994), p. 14.

points to the dependence of empire on ‘the idea of having an empire’.<sup>97</sup> Imperialism gains a coherence with a set of experiences, by developing a cultural idea of imperial entitlement that can be taught and socialised into subsequent generations of empire builders.

This brings us to a definition of the term I will use to interrogate the rhetoric of imperial identity at work in my chosen sources; *Encultured Imperialism*. Enculturation, in keeping with the shifting topography of the concepts discussed above, must also be recalibrated to this discursive context. The *Oxford Dictionary of Cultural Anthropology* defines enculturation as ‘the process of learning the cultural rules and social patterns of a society’, most intensively in childhood but continuing throughout the ‘stages of life’.<sup>98</sup> Anthropologist Gerd Baumann saw civil culture – beyond family and formal education – which imparts the process of enculturation in a society, as a powerful source of this learning. Baumann outlines ‘three elements’: ‘competence’ regarding civil society, ‘nationally specific conventions of civil culture and norms of civility’, and conformist or critical familiarity with ‘its dominant national self-representation’. This paradigm positions civil society in relation to each individual’s social privileges as well as the evolving condition of the national culture(s) within which they are raised.<sup>99</sup> Enculturation, as a socialisation process, is a healthier term than the more prescriptive ‘acculturation’ concerning immigrants to a host society, but it does not occlude the more pervasive, or forcibly conformist elements of any ‘home’ society.<sup>100</sup> Where compliance is a requirement of success, and contraventions of this are punished or rewarded

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>98</sup> L. Vivanco, ‘Enculturation’, *Oxford Dictionary of Cultural Anthropology* (Oxford, 2018).

<sup>99</sup> G. Baumann, ‘Introduction: Nation-State, Schools and Civil Enculturation’, in G. Baumann, et al. Eds. *Civil Enculturation: Nation-State, School and Ethnic Difference in the Netherlands, Britain, Germany, and France* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 4-5.

<sup>100</sup> P. Weinreich, ‘“Enculturation”, not “acculturation”: Conceptualising and assessing identity processes in migrant communities’, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33 (2009), pp. 124–139.

in relation to factors such as wealth, connections or fame, competence can be exactly this kind of prescribed acquiescence.

So how does this come to bear on my frame of analysis for this study? In European societies, including Britain, that were developing an outward looking but inward reflecting National-Imperial cultural identity from 1750 onwards, enculturation was the formation of the imperial observer by socialisation in a dynamic society, a culture that imparts the characteristics, behaviours, and ways of seeing that the imperial agent requires in order to continue this process. This is the force of encultured imperialism at work in the travel narratives I will examine. The actor-authors were encultured with a particular type of British National-Imperial identity which had, by the 1810s, conventionalised a number of intellectual and social perspectives and beliefs. It is through these that they saw and evaluated encounters. There was a feedback loop in operation here, consolidating and updating this encultured form of imperialism using class and gender. British society enculturated each generation with an imperial sense of cultural superiority by imagining British Imperial conditions. Each generation's experiences were evaluated through the lens of this National-Imperial identity to form a global and imperial worldview. Various media were then used to feed their experiences back into society, strengthen the material available for ongoing enculturation of the population, and complete the loop. At this particular juncture, a process of reimagining a British Imperial identity had to take place, as it did after every contraction, such as the end of the 'First Empire' or through Decolonisation. It occurred with the repositioning of enhanced confidence and ambition following the extended period of war up to 1815.

## Public Discourse, Political and Intellectual Fashions

In the 1810s there was a renewed opportunistic interest in the world at the edges of British power, stimulated by strong cultural and intellectual trends in British society. These included 'popularisation' of many of key ideas of both the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The influence of both cultural movements spread beyond academic, scientific, and artistic interest into the more generalised, broadly disseminated cultural exchanges of wider society. Components of the Enlightenment that began to spill outward included rationalism, empiricism, and emergent scientific method. These trends, wherever discussion of them entered public discourse, also interacted with cultures of authority and ownership of knowledge. By the 1810s the system of importing knowledge into Europe, from a global range of peripheries, was established. Interested parties had developed key procedures for classifying information and putting it to good use. Jürgen Osterhammel draws on Peter Burke's procedural areas to demonstrate the development of this system from the early modern period, into a network and marketplace of complementary and competing interests in the knowledge products of Enlightenment: 'professing, establishing, locating, classifying, controlling, selling, acquiring, trusting, distrusting'.<sup>101</sup> Stakes were held in many areas at once by individuals and agencies with overlapping remits. While many scientific disciplines were nascent, attempts at a polymathic approach in travel narratives written for publication made this medium a particularly fraught testing ground for interactions and conflicts between features of the 'age of reason'.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> J. Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East: Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia* (Princeton, 2013), pp. 6-7. P. Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge, From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge, 2000), Contents page, pp. 1-18.

<sup>102</sup> C. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago, 2007), pp. 87-135.

The trends of Romanticism were no less widespread by the 1810s. Often placed in a position of cultural opposition to the tenets of Enlightenment reason, the widening familiarity with both philosophies meant that the tensions between them were complemented by less widely discussed similarities. Both modes of thought lionised curiosity, the core common ground which provided space in any budding intellectual's personal philosophy for a keen interest in both sciences and scripture, empiricism and imagination. Influential figures that straddled this 'boundary' publicly included Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Alexander von Humboldt, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley, Humphrey Davy, William, Caroline and John Herschel. These few names encompass the fields of literature, philosophy, natural sciences, chemistry, astronomy, music and more.<sup>103</sup> Romantic and Enlightenment thought were, however, both prone to degrees of misunderstanding and misrepresentation as tropes of a 'popular' culture, performed self-consciously for a travel-writing readership by authors whose talents invariably lay elsewhere. These writers, where they were not very good, still thought they knew what readers wanted.<sup>104</sup> Along with authoritative empirical detail, they assumed, readers desired engagement with key Romantic tropes. Uses and misuses of the beautiful, picturesque, and sublime were attempted, along with emotional responses to experience, often jarring within the passive distant gaze of the rational observer dominating most narratives.

This was no accident, however. Authority, empiricism, strong emotion, heroic discovery, and romantic imagery combined in a legitimisation of the authored account. Mary Louise Pratt's 'mid-Victorian paradigm' of 'the "discovery" itself,' which 'even within the ideology of

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<sup>103</sup> For an entertaining account of romantic perspectives in early scientific exchanges see R. Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* (London, 2009). On Coleridge's interest in science and the British Romantic poets' engagement with knowledge and wonder, see P. Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism* (Chichester, 1998).

<sup>104</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 126-132.

discovery, has no existence of its own,' takes on its 'real' meanings within the European societies of its reception 'after the traveller (or other survivor) returns home, and brings it into being through texts.'<sup>105</sup> Pratt hints that her examples from the 1860s inherited this blending of intellectual fashions.<sup>106</sup> Tim Fulford refers to the dependence of Romanticism on historical understandings of the British and other empires, 'shaped by their view on race, slavery and gender' along with political discourse and the 'desire to imagine – and rule – the exotic'. He suggests that a 'complex geo-political imaginary' arising from the partisan complexity of debates and understandings around imperial and national connections – developing ideologies, materialities, rationalities and imagined identities – bonds the development of British Imperialism and Romanticism in this period.<sup>107</sup> Imperialism, in the imagination, needed to be both rational and romantic.

It is not hard to imagine how prominent these trends would have been to contemporaries writing *out from* an aspirational British background between 1800 and 1830, and back *into* that society on colonial subjects of alterity. A successfully encultured form of British Imperial identity was demonstrably in effect, significantly pre-dating the claimed beginnings of 'Victorian' Imperial Identity in the 1830s. It post-dates Napoleonic success, running into a period vital in moving from the evolving culture of British Imperialism in the age of the Enlightenment and the 'First Empire', to the pervasive cultural processes of the later nineteenth century. Between 1815 and 1830 there was a shift from extended and unprecedented national war economy and culture to a peacetime situation incorporating a

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<sup>105</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 2003), p. 204.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 202-205.

<sup>107</sup> T. Fulford, 'Races, Places, Peoples, 1800-30', in T. Fulford and P. Kitson, eds. *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780-1830* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 47.

succession of social and economic problems. Britain did however have a geopolitical power further reaching than ever as a result of its role in victory over Napoleon and enterprises of colonial consolidation in India.<sup>108</sup> Concurrently, public discourse was broadening rapidly. Numbers, content, and publishing figures of periodicals from the daily press to the annual review were all increasing in frequency and scope.<sup>109</sup> Broad intersecting issues of debate came to the fore, such as censorship and libel in literary politics.<sup>110</sup> These also included economic expansion, exploration and global influence, scientific knowledges and their uses, anti-slavery, its projected consequences, and the religious and secular flavours of debate around that issue. Technological change and scientific innovation were gradually influencing a worldview represented through individual contributors' engagements with these societal debates and causes.

Geo-strategic advantages also drew more attention. Maritime hegemony was established by the outcome of the wars. Britain was the last of the global maritime powers left, with an expanded capacity and reach, while political influence over the others further bolstered the differences between British growth in maritime strength and Spanish, Portuguese, French and Dutch decline. Spain was dragged into reactionary responses to rebellion in their colonies and could not necessarily say no to British political demands on issues such as the suppression of the slave trade in West Africa.<sup>111</sup> Both Iberian powers also owed vast sums to British creditors.

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<sup>108</sup> C. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the world, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), pp. 184-190, 209-215. G..J. Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton, 2019), pp. 88-89. C. Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland* (London, 2013), pp. 192-193.

<sup>109</sup> W. St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 103-121, 186-209.

<sup>110</sup> P. Magnusson, *Reading Public Romanticism* (Chichester, 1998), pp. 3-11, 15-21.

<sup>111</sup> H. Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The story of the Atlantic Slave trade, 1440-1870* (New York, 1997). R. Burroughs and R. Huzzey, eds. *The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade: British Policies, Practices and Representations of Naval Coercion* (Manchester, 2015), pp. 1-9.

The French – the only European nation to attempt both continental pre-eminence and maritime-colonial power – were defeated, while the Netherlands declined in power and imperial scope, damaged by association with France, with significant economic consequences in Britain's favour.<sup>112</sup> Britain's own national debt may have been a serious concern to many in the 1810s and 20s, as Anthony Page demonstrates, and it certainly had very real domestic consequences, but the fact of being the last substantive naval force standing among the major maritime powers of western Europe opened a range of global opportunities.<sup>113</sup>

British opportunism, bolstered by British confidence, driven outward by domestic social and economic conditions, was used to push enterprise and to experiment in global power and influence around the Atlantic periphery. Several strategic interests were served by this, including the sea routes to the Indian Ocean, suppression of the slave trade and access to bridgeheads where alternatives for trade could be explored. Opportunism allowed agents and adventurers to seek advantage in those other Atlantic powers' weakness and decline, and in the diplomatic pressure on them to join the ban on shipping African people across the Atlantic to a horrifying short life of plantation slavery.<sup>114</sup> Private interest in the cause of new states seceding from the Spanish Empire in South and Central America could also be used to establish reputations and build careers in a post-Abolition Atlantic. Peter Blanchard's research demonstrates that the rhetoric of emancipation, if not always the effective practice, was

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<sup>112</sup> The British share of world shipping jumped from 25.3% in 1780 to 42% in 1820, at the expense of the other European naval powers. See K.H. O'Rourke, 'The worldwide economic impact of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793–1815,' *Journal of Global History*, 1 (2006), pp 123–149.

<sup>113</sup> A. Page, 'The Seventy Years War, 1744–1815, and Britain's Fiscal-Naval State', *War & Society*, 34:3 (2015), pp. 162-186.

<sup>114</sup> M. Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the slave trade since 1807* (London, 2007), pp. 15-20, 121-128.

explored within the Patriot movement.<sup>115</sup> Both theatres offered potential economic opportunity and a corpus of knowledge for individuals to forge domestic intellectual reputations. British foreign policy worked to keep many of these avenues of international opportunity for bolstering British maritime, diplomatic, and economic hegemony open while taking a conservative line within continental Europe, shifting towards non-intervention in North America, and restrained, qualified, privately expressed support for nationalist independence movements such as those in South America.<sup>116</sup>

One underlying motivation for all this was to keep a grip on maritime networks within the Atlantic and around Africa into the Indian Ocean. However, staying in West Africa after abolishing the slave trade meant finding new commercial opportunities to maintain the presence. Seymour Drescher argues that the Empire (meaning the metropolitan government) actually took the least advantageous of two options for extending and entrenching its power after 1815, attempting to enforce suppression in the Atlantic and pressuring the other slaving nations into abolition instead of reopening the British trade, with the detriment in human cost 'borne chiefly by Africans'. He claims that a British 'aversion to slaving' was separate from economic arguments despite calls on that basis for the rejuvenation of a colony at Sierra Leone.<sup>117</sup> The Gold Coast also became a focus of arguments around the viability of post-slave-trade opportunities for trade. Arguments around what constituted a worthwhile location for a British outpost were contentious and highly subjective in many cases. Criticisms due to high

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<sup>115</sup> P. Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave soldiers and the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America* (Pittsburgh, 2008), pp. 5, 81-83, 160-169.

<sup>116</sup> An interesting comparison of strategies for geopolitical hegemony can be found in S.S. Karatasli and S. Kumral, 'Territorial Contradictions of the Rise of China: Geopolitics, Nationalism and Hegemony in Comparative-Historical Perspective', *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 23:1 (2017), pp. 5-35.

<sup>117</sup> S. Drescher, 'Emperors of the World: British Abolitionism and Imperialism', in D. Peterson, Ed. *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic* (Athens, 2010), pp. 134-136.

European mortality and the absence of viable natural harbours were valid but could be overridden by personal motivations. Colonial projects were influenced by the abolition movement and its growing acceptance into the mainstream of public discourse, with a language of moral justification, fixing on a concept of progressive change and improvement of the other in the image of the leading British example.

With the Gold Coast added to his jurisdiction, Sierra Leone's Governor Charles MacCarthy sought to embody these ideals, fixing in the process his own uniquely constructed idealised British persona.<sup>118</sup> MacCarthy's approach, according to Bronwen Everill, brought 'strands of humanitarianism together' using the Church Missionary Society, wider networks of anti-slavery organisations, and further metropolitan cooperation to settle recaptives into village communities around the town. The parishes of the colony expanded into the interior of the region. Colonisation and Civilisation came together.<sup>119</sup> Whether MacCarthy might have exercised a similar model at Cape Coast or Accra if he had survived his encounter with the Asante army in 1824 is an interesting hypothetical. Sierra Leone was debated, condemned as a folly on one side and as the wrong option by some, and held up as a shining light of potential for enlightened British expansion on the other. Those who advocated an alternative pushed the Gold Coast and emphasised the perceived potential there; interest in the Fante region and the powerful and domineering inland neighbour had to come to the fore if any suggestion that a more formally colonial British expansion in the region was to go ahead.<sup>120</sup> West African expansion remained limited even as it gained some advocacy for its growth and

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<sup>118</sup> Franco-Irish and doubly an exile, MacCarthy came through an intriguing path to his status as a model of progressive British colonial rule before his untimely end against Asante at the Battle of Nsamakow in 1824.

<sup>119</sup> B. Everill, *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (Basingstoke, 2013), p. 21.

<sup>120</sup> Africanus and Investigator, letters to *The Times*, January-February 1820. See Chapter 1.

reconfiguration around, for example, the Gold Coast. The authors in this study, however, had existing connections to the region and its agencies, which may have weighed encouragingly against these negative factors when deciding to pursue the opportunities they were presented with.

Outside the official British sphere, and with relative peace between powers with international reach and scope, wartime opportunities lay in revolutionary South America. British territorial presence on the continent in British Guyana offered limited individual opportunity and reputation, as a slave economy. The South American revolutions drew significant interest, seen in newspaper coverage throughout 1816, as I will explore in Chapter 1. With the British state vacillating around active involvement or support, espousing the progressive cause of independence from oppressive imperial Spain at times and subsequently explicitly banning British subjects from involvement, private adventure was the only course of action available. For some this meant trade, which Rory Miller describes as the influential factor in swaying eventual official British endorsement of the ‘Patriot’ cause, recognitions of independence coming from 1824.<sup>121</sup> For others it was the mercenary opportunity offered by the Independent armies. Alongside the liberating cause, characterised as progressive and contrasted with revolutionary France, was the centrality of South America to the European popular conception of knowledge as a force for progress through empiricism and reason. The continent was the theatre of Alexander von Humboldt’s discoveries; according to Simón Bolívar, South America had been awakened ‘with his pen’. The fame of von Humboldt’s work gave his imagined and documented South America a broad popularity. From its initial publication in 1808, *Views of*

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<sup>121</sup> R. Miller, *Britain and Latin America in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Abingdon, 1993), pp. 36-41.

*Nature* alone was translated into eleven languages.<sup>122</sup> So, rich as it was with potential for new knowledge and reputation and location of the content of a major intellectual fashion, it was also alliable with the furthering of a just cause in liberation from Spanish colonial tyranny.

Such factors were components of career fashions, key to establishing domestic reputations, for contact-zone-careerists in European peace-time. Both theatres were tied by a number of geographically located subjects of popular attention and focus in British public discourse that depended on the significance of the Atlantic Ocean for imaginaries of adventure and discovery, and priorities of naval hegemony, slave-trade suppression, and private or state expansionist opportunity. A fertile field for the British traveller seeking domestic career advantage, it was also an awkward one to negotiate. The travel narrative provided the ideal opportunity to attempt this negotiation, shaped by the intellectual and political fashions of the period as encultured elements of the author's worldview.

### **Entangled Empires and Geographies: Comparisons, Judgements and Trends**

Relationships between imperial political entities are prominent in the accounts in each of the theatres I examine here. The entanglement of interests, agendas and perspectives between empires, colonies, communities and individuals, has been formative in the emergence and persistence of ideas of British pre-eminence and self-belief in their own superiority in

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<sup>122</sup> A. Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, the Lost Hero of Science* (London, 2015), Chapter 12, Chapter 10 Kindle Edition.

comparison to European expansionist peers. This was a process already in development while the Spanish and Portuguese American empires were predominant and never themselves in isolation from external influences. It developed while other slave-trading maritime empires including the Dutch were vibrantly expanding networks of Atlantic exploitation and extraction.<sup>123</sup> Growing scholarship on entanglements – of intellectuals, ideas, colonial subjections, knowledge and academic disciplines, as well as empires and colonies – have helped to carry our understandings beyond the comparative and into inter or trans-cultural realms of complexity when considering interactions between empires, nations, smaller polities, distinct communities and cultures, the colonised and the resistant.<sup>124</sup>

Beneath the umbrella identities and foundational principles of each empire, the practical entanglement of parties across and beyond boundaries of identity were profuse. Close attention to entangled histories of empires in the Americas effectively began with an exchange of ideas in a 2007 issue of *American Historical Review*. Building from his earlier contributions, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra suggests that an understanding of imperial entanglements in the Atlantic world came to the fore when 'literature on commodities, piracy, slavery, and smuggling' revealed a 'mosaic of interdigitated Atlantic histories'. That is, if you trace the histories of tobacco, chocolate, or any other staple, you find 'commercial and ethnic entanglements' that had no regard for exclusionary barriers of imperial distinction.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> For the chronology, characteristics, and connections of the 'Dutch Atlantic', see G. Oostindie, J.V. Roitman, Introduction, in G. Oostindie, J.V. Roitman, eds. *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680–1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 1-21.

<sup>124</sup> Some intriguing examples include C. Marichal, *Bankruptcy of Empire: Mexican Silver and the Wars Between Spain, Britain, and France, 1760–1810* (Cambridge, 2007); G. Steinmetz, ed. *Sociology and Empire: The Imperial Entanglements of a Discipline* (Durham, 2013); J. Lhati, ed. *German And United States Colonialism In A Connected World: Entangled Empires* (London, 2021).

<sup>125</sup> J. Cañizares-Esguerra, Introduction, in J. Cañizares-Esguerra, ed. *Entangled Empires: The Anglo-Iberian Atlantic, 1500-1830* (Philadelphia, 2018), p. 3.

Developing the chronological understanding of Atlantic imperial interconnectedness, Eliga Gould's consideration of English and British agendas and endeavours as parts of a Spanish periphery highlights the intractable problem of comparing the British and Spanish American Empires as distinct entities across a period of constant interaction, exchange, and fundamental shifts in balances of power locally and more broadly.<sup>126</sup> John H. Elliott has highlighted the long-running parallels between the English and British colonial projects in the Americas, and the Spanish, while making it clear throughout that there are difficulties in making comparisons between heterogenous case studies of colonisation and exploitation between and even within those empires. Variables of time and place existed across the available examples – stages of development, lifecycles even, where every web of competing interests between colony, metropole, officials, opportunists, or the colonised, racialised, assimilated and rejected, meant that each was unique and evolving, while 'changing ideas and priorities at the centre of empire were reflected in changes in imperial policy, so that the third or fourth generation of settlers might well find itself operating within an imperial framework in which the assumptions and responses of the founding fathers had lost much of their former relevance.'<sup>127</sup> The imperial networks of the Atlantic in particular were sometimes an expression of what would later become globalisation. Stephen Conway observes that this did not however mean that exclusion, protection, and imperial antagonism were absent from relations between official or personal representatives of the Empires that came into contact with each other.<sup>128</sup> A web of tensions over differing objectives, and struggles over the relative imperial supremacy of parties in exchange between colonial entities, also prefigured the

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<sup>126</sup> E.H. Gould, 'Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery', *The American Historical Review*, 112:3 (June, 2007), pp. 764-786.

<sup>127</sup> J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, pp. xv-xvii.

<sup>128</sup> S. Conway, *Britannia's Auxiliaries*, pp. 8-9.

damaging inequalities of exchange present in postcolonial globalism. It is worth remembering, as Rafe Blaufarb stresses, that conflict and aggressive competition characterised many of these entangled histories, especially amidst the overlapping opportunistic attempts by official and independent representatives of Britain, the USA, France and others to fill the partial vacuums formed by Spain's American collapses, and the fraught independence of many of its colonies.<sup>129</sup> It is the recorded gaze of several sets of adventuring British eyes on the decline, waste, opportunity and moral imperatives that arose from Iberian imperial 'degeneration', that my study will interrogate.

Entanglements of imperial and regional competitors, colonisers and colonised, were not confined to the western edge of the Atlantic. In West Africa, the brutally competitive markets of human exploitation that attracted Europeans throughout the centuries of the slave trade left a remainder of interest in post-1807 opportunities for further opportunity and extraction in the region, for those who had maintained outposts in some form. Tense relationships of proximity continued on the Gold Coast, especially between the remaining Dutch presence and that of the British, even as the Anglo-Dutch 'special relationship' emerged from the diplomatic aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>130</sup> Further entanglements, the complicating factors of political agendas working within the region, were also mutually influential on the individuals and networks operating along the coastlines. In the region of the Gold Coast this meant Asante, a centralised and expansionist territorial empire itself, and one whose internal politics as well as border relations had been affected by British intentions to suppress slave trading

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<sup>129</sup> R. Blaufarb, 'The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence', *The American Historical Review*, 112:3 (June, 2007), pp. 742-763.

<sup>130</sup> N.C.F van Sas, 'The Dutch and the British Umbrella, 1813-1870', in N. Ashton, D. Hellema, eds. *Unspoken Allies: Anglo-Dutch Relations since 1780* (Amsterdam, 2001), pp. 34-37.

since 1807.<sup>131</sup> The relevance of this to comparable interpretations made by observers of South America, and those of the Gold Coast region, is that in both cases a set of preconceptions about the regional powers were effectively used to construct justifications for the superiority of a British way of doing things in each theatre. Much of the recent scholarship I have mentioned here on entangled empires and their peripheral networks emphasises the messiness, the independence from metropolitan controls or principles, and the interdependence across colonial regions and frontiers, of the politically differentiated empires involved. I contend that, in the case of the encultured worldview and gaze of the travel writers examined in this study, that messiness was overcome by a performed, public conviction that overriding National-Imperial principles justified the centrally culturally directed imposition of a characteristically British approach. That this existed at the stage of imperial imaginary, of projection and speculation, and that it was rapidly compromised amidst the entangled realities of colonisation, did not prevent the confident message from being reaffirmed within British public discourse and National-Imperial identity by traveller-authors such as those I examine here.

The bases of comparison between empires 'in the field', such as with these authors and their judgements on Spain or Asante, also turned towards comparison of disparate geographies, with inferiority of management, exploitation or civilisation sitting at the heart of the agenda of evaluation in both.<sup>132</sup> The growth of the travel writing genre and its rise to prominence in

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<sup>131</sup> Asante entanglements with European powers and their shifting priorities in the 1810s and 1820s are apparent in the work of prominent historians on Asante Ivor Wilks and Tom McCaskie, although their differing analogies of Asante state organisation do not find much room to explore this further. See Chapter 5, pp. 338-339. T.C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 14-23. I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. pp. 1-42.

<sup>132</sup> See Chapter 3.

British public discourse also enabled a tendency toward comparison and appraisal of regions, landscapes and environments, against an accepted evaluative agenda of colonisation as improvement. This was another set of entanglements, of human and Romantic geographies with the pursuits of imperial projection, and with the methods and sources of knowledge acquisition and appropriation. Like the speculative imperial gaze on entangled Atlantic imperial networks, the knowledge-project of reconciling the exotic with potential for 'improvement' did not have to occur within the formal confines of an observer's imperial system – Joseph Banks used botany as diplomatic exchange between empires and operated extensive personal and private networks of collecting and knowledge exchange before transferring much of this accumulation into public knowledge, setting precedents for the trans-imperial colonisation of scientific data.<sup>133</sup> There many other less calculated frontier examples of encountering, exchanging and reporting which entwined the experiences of global encounters with the development of a British worldview. Dane Kennedy's re-appraisal of the 'blank space' characterisation highlights the problematic production of knowledge by British explorers across the interiors of Africa and Australia in the nineteenth century, proposing that their perspective 'rested on the founding premise that the two continents were the conceptual equivalents of oceans' that were 'knowable only through the application of scientific methods that seaborne explorers had pioneered'.<sup>134</sup> This technical application in response to a preconceived notion of place was a substantial facet of a broader enculturation on the part of the knowledge gathering agents, and his study raises further questions about how comprehensive the tools of an encultured identity were in influencing all travel,

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<sup>133</sup> J. Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, the British State and the uses of science in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 152-165. N. Chambers, *Joseph Banks and the British Museum: The world of collecting, 1770-1830* (London, 2007), pp. 30-32, 100-101.

<sup>134</sup> D. Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, pp. 2-4.

adventure, service and colonisation activities by British people before and during the period of his study. As Kennedy notes, eighteenth century British cartographic conceptions of the African interior filled the gaps and assumed that a patchwork of identifiable states and polities would exist there. Erasure happened during and after the periods of first-person British exploration.<sup>135</sup> Something happened, through these experiences, to make erasure to blankness the politically expedient way of representing Africa, Australia, and other geographies of expansionist potential. The process was multifaceted. Kennedy must leave out many other cultural trends affecting explorers to focus on the technical culture of the maritime approach to continental interiors – entanglements of cultural and intellectual fashions in the enculturation of observers must be explored thematically due to their complexities. Regardless of which facet of cultural influence on observers is explored, however, the importance of exoticisation and agendas of civilisation become clear.

Whether at the frontiers of the imperial imaginary, or within the borders of colonisation, the process of exoticisation and the justificatory agendas of ‘improvement’ formed the framework of knowledge gathering and dissemination within the structure of Empire. David Arnold notes that, although ‘despite Said, the East did not fail to make its contribution’ to Orientalism, the process of tropicalization in India ‘was an overwhelmingly European epistemological manoeuvre, founded in “nature” but pregnant with economic, political, and cultural significance.’<sup>136</sup> For Deepak Kumar, while he sees the directional nature of knowledge extraction as more complex than a one-way process, India was an example in which local knowledges were always used though often devalued, while the local sources ‘remained

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid, pp. 11-12.

<sup>136</sup> D. Arnold, *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze: India, Landscape and Science, 1800-1856* (Seattle, 2006), pp. 7-8.

unnamed'.<sup>137</sup> A long history of travel, observation, gathering of knowledge and reshaping it for British public discourse, all contributed to the 'tropicalization' of India, and the justification of the 'improvement' agenda, while disconnecting the information collected and the epistemologies constructed out of it from the complex cultural legacies of the networks and societies that produced it. Kumar, Arnold, and others working on India situate it as the crucial, foremost arena for the development of this knowledge-colonisation within the global British Imperial system, and Arnold places many consequences for African exploration and colonial consolidation *after* those consolidations within India that occurred between 1818 and 1857, making imaginaries that utilised African (or American, or other Asian) experiences peripheral to Indian examples in the early nineteenth century.<sup>138</sup> Nancy Leys Stepan opens this out geographically beyond Arnold's Indian contexts, but in doing so she adheres to the temporal narrative that begins a global gaze on 'tropicality' after von Humboldt and from the 1840s.<sup>139</sup> As I have mentioned earlier in this introduction, many other geographically unbound historical and literary studies have focused on the 1830s or 1840s as the starting point of these related processes of British imperial identity, worldview and justification. In engaging with imperial projections of exoticisation and 'improvement' on the Atlantic peripheries of British attention between 1815 and 1830, I am seeking to expand our understanding of this key process in British National-Imperial knowledge-making and consolidation of identity in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, to include a global accumulation of incidences of this 'travelling gaze' on tropical, undeveloped, exotic and presumed-to-be unexploited environments.

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<sup>137</sup> D. Kumar, 'Botanical Explorations and the East India Company: Revisiting "Plant Colonialism"', in V. Damodaran et al. eds. *The East India Company and the Natural World* (London, 2015), pp. 16-35.

<sup>138</sup> D. Arnold, *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze*, pp. 74-75, 89-90, 110-112.

<sup>139</sup> N. Leys Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature* (London, 2001), pp. 13-16.

## Agents and Adventurers: Case Studies from the Gold Coast and Venezuela

The role of the term 'adventurer' in this thesis is twofold. First, it serves to distinguish between the actor as author and the actor as character in their own narrative. Second, it marks a further distinction between the roles of the private individual acting beyond British authority, and the agent of British interests who actively represents it. Devin Dattan's research on the professional careers of adventurers in the late nineteenth century deals with potentially problematic uses of the term, drawing on Martin Green's definition of adventure as 'a series of events, partly but not wholly accidental, in setting remote from the domestic and probably from the civilized' with a central character and a 'series of exploits which make him/her a hero, eminent in virtues such as courage, fortitude, cunning, strength, leadership and persistence'.<sup>140</sup> Paul Fussell's study of interwar literary travel in the twentieth century places explorer, traveller and tourist on a continuum; Dattan places the adventurer between explorer and traveller. Not the first, the 'discoverer', they are often the second to visit.<sup>141</sup> I would add that, at this same point, there are two parallel and overlapping positions. The adventurer, while possibly 'professional' in the sense that they were pursuing a career, was a private individual. The agent, on the other hand, formally and particularly represented the interests of their masters or employers. Adventurers to the South American wars were, as we shall explore, still characteristically imperial in their Britishness, but agents of British interests in the region of the Gold Coast were far more explicit about National-Imperial loyalties.

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<sup>140</sup> M. Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (New York, 1979), p. 23.

<sup>141</sup> D. Dattan, *Adventure, Empire and Representation in the Writings of British Professional Adventurers, c. 1880-1914* (PhD, University of York, 2018), pp. 30-33. P. Fussell, *Abroad: British literary travelling between the wars* (Oxford, 1980), p. 39.

With the circumstances, then, of change from a wartime to post-war economy and society, and the rising tide of industrialisation, the years following 1815 were a unique period of transformation for intellectual fashions, public debates, and questions of British National-Imperial identities within a global context. Opportunities for aspiration in British society faced outwards in new ways that neatly prefigured the height of British expansionism and imperial pre-eminence later in the century. With an eye on the domestic career even while abroad, agents and adventurers could contribute their experiences to the widening canon of travel writing that sought to report, produce knowledge, and build identities out of subjective experiences of the other. The result of engagement with intellectual trends that blended Enlightenment and Romantic influences, as these case studies will demonstrate, was a focus on readers' expectations along with conscious attempts to tap into public discourses of political and intellectual self-fashioning within an encultured National-Imperial identity and worldview. They were dependent on the construction of other places and other people as sources of potential enrichment and as oppositional, inferior, or hostile counterparts to an increasingly standardised British Imperial persona. The following chapters will explore these themes by looking inward at the authors' motivations and justifications, before gazing outward through their 'Imperial Eyes' at the landscape, environment and human geographies of the regions they visited, and the people they encountered as evaluated through an established hierarchical view of human difference that was evolving into the modern racism of High European Colonialism through these kinds of encounters.<sup>142</sup>

Chapter 1 will concentrate on the context of these actor-authors' missions and adventures in South America and West Africa, before discussing their motivations and agendas as

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<sup>142</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 7, 153.

communicated through the conventions of the travel writing genre. I will conclude with a study of two authors' attempts to defend themselves in the cut-throat arena of British public discourse. Chapter 2 discusses the intersections and tensions of two key intellectual fashions in the broadly imperialistic travel writing of the period, focusing on accounts and evaluations of landscape, place and environment in order to explore the authors' often inexperienced engagement with the common tropes of Enlightenment intellectualism, and Romanticism. In Chapter 3 I will build on these constructions of place to discuss the human geographies of the regions as seen and often misrepresented by the authors. I address the construction of 'useful knowledge' on cultures of land and resource usage, including the rhetoric of neglect that allowed the imperial imagination to lay claim to a more legitimate jurisdiction over other places than those locations' current or 'native' incumbents.

My focus shifts, in chapters 4 and 5, to the assessment of other people. Race and class began to interact in the case studies in intriguing ways, often presaging the fixed authoritarian colonial views of the 'Victorian' Imperial project, but also bridging the gap between the solidification of race in scientific terms and the continuing Enlightenment influence on concepts of human difference that retained a greater degree of mutability. Chapter 4 concentrates on the construction, reconstruction, and misrepresentation of racialised groups within the populations of both theatres. It explores the prevalence of a pragmatically entrenched view of human difference that relied on established prejudices and chauvinistic cultural arrogances to establish racial hierarchies, and which could do so without recourse to complex theories and debates progressing in London, Edinburgh, or Paris. In Chapter 5, I will address the authors' engagements with gender, and particularly with the idealisation of a distinctly European, 'modern' military character in order to judge the adequacy of racialised

population groups. This chapter will also consider the authors' construction of archetypes or exceptions to their idealised characterisations of race and gender, ennobled 'savage' races, subordinate or sub-normative indigenous gendered stereotypes, and the perception of strongly negative characteristics in allies or enemies that allowed them to define their Imperial worldview by exclusion.



## Chapter 1

### Authors and Theatres: Background, Context, Agenda and Justification

The Ashantees are a powerful nation, and some years ago visited the coast with an army of upwards of 100,000 men; but they have for several years been prevented from trading with Europeans by the hostility of the Fantees, and other nations residing in the neighbourhood. Their present expedition, therefore, by opening the path into the interior, may not improbably be attended with very important commercial advantages, great quantities of gold and ivory being produced in the Ashantee country. May we not hope, that from this opening some additional means may arise of facilitating that great work, the progressive civilization of the African race?

*The Times*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1816.

The shouts were now for independence: and success to the enterprize of the Spanish South American patriots, and a glorious triumph to their cause, came from the mouth of nearly every Briton! It was not sufficient for me to wish them success: I felt I might do more; and I determined to lend my personal assistance in promoting it.

Gustavus Hippisley, *A Narrative of the Expedition to the Rivers Orinoco and Apure* (London, 1819).

Authors of travel accounts have their own personal agendas in writing and seeking publication. They must also either synthesise or deflect the interests of a range of competing influences; in the early nineteenth century these included official bodies, paymasters, sponsors or patrons, newspaper editors, reviewers, political groups, ‘public’ opinion, peers, editors, publishers, their fellow protagonists, and even their enemies.<sup>1</sup> The authors I focus on here had to situate their work within existing public discourse. They also had to express a

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed exploration of the process of producing, publishing, and meeting the expectations of readers of travel writing in the nineteenth century, see C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 1-30, 45-55, 100-115, 133-139.

commitment to their chosen cause and reaffirm their own characters as influenced by the subject at hand. In this chapter I will explore those personal agendas, stated objectives, and justifications for travelling, serving, returning, writing, and publishing. In order to do this, I will first discuss the immediate background of British public discourse concerning revolutionary South America and the post-1807 Gold Coast region, to provide context to the authors' involvement. I will then describe the career trajectories of these authors before examining the motives and agendas expressed in their books. Finally, I will discuss an example from each theatre of the contentious ongoing public discourses of criticism, self-justification, and self-defence around travel writers' published accounts. This will include Thomas Bowdich's grievances towards his more critical reviewers and his former employer the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa (The African Company), and Gustavus Hippisley's attempt at defending his actions and his character through the publication of his account, with its extensive appendix including antagonistic public correspondence with Bolívar's agent and representative in London, Luis Lopez Mendez.<sup>2</sup>

Statements of intent toward the West African interior and the formerly closed markets of the Spanish South American colonies appeared in the British press in the 1810s. They utilised diplomatic priorities, anti-slave trade rhetoric, and relationships between governance and economic access focused on the humbled European imperial powers and their compromised spheres of influence around the Atlantic. Maritime hegemony, the major prize of victory over Napoleon, intensified this.<sup>3</sup> The article on contact with the Asante army in *The Times* on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1816 declared commitments to pillars of British foreign interest in West Africa from the

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<sup>2</sup> G. Hippisley, Appendix, *Narrative*, pp. 529-653.

<sup>3</sup> R. Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon: The Organization of Victory, 1793-1815* (London, 2013), pp. 378-380.

outset – vital ‘commercial advantages’, and that ‘great work, progressive civilization’.<sup>4</sup> British travellers should uphold these objectives in their dealings with and writings about people and places on the Atlantic periphery. How these declared British principles of foreign engagement would apply in the regions of the faltering Spanish Empire in South America was less clear, as expressed in the press and then the writings of the British protagonists. Interest persisted, with condemnations of the Spanish ‘tyrant’ King Ferdinand and allusions to the financial pressures and noble motivations of the Patriot cause, although there was ambivalence towards republican movements’ motivations and capabilities rather than the universal favour Gustavus Hippisley suggested.<sup>5</sup> An examination of our authors’ motivations and agendas for putting their stories into print will demonstrate what undercut their support.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to our African authors’ experiences, the principles and objectives stated in *The Times* were already established, recognisable in reportage from different quarters as interaction with Asante grew.<sup>7</sup> It was also shown in explicit criticism of the Spanish monarchy’s attempts to return to a regime akin to their pre-war Imperial political dominance.<sup>8</sup> This process of setting or reflecting broader agendas is reflexive of British societal principles of identity in comparison to the perceived characteristics and immediate interests of international

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<sup>4</sup> ‘In another part of our paper...’, *The Times*, 10 July 1816.

<sup>5</sup> *The Examiner*, Is. 454, 8 September 1816.

<sup>6</sup> For various brief comments on the viability of the South American movements, see ‘Abstract of Foreign Occurrences’, June, *The Gentlemen’s Magazine for 1816, Part I* (London, 1816) pp. 557. ‘Abstract of Foreign Occurrences’, August, December, *The Gentlemen’s Magazine for 1816, Part II* (London, 1816), pp. 170-171, 552.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Ashantees and Fantees’, *Caledonian Mercury*, 18 July 1816. ‘Africa. - Success Of The Mission To The Capital Of The Ashantees’, *Morning Post*, 27 January 1817.

<sup>8</sup> J. Lynch, ‘The origins of Spanish American Independence’, in L. Bethell, ed. *The Cambridge History of Latin America, Volume III: From Independence to c. 1870* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 6-7. ‘Today Charleston papers have reached us...’, *Caledonian Mercury*, 19 August 1816. ‘It would seem as if the extinction of Black Slavery, in a large and interesting portion of the globe, was reserved for the Spanish Americans...’, *Morning Chronicle*, 29 August 1816.

protagonists – Englishness and Britishness have always been measured against perceptions of others.<sup>9</sup> This is the domestic background against which the authors have set their accounts of their experiences. It is an encultured imperial identity.

These authors were encultured with class, ambition, and authority, which shaped the language and content of their attempts at defining their motives and justifying decisions when writing about experiences. They had to reflect the immediate context of discussion in the British press, constructions of ideas and principles in relation to their own (often self-consciously British) identities, broadly accepted notions of British pre-eminence, and, as Antoinette Burton notes, a ‘perpetually aspirant’ imperial confidence born of recent geopolitical triumphs.<sup>10</sup> Burton separates the realities of British Imperial fragility and incompetence from the confident imaginaries of Imperial pre-eminence – the authors in this study concentrated firmly on the latter. Together this formed a viable National-Imperial culture in the imagination. Publishing a narrative of foreign adventures and encounters had become a popular career move for male, British, aspirational middle-class individuals with limited domestic opportunities.<sup>11</sup> Ambitions were also shaped by the social and intellectual fashions of contemporary society, prevailing trends of thinking related to socio-political allegiance (and to their vested interests), the place and nature of their upbringing and education, and life experiences.<sup>12</sup> Exporting this accumulation of influences and re-importing interpretations of their encounters through this lens allowed authority and credibility to be

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<sup>9</sup> R. Samuel, 'Introduction: The Little Platoons', in R. Samuel, ed. *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity, Volume II: Minorities and Outsiders* (London, 1989), pp. xxii-xviii.

<sup>10</sup> A. Burton, *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 13-14.

<sup>11</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 121-132.

<sup>12</sup> There were well established philosophical roots to this by the period. See D. Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-century Britain* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 154-157, 313-314.

garnered from the process of writing and publication as a step in a self-consciously public career. Authors had to state their motives for travelling and for writing, and justify their own actions throughout, amidst shifting political opinion, geopolitical importance, and public criticism.<sup>13</sup>

The widening of public discourse in the first quarter of the nineteenth century remained an important factor in determining authors' motivations, as laws were challenged and changed, while both readers and numbers of publications increased substantially. These processes were set in motion in the 1770s, but their effects continued to play out amidst a shifting discourse of social and political attention and concern that had to contend with radical politics by the 1810s.<sup>14</sup> Readers had become consumers of knowledge and the commercial challenges of meeting the demands of such a diverse and shifting market had powerful, sometimes devastating consequences for even well-established competitors like John Murray and Walter Scott.<sup>15</sup> Political considerations played their part in this. The 'explosion of reading was met, to a significant degree, through the publication of more travel writing books in various forms, which were quick and easy for publishers like Murray to get into print, reproduce and abridge, and grab the attention of a reading population hungry for new knowledge of the world.<sup>16</sup> This made travel writing for publication into a significant testing ground for conceptions of British National-Imperial identity, opportunity and ambition.

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<sup>13</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 121-132.

<sup>14</sup> See Introduction, pp. 13-16. W. St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 111. P. Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 18-20.

<sup>15</sup> W. St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, pp. 169-171. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>16</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 30-32.

Along with widening British interest in accounts of other places and people, and stories of British exceptionalism and success, there was also a growing appetite for public debate on the terms of those advances, very different from that of twenty or even ten years earlier. The conferences and treaties between the European powers from 1814 to 1818 gave British representatives the opportunity to exert influence on several key geo-political issues including the suppression of the slave trade between Africa and the Americas, British maritime hegemony in the Atlantic and beyond, and consolidating or relinquishing colonial gains particularly in Africa.<sup>17</sup> A lively public discourse was stimulated in Britain, concerning Spanish Imperial integrity, their debts to British creditors, and the involvement of Spain and other European powers in the ongoing trade in slaves from West Africa. British tactics at the Aachen Conference in 1818 would bring several of these topics into focus, while pressure brought to bear directly on a weakened Spain demonstrated how closely related these issues could be.<sup>18</sup>

### **South America: Venezuela, Bolívar, revolutions, and proto-decolonisation**

The attention and the column inches that were afforded to Spain's plight included strong if ambivalent interest in anti-Imperial independence movements in their American colonies. A heady, contradictory mix of *schadenfreude*, superiority, anxiety, and opportunism coloured

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<sup>17</sup> On the Vienna Congress and subsequent British pressure on Spain concerning these issues, see M. Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and its Legacy: War and Great Power diplomacy after Napoleon* (London, 2013), pp. 49-51, 145, 196-201; and B. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 109.

<sup>18</sup> M. Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and its Legacy*, pp. 196-201; B. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna*, pp. 325-327.

much of this, but the range of opinion left room for the exercise of equally contradictory elements of the evolving British national character. In similar ways to West Africa after the British abolition of the slave trade, South America in British public discourse offered an imagined theatre in which ideas of British national-imperial identities could be explored.

These revolutionary independence movements were useful topics for British commentators to espouse fellow feelings toward ‘oppressed’ South American elites on the grounds of progress, equality, and freedom. They also allowed a forum for criticism of the Catholic absolutist Spanish Monarchy opposing the Patriots, Spain’s colonial violence and mismanagement, in comparison to principles of British Imperialism. English political sensibilities were far from immune to the kind of statesman’s courtship exercised by Simón Bolívar, who referred to Rome and Great Britain, in 1819, as the two ‘outstanding nations of ancient and modern times; both were born to rule and be free’.<sup>19</sup> Bolívar blended the rhetoric of authoritarianism and freedom in what he saw as a model of British Parliamentary government, which he was careful to flatter.<sup>20</sup>

In turn, public discourse on Bolívar the man tended towards the appreciative, though the sparse and incomplete reports of his defeats and Spanish Royalist successes muddied the waters concerning the standard of his and his subordinates’ military leadership throughout the 1810s. *The Morning Chronicle*, in January 1816, printed a long letter to the Editor signed by ‘A South American’, which contained much evidence of Bolívar’s later admiration for Britain in an earlier, qualified form. Published without any editorial comment, it resolutely espoused

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<sup>19</sup> Simón Bolívar, ‘The Angostura Address (15 February 1819)’, in S. Bushnell, Ed. S. Bolívar, *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar* (Oxford, 2003), p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> On Bolívar’s argumentation, see G. Andrade, and J. Lugo-Ocando, ‘The Angostura Address 200 Years Later: A Critical Reading’, *Iberoamericana – Nordic Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* (2018), pp. 1-9.

the Patriot cause. It addressed the cruelty of Royalist forces towards the Venezuelan people, and their determined, righteous resistance. The 'horrors' perpetrated in the name of King Ferdinand were further reported in April, along with criticism of Lord Castlereagh's trade policy concerning the Independent forces' occupation of Margarita Island.<sup>21</sup> By early October, however, wildly contrasting reports on the progress of the war began to appear in the British press. *The Morning Chronicle* and the *Caledonian Mercury* announced Bolívar's defeat in the region of Ocumare de la Costa in July.<sup>22</sup> By the 21<sup>st</sup>, correspondence from Admiral Brion detailed Independent troop numbers and positions, enough to put the London paper back on the fence 'under the great contrariety of opinions that reign' and the unreliability of official Royalist statements which had previously 'defeated, hung, drawn and quartered Bolívar in a variety of ways'.<sup>23</sup> The defeat was declared confirmed in the London papers the following day, and varying descriptions of Bolívar's measured retreat, ignominious flight, or disappearance mixed with accounts of the decisiveness of the Spanish Royalist army, or their inability to properly destroy the fragmented enemy forces. The news spread through well-established networks, entering the British Isles by several port towns, the reports being mirrored or reprinted in Edinburgh's *Caledonian Mercury* and others.<sup>24</sup> They characterise Imperial Spain as aggressor and oppressor, independence forces as heroes of freedom and victimised amateurs, and news from the region as unreliable. British mercenaries would carry these well-publicised preconceptions with them.

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<sup>21</sup> This was highly likely to have been written by Bolívar or a close associate with his approval. A South American, 'To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle', *Morning Chronicle*, 5 January 1816. 'We have received letters...', *Morning Chronicle*, 22 April 1816.

<sup>22</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 8 October 1816. *Caledonian Mercury*, 10 October 1816.

<sup>23</sup> 'We have received Jamaica papers to 17<sup>th</sup> August...', *Morning Chronicle*, 21 October 1816.

<sup>24</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 22 October – 7 November 1816; *Caledonian Mercury*, 24 – 28 October 1816; *Morning Post*, 24 October – 26 November 1816; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 4 November 1816.

Another stimulant to the British press and their readers in 1816 was the involvement of Sir Gregor MacGregor. Briefly a British officer in the Peninsular War with a talent for constructing and promoting his own reputation, MacGregor made the most of his move to Caracas in 1811, marrying Bolívar's cousin and securing a military appointment.<sup>25</sup> Matthew Brown sees this as an early stage in his self-shaping identity.<sup>26</sup> Interest in the affairs of the South American Independence movements meant that his involvement was hungrily reported in the British press. While speculation about Bolívar's whereabouts was rife, reports raised the possibility that MacGregor had extricated some credit from the Liberator's defeat. From August, MacGregor was reportedly in charge of an orderly retreat 'to the plains', defeating a Royalist garrison on their way.<sup>27</sup> On the same day, *The Morning Post* declared the 'General-in-Chief Sir Gregor MacGregor' killed while fighting a rear-guard action, albeit with the acknowledgement that 'intelligence from South America is of so contradictory a nature' that it could not be relied upon.<sup>28</sup> In the *Morning Chronicle* four days later, news from the Windward Islands confirmed Bolívar's whereabouts, reported discontent with his leadership, but thought Bolívar guilty of no more than 'an error of judgement'. They were also 'happy to state' that MacGregor 'is not killed, as the Spaniards had boasted, even for the *fiftieth* time'.<sup>29</sup> The *Chronicle's* favourable position on the Independence cause was clear, even if the truth of events on the ground was

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<sup>25</sup> M. Brown, 'Gregor MacGregor: on the fringes of Empire', in D. Lambert, A. Lester, Eds. *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 32-39.

<sup>26</sup> It was followed by the 'liberation' of Amelia Island and the events that led to what became known as the 'Poyais Bubble' by the *Quarterly Review* – variously described as a 'confidence trick', a 'swindling of dupes', and probably a 'hoax', including in 'Thomas Strangeways KGC (Knight of the Gull Catchers)', 'The Poyais Bubble', *Quarterly Review Vol. XXVIII* (London, 1823), pp. 157-161. See also M. Brown in D. Lambert and A. Lester Eds. *Colonial Lives*, pp. 32-57.

<sup>27</sup> 'By the Leeward Island Packet', *The Morning Chronicle*, 10 October 1816; 'Curacoa, Aug. 10, 1816.', *Morning Chronicle*, 24 October 1816.

<sup>28</sup> 'The intelligence from South America...', *The Morning Post*, 24 October 1816.

<sup>29</sup> 'The numerous papers we received...', *The Morning Chronicle*, 28 October 1816.

not. By December, *The Caledonian Mercury* highlighted criticism from some quarters that because people had read of 'the imprudent considerations of Bolívar, they conclude the cause of liberty and independence has become desperate and hopeless throughout South America', when successes such as MacGregor's proved otherwise.<sup>30</sup> By their next edition they assumed that MacGregor was now the *de facto* commander of the entire Venezuelan Patriot cause.<sup>31</sup> On the same day in London, the *Chronicle* shared MacGregor's 'General Order' of September 1816, doing nothing to dispel the growing impression that one Scottish veteran was advancing the cause for Independence far more successfully than his erstwhile Venezuelan superiors.<sup>32</sup> MacGregor secured over thirty mentions, often in detail, across these four newspapers by April 1817. This first stage of his fame as adventurer, with a little stage-management of his military successes carefully mixed in, demonstrated the value of involvement for British men in the Independence movements. Benefits for reputation, public character and domestic capital were advertised by the apparent success and admiration that MacGregor had found. His involvement proved that the opportunity there was real by the time the first mercenary battalions were raised.

With a British military hero, the rhetoric of freedom from tyranny, and the chance to prove an innate British superiority over Imperial Spain, regular domestic newspaper coverage in 1816-17 made sure that events in South America were widely known, if not clearly understood. This built on a British view of South America as a destination for European adventurers, arising from fame surrounding Alexander von Humboldt's exploits. Matthew Brown notes a perhaps

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<sup>30</sup> 'We have received further accounts from Barbadoes...', *The Caledonian Mercury*, 28 December 1816.

<sup>31</sup> 'Private Correspondence. London, Dec. 30.' *The Caledonian Mercury*, 2 January 1817.

<sup>32</sup> 'General Order. Gregor M'Gregor, General of Brigade of the Republican Army...', *The Morning Chronicle*, 2 January 1817.

rather sad absence of MacGregor's adventures in British and Scottish collective memory, but he was the central relatable figure in the months leading up to the recruitment of the first British mercenaries.<sup>33</sup> With his close connection to Bolívar, and the Patriot leader's performative flattering of British Imperial political exceptionalism, any under-employed veteran or frustrated military man young or old was presented with an appealing case for offering their talents to this cause.

### **West Africa: The Gold Coast, anti-slavery, and the mysteries of the interior**

Also attracting attention in the domestic press was the thorny issue of what to do with British-held bridgeheads on the African coast. Their validity and efficacy were highly questionable without a firm economic imperative to stay now that the slave trade was no longer 'legitimate'.<sup>34</sup> In July 1816, *The Times* reported on events at Cape Coast and the threat of an Asante army 'upwards of 20,000 men'.<sup>35</sup> Subsequent articles blamed the hostility of the Fante people, with whom the African Company agents had direct contact, for Asante aggression.

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<sup>33</sup> M. Brown, 'Inca, Sailor, Soldier, King: Gregor MacGregor and the Early Nineteenth-Century Caribbean', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 24:1 (2005), pp. 44–70.

<sup>34</sup> 'Legitimate' rapidly came to be associated in British discourse with trade in alternative commodities and raw materials *instead of* enslaved people, but of course that trade was formerly legal, respectable, and highly profitable, making the shift in rhetoric highly misleading. See R. Law, Introduction, in R. Law, ed. *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 1-11. For contemporary usage of the concept, see T.F. Buxton, *The African Slave Trade, and Its Remedy* (London, 1840), pp. 42, 44. On the legacies of memory of this delegitimated but traumatic experience, and the continued centrality of enslavement to 'legitimate' production in the region, see R. Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago, 2020), pp. 11-12, 37-38.

<sup>35</sup> 'Affairs in Africa', *The Times*, 10 July 1816.

The correspondents also pitied the Fante at Cape Coast, starving and besieged by their enemy, relieved by British benefactors at the Castle. A leader in the same paper called for the advancement of the civilisation of 'Africans' as a result of this opportunity to negotiate with the Asante Empire.<sup>36</sup> Characterisations of British agents, Asante and Fante were set by the paper's correspondents from the beginning of their coverage of the events that led to the First Anglo-Asante War.

The tone of characterisation was not unique to *The Times*. Readers of the news elsewhere frequently received slightly different edits of the same narrow selections of correspondence on any given subject. Regional newspapers took their reports wholesale from the London dailies and uncritically reproduced their tone. The report received from the *Inconstant*, in the 28<sup>th</sup> October article in *The Times*, was to be printed almost to the word in the *Caledonian Mercury* three days later. Correspondence printed in *The Times* that July appeared in the *Mercury* and the *Falmouth Gazette*. In November 1817, when the Company Mission to Kumasi returned reports to London, the *Morning Chronicle* reported at length, noting the 'ardent desire' of the Asante to negotiate as well as the 'obstructive' efforts of the Fante.<sup>37</sup> Correspondence from the Mission was repeated with even the editorial comments intact in the *Caledonian Mercury*, with similar 'cut and paste' reprinting between the Edinburgh paper, the London dailies, and regional weeklies in Hereford, Exeter, Liverpool and Newcastle into

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<sup>36</sup> 'By fresh advices received yesterday...' *The Times*, 24 July 1816; 'Africa-...Advices were received yesterday,' *The Times*, 10 August 1816. 'Coast of Africa', *The Times*, 16 October 1816; 'Coast of Africa', *The Times*, 28 October 1816.

<sup>37</sup> 'English Mission to Ashantee, in Africa', *Morning Chronicle*, 3 November 1817.

the following year.<sup>38</sup> Characterisations of the powerful, dangerous, but potentially friendly Asante Empire, and the obstructive, incapable, untrustworthy Fante people, were uncritically injected into British public discourse through this practice of reprinting articles around the country, credited or not.

Press exchanges from shortly before the first mission through to the final treaty stages after the war frequently concerned the viability of Cape Coast Castle as an enduring British trading post. Correspondence compared Cape Coast with Freetown and two arguments emerged. The first favoured maintaining operations at Sierra Leone, abandoning Cape Coast Castle and its surrounding forts, and leaving the Gold Coast completely. This would have ended the African Company too, but the opposing argument also generally sought this outcome. Mirroring the cited evidence, the alternative was to abandon Freetown to its resettled population and unguided private interests, establishing the Gold Coast as the centre of British operations in West Africa. This argument hinged on the potential of the region; the Asante Empire presented a prize opportunity to its supporters. The arguments put forward by both sides were simple and vehement. One or the other was the superior port, defensive position, connection to trade routes into the interior, base for suppressing the slave trade and so on. The opposite side's championed location was inferior due to inadequacy as a port, degeneracy of neighbouring communities, barbarity of polities inland. One of the main disputes was over the frequency of death and disease among European populations, with a range of manipulated

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<sup>38</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 17 November 1817. 'Success Of the Mission to Ashantee', *Morning Post*, 20 January 1818; 'Friday's Post Concluded...', *Hereford Journal*, 28 April 1818. On 'scissors-and-paste journalism' and digitised newspaper collections, see M.H. Beals, 'Stuck in the Middle: Developing Research Workflows for a Multi-scale Text Analysis', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 22:2 (2017), pp. 224–231.

figures claimed on both sides.<sup>39</sup> Another was the relative condition of current governance at the two sites, and the progress made in ‘civilising’ or ‘improving’ local people or resettled slaves. In this, Sierra Leone had the initial advantage, although it faced disparaging remarks in the press.<sup>40</sup>

Strong opinions against the competence and legitimacy of the African Company at Cape Coast Castle contrasted with praise of Governor Charles MacCarthy at Freetown, including endorsement in the House of Commons by William Wilberforce in 1817 for extending ‘the advantages of civilization to a considerable extent’, with some ‘1463 Negro children in a course of education’.<sup>41</sup> Approbation of MacCarthy continued in 1823, with the *Caledonian Mercury* declaring, on news of his departure from Freetown for Cape Coast Castle, that it was ‘gratifying to observe a British Governor so indefatigable in spreading Christian knowledge and the arts of civilized life though regions involved in Pagan superstition and barbarous ignorance’.<sup>42</sup> When Dupuis mentioned the governor in his account, he was careful to maintain this line. MacCarthy may be an early example of what would become an archetype of the Victorian colonial or soldier hero, a persona that was used frequently to model hegemonic masculinity in public discourse later in the century.<sup>43</sup>

In *The Times* in 1820 this debate was pursued by two correspondents using the pseudonyms Africanus and Investigator. Their exchanges were published throughout January and February,

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<sup>39</sup> Africanus, in *The Times*, 12 January 1820. Investigator, in *The Times*, 22 January 1820. Africanus, ‘To the Editor of The Times – Letter II’, *The Times*, 3 February 1820.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Ashantees and Fantees’, *Caledonian Mercury*, 18 July 1816.

<sup>41</sup> W. Wilberforce to the house, House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 9 July 1817, vol. 36, cc. 1321-36.

<sup>42</sup> ‘British Settlements in Africa’, *Caledonian Mercury*, 21 July 1823.

<sup>43</sup> G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, pp. 5-25, 40-53, 233-240.

along with contributions by several others. This was a very public exchange.<sup>44</sup> Africanus is a significant choice of pen name, demonstrating a love for or strongly held connection to Africa, and a clear allusion to classical knowledge. Ignatius Sancho had used the name in writing to *The General Advertiser* in 1778 and 1780.<sup>45</sup> By the 22<sup>nd</sup> January, Investigator, taking a position against the continued use of Freetown as a base, suggested that its continuing advocates ‘may have been influenced, not only of patronage, but of personal interest’, noting an ‘extraordinary soreness and irritability whenever the subject of Sierra-Leone is brought upon the carpet’. The author then laid out counter-arguments against the ‘relative salubrity’ of Sierra Leone, giving figures for the average life of a European on the Gold Coast as ‘12 years and a half’, citing the respectable name of Sir James Yeo, Commodore of the West Africa Squadron, and drawing on reports of a trial for cannibalism which Africanus had questioned.<sup>46</sup> Africanus responded by addressing some of the ‘leading features’ of ‘hideousness and deformity’ among ‘our officers on the Gold Coast’. Members of the African Company, in British uniform but primarily traders, possessed ‘neither talent, activity, or inclination for any great undertaking’ according to Yeo.<sup>47</sup> This exchange took place against the backdrop of House of Commons debates on this West African question between 1819 and 1821, when the Company was abolished by the government.<sup>48</sup> These were influenced by Joseph Dupuis’ reports (but not by his narrative, which was delayed until 1824), and saw the Gold Coast forts taken under the ownership of the Crown. MacCarthy became their governor, in addition to Sierra Leone. This

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<sup>44</sup> *The Times*, 4 January – 19 August 1820.

<sup>45</sup> I. Sancho, J. Jekyll, *Letters of the late Ignatius Sancho, an African: To which are prefixed, memoirs of his life* (London, 1784), pp. 162, 336.

<sup>46</sup> Africanus, in *The Times*, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1820; Investigator, in *The Times*, 22 January 1820.

<sup>47</sup> Africanus, ‘To the Editor of The Times – Letter II’, *The Times*, 3 February 1820.

<sup>48</sup> ‘House of Commons, Friday February 19<sup>th</sup>’, *The Times*, 20 February 1819; ‘House of Commons, Tuesday, Feb 20... AFRICAN FORTS’, *The Times*, 21 February 1821.

all took place alongside the publication of Bowdich's, Hutton's, and eventually Dupuis' accounts, and set the tone for public discourse on British presence in West Africa before the war with Asante and Henry Ricketts' narrative.

Newspaper references to Asante demonstrated interest following the advance of their army on the coast in 1816. The call in *The Times* to continue the 'great work, the progressive civilisation of the African', by acquiring 'great quantities of gold and ivory' from the 'Ashantee country', encapsulates the official British mindset on their dealings with the powers of the region.<sup>49</sup> The *Morning Chronicle* reported at length on the mission to Kumasi, lauding the commercial opportunities, crediting a 'Mr Borodich' with leadership from the start and including an extract of a letter from the mission which described arrival at the Asante capital with all the self-importance and grand description subsequently found in Bowdich's published narrative.<sup>50</sup> In both of these cases, and frequently in the press before relations soured in 1823, the Fante were duplicitous and unreliable while the Asante were rich, populous, welcoming, decadent, and dangerous, but far superior candidates for a beneficial relationship than their 'more civilised and artful' neighbours.<sup>51</sup> These reports were, however, balanced by lurid descriptions of their brutal practices of human 'sacrifice', superstition and barbaric splendour, from the Mission's correspondence and later with extracts from Bowdich's book.<sup>52</sup> These

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<sup>49</sup> 'In another part of our paper....', *The Times*, 10 July 1816.

<sup>50</sup> 'English Mission to Ashantee, in Africa', *The Morning Chronicle*, 3 November 1817.

<sup>51</sup> This seems mainly to allude to Dahomey but probably encompasses Oyo and Benin further to the west. 'English Mission to Ashantee, in Africa', *The Morning Chronicle*, 3 November 1817.

<sup>52</sup> *The Times*, *Morning Chronicle* etc..... 'Owdich's Account of the Mission to Ashantee', *Caledonian Mercury*, 12 April 1819. 'Ashantee Superstitions', , *Caledonian Mercury*, 19 April 1819.

titillating descriptions were reprinted alongside reports of his death in early 1824.<sup>53</sup> By 1820, Asante as a byword for barbarism seemed to have entered the popular imagination; it was used pejoratively in Parliament by Lord Erskine, in debates on the proposed Marriage Bill.<sup>54</sup> By April 1824, reports of MacCarthy's defeat began to arrive, upstaging Dupuis' belated measured account of Asante with reports of their 'ferocious' nature, 'blood-thirsty character', and massacre of Sir Charles' forces 'under circumstances of aggravated cruelty'.<sup>55</sup> The tone of this public discourse was ambivalent at first, considering Asante potential with their barbaric decadence, with greater emphasis on them as cruel and uncivilised, albeit militarily dangerous, as tensions ignited in 1824. The effect of this public discourse on the Gold Coast region, Cape Coast's 'legitimacy', and contact with the Asante Empire on subsequent visitors to the region influenced judgements. For Thomas Bowdich, the language of opportunity in reports that preceded the publication of his book provided the immediate context. The language of threat attached to increased contact with Asante formed the backdrop to William Hutton's publication, and overwhelmed any message that contradicted the construction of Asante as a dangerous antagonist by the time Joseph Dupuis' version of events reached print.

Each of the authors in both theatres, writing back to shifting public discourses, had to negotiate their own legitimacy and authenticity on the subjects they covered. They had to

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<sup>53</sup> 'Death of Mr. Bowdich, The African Traveller', *The Morning Chronicle*, 6 March 1824. 'Death of Mr. Bowdich, The African Traveller', *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 March 1824. 'Discoveries in Africa', *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 13 January 1820. 'Laws and Treaties', *The Morning Chronicle*, 18 April 1820. 'Immolation of Human Beings', *Newcastle Courant*, 13 May 1820.

<sup>54</sup> 'Parliamentary Intelligence... Marriage Bill...', *The Times*, 20 July 1820. This would lead to the 1823 Marriage Act, largely concerned with parental control, consent to marriage and property, which Rebecca Probert describes as 'as a significant counterblast to the literary endorsements of romantic love'. R Probert, 'Control over Marriage in England and Wales, 1753—1823: The Clandestine Marriages Act of 1753 in Context', *Law and History Review*, 27:2 (Summer 2009), pp. 413-450.

<sup>55</sup> 'Defeat of the British Troops by the Ashantees', *Liverpool Mercury*, 30 April 1824. Followed by reports in *The Examiner*, 2 May 1824; *Caledonian Mercury*, 3 May 1824; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 3 May 1824; *Morning Chronicle*, 3 May 1824.

strive to make what they said relevant and engaging amidst vagaries of public interest, reporting and debate, building authenticity out of their own experience and ambition, making their own lives and careers important for any reading of their travel narratives. This was not an easy literary ambition to realise.

### **The Authors: Their Lives and Careers in Context**

Writing and publishing the narratives in question were mostly these authors' first forays into the forum of public discourse. For many it would be their only and last. Joseph Dupuis had some limited experience of the travel writing genre. He wrote detailed notes and appendices for the sensational and disputed tale of the American sailor Robert Adams, enslaved in North Africa and freed with the involvement of Dupuis while the latter was consul in Mogador in 1814.<sup>56</sup> Subsequent works reaching publication from our authors were also few. Thomas Bowdich may have had a long and successful writing career but for his untimely death. His wife Sarah Bowdich Lee launched her own successful career with the work of their last voyage together.<sup>57</sup> Established public authority was therefore a limited commodity across this sample

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<sup>56</sup> R. Adams, *The Narrative of Robert Adams, a sailor, who was wrecked on the western coast of Africa, in the year 1810, was detained three years in slavery by the Arabs of the Great Desert, and resided several months in the city of Tombuctoo. With a map, notes, and an appendix.* (London, 1816).

<sup>57</sup> T.E. Bowdich, and S. Bowdich, *Excursions in Madeira and Porto Santo, during the autumn of 1823, while on his third voyage to Africa* (London, 1825).

of authors. I will now provide a short account of each individual in the context of their writing and publication.

At first glance, a long career of military involvement was a strong credential for Gustavus Hippisley's appointment as lieutenant colonel in the forces of Venezuela and New Granada. However, his real experience was far more limited than his own assertions suggested. Born in 1768 into a moderately well connected family, his service record began as a coronet by purchase into the 9<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons in 1787.<sup>58</sup> Respectable, if not fashionable, the 9<sup>th</sup> would have been an affordably aspirational place to begin an army career, or to tick off the societal achievement of a limited soldierly background. Hippisley married Ellen Fitzgerald in 1789, daughter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Knight of Glin, and sold out of his regiment the following year. His eldest son was born in 1792; Gustavus Butler Hippisley would accompany his father to the Orinoco and would also inherit his father's ability to accumulate unfortunate debts later in life.<sup>59</sup> The father reenlisted by purchase in the 8<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons in 1796, was promoted lieutenant, and sailed to garrison duty at Cape Town, possibly seeing some frontier skirmishes during the Third Xhosa War. This may have been his only prior fighting experience.<sup>60</sup> He transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot in 1805 and then to the 18<sup>th</sup> in 1808 'on account of ill health'. From that point, Hippisley the country squire continued to enact his aspirations to military service, and garner associated benefits, through a series of appointments with the North Somerset Yeomanry, as adjutant and then brevet captain, before his first residence in Guernsey,

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<sup>58</sup> WO 25/762 Services of officers on Full and Half Pay, 1828, National Archives.

<sup>59</sup> Gustavus Butler Hippisley also became embroiled in elements of Gregor MacGregor's scams, likely closely tied to his financial difficulties and an association with its possible origin in their mutual service in South America. 'Petitions of Insolvent Debtors list', *London Gazette*, 1.18077 (London, 1824), p. 1839.

<sup>60</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, p. 188.

probably between 1814 and 1817.<sup>61</sup> By circumstance, illness, or disinclination, Hippisley's military ambitions were unfulfilled when the opportunity was presented to him of utilising substantial credit for raising his own regiment as Colonel of the Venezuelan Republic.

Hippisley's social status and life experiences shaped his ambitions and his declared sympathies with South American Independence. He foregrounded his army background and connections in the *Narrative*. Access to the Venezuelan Deputy in London was on the 'approbation' of his friend, a man of 'high rank in the army of Great Britain, and whose experience in military matters, was as distinguished as his name was honoured, loved, and respected'.<sup>62</sup> Authority and endorsement were claimed by this unnamed association. Eric Lambert suggests that Hippisley was encouraged to continue 'quietly' with raising the regiment in London in 1817, despite Spanish diplomatic complaints to the Foreign Secretary, which may explain why the newly elevated Colonel was at pains to ensure his readers knew he had government connections in high places advising him.<sup>63</sup>

More secure in the authority of his experience, Joseph Dupuis had some diplomatic experience in North Africa by the time of his appointment to the Consular mission. He was appointed to a Vice-Consulship based at Mogador in 1811, establishing a friendship with Hanmer Warrington, Consul in Tripoli from 1814. While posted there, involved in negotiations to free Europeans from slavery, Dupuis arranged a ransom to be paid for Robert Adams.<sup>64</sup> His authority, and the association of his consular activities with the 'Christian' and anti-slavery

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<sup>61</sup> WO 25/762. *London Gazette*, l.16898 (May 1814), p. 1009.

<sup>62</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 3, 7.

<sup>63</sup> E. Lambert, 'Irish Soldiers in South America, 1818-30', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 58, No. 232 (Winter, 1969), pp. 376-395.

<sup>64</sup> B. Gardner, *The Quest for Timbuctoo* (London, 1969), pp. 26-32.

credentials of his negotiations to the sailor and other white captives, were lent to the publication of Adams' account of his enslavement and travels. Its authenticity was questioned at the time and later when more became known about Timbuktu and the surrounding regions, but Dupuis' legitimacy and expertise were supported; the *Monthly Review* suggested it was more 'a work of amusement than of instruction', calling into question the geographical knowledge imparted by Adams' tale, but attributing great value to the observations made in Dupuis' appendices.<sup>65</sup>

Dupuis secured the opportunity to operate on behalf of official British interests and circumvent the authority of the African Company on the Gold Coast before the likely dissolution of the Company.<sup>66</sup> Doubts surrounding the transparency of the Company's mission to Asante in 1817 and the questionable value of Thomas Bowdich's treaty following further aggression from the Asante toward the coastal states and settlements suited as a pretext for an official British Consular mission to Kumasi. Both personal authority and credentials on one hand, and the legitimacy of Foreign Office doubts surrounding the African Company's integrity on the other, were delineated by Dupuis in the opening passages of his narrative, continuing throughout. Dupuis reported on these issues to the Foreign Office, but also received criticism for his role during debates in the Commons leading up to the decision to dissolve the African

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<sup>65</sup> R. Adams, J. Dupuis, *The Narrative of Robert Adams, a Sailor who was Wrecked on the Western Coast of Africa, in the Year 1810* (London, 1816). Anon, Art. IV, 'The Narrative of Robert Adams', in *The Monthly Review, from January to April inclusive* (London, 1817), pp. 26-38. Anon, 'Timbuctoo', *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, Vol. 5 (London, 1831), pp. 169-180. C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>66</sup> This was apparent through exchanges in Parliament, and in correspondence to the paper, in *The Times* and other London dailies. See, for example, criticism of the James/Bowdich mission, in 'A.B.', 'To the Editor of the Times', *The Times*, 31 December 1818.

Company and establish Crown control over the Gold Coast from Freetown.<sup>67</sup> Dupuis strongly favoured dissolving the Company and its ruling Committee. Publishing his account allowed him to legitimate personal interpretations of the ‘useful’ knowledge acquired on his mission, contrasted to those of his Company predecessor Bowdich, with what reviewers saw as authority and rigour – he was apparently a man of ‘considerable talents, information and address’.<sup>68</sup> In *The New Monthly Review*, however, Dupuis’ inconsistencies and hypocrisies were ridiculed; he pursued impossible minor points of negotiation – ‘some paltry local or pecuniary object’ – instead of the broader principles of his mission, while taking every opportunity ‘of vituperating’ the African Company’s government of Cape Coast.<sup>69</sup>

Dupuis returned to consular roles in North Africa following his adventure in Asante. He applied to the position at Santa Cruz in Algeria in 1825, before being posted to Tripoli.<sup>70</sup> His diplomatic career appeared to end in the early 1840s, allegedly following some falling out with the Foreign Office, after which Dupuis spent time in Greece in an unsuccessful private enterprise to export antiquities (possibly with Warrington). He settled in London and inherited a part of the wealth of his father-in-law, the artist JMW Turner (after some acrimonious legal wrangles),

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<sup>67</sup> ‘Commons Sitting of Friday, June 16, 1820’, *Hansard*, Second Series, Volume 1, 1103. ‘Communications from and Instructions to Naval Officers, relative to Suppression of Slave Trade, 1819-20’, *House of Commons Papers*, Vol. 23, 1821. Select Committee on Petition of Committee of African Company, and Reports of Select Committee of 1816, *House of Commons Papers*, No. 431, Vol. 401, 1817.

<sup>68</sup> Anon, ‘Ashantee – Art IV’, January 1825, *The Edinburgh Review, Or Critical Journal*, Vol. 41 (Edinburgh, 1825), p. 346. See also, Anon, ‘Interior of Africa – Art. IX’, *The Quarterly Review* (London, 1825), pp. 470-471.

<sup>69</sup> ‘The Ashantees’, in *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, Vol. XI *Original Papers* (London, 1824), pp. 378-382.

<sup>70</sup> FO 76/20, Consul Hanmer Warrington and Vice-Consul Joseph Dupuis, General Correspondence, 1826. FO 76 21, Consul Hanmer Warrington and Vice-Consul Joseph Dupuis, General Correspondence, 1827. FO 76/36, Vice-Consuls J. Fraser, Joseph Dupuis, and various, General Correspondence, 1833. D3155/C6300, Derbyshire Record Office, Kingston Hall: William T Bankes to Robert Wilmot Horton, Mr Dupuis has just applied to be consul at Santa Cruz, 12th October 1825.

a few years after Turner's death, having married Evelina Turner in 1817.<sup>71</sup> Dupuis had limited heated exchanges concerning his dealings with the African Company, his overlooked advice on avoiding conflict between the British and Asante, and made further defences of Adams' story. He also contributed a series of descriptions of the 'dispersed Canaanite Tribes' to his son Hanmer Dupuis' *The Holy Places* in 1856.<sup>72</sup> Joseph Dupuis died in 1874 in Lambeth, London.

The achievements and disappointments of both Hippisley and Dupuis with British state institutions and interests, in peace and war, within networks of British aspirational society and beyond them, demonstrate their inculcation to the accepted systems and processes of being, representing, and pursuing British social careers through foreign service. Commitment to acceptable values and ambitions, as well as to practical needs of respectable living at metropole or periphery of British interest, are evident at greater variance among the other actor-authors in this study. The same sense of ingrained imperial superiority was expressed, though it manifested differently in each individual's written persona.

William Hutton in particular demonstrated this in *A Voyage to Africa*. Published in 1821, he beat his superior Dupuis into print by three years. Hutton's concern, he declared, was not with the detail of negotiation or political manoeuvres of the African Company against the consular mission. Instead, he focused on the objectives of 'cultivation and civilization of the whole coast', as well as the benefits of expanded British commerce in the region, a topic close to his

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<sup>71</sup> A. Bailey, *Standing in the Sun: A Life of JMW Turner* (London, 2013), pp. 281, 456, 530.

<sup>72</sup> H.L. Dupuis, J. Dupuis, *The Holy Places, a narrative of two years' residence in Jerusalem and Palestine, with notes on the dispersed Canaanite tribes* (London, 1856).

heart.<sup>73</sup> His family background was entangled with West Africa. W.B. Hutton and Sons was established by his uncle in the eighteenth century and his cousin Anthony Calvert Hutton was in the region on the firm's business at the same time as William.<sup>74</sup> Anthony died at Accra in October 1821, W.B. Hutton the following year, and his other son William Mackintosh Hutton took over the business. Transition from the slave trade to other goods went well. By 1835, the company was 'among the ten largest palm oil firms in Britain and were certainly the largest oil importers in London'.<sup>75</sup> William Mackintosh Hutton was consulted by a Parliamentary Select Committee in 1842 tasked with inquiring 'into the State of the British Possessions on the West Coast of Africa' and their 'present Relations with the neighbouring Native Tribes'.<sup>76</sup> He wanted to extend 'influence' over regional powers through commerce, as a step towards 'an improving population' and the suppression of the slave trade.<sup>77</sup> The tone of the report reflects many of the ideas put forward by our William Hutton as early as 1821, in *A Voyage to Africa*.

The William Hutton I am concerned with here was employed by the African Company on Joseph Dupuis' arrival in Cape Coast and was assigned at his request to his staff. Hutton was enthused by the prospect of travelling to Kumasi, surveying habitation, and judging potential on their journey.<sup>78</sup> Blocked by the Company from returning to Kumasi following Dupuis'

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<sup>73</sup> W. Hutton, *A Voyage to Africa* (London, 1821), pp. 153-157, 422.

<sup>74</sup> Anthony Calvert Hutton gave evidence to a Select Committee considering the African Committee's petition on the maintenance of their forts on the Gold Coast in 1816. 'Select Committee on Petition of Committee of African Company, and Reports of Select Committee of 1816', *House of Commons Papers*, No. 431, Vol. 401, 1817.

<sup>75</sup> M. Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 87.

<sup>76</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa* (London, 1842), contents page.

<sup>77</sup> This Hutton was careful to make clear that he had never been to the coast of Africa, and that the actions of any individuals employed by Hutton and Sons in supplying illicit slavers in the region were not sanctioned by him or the company. *Ibid*, p. vii.

<sup>78</sup> Hutton, *A Voyage to Africa*, pp. 119-120.

departure, Hutton headed to England.<sup>79</sup> Commerce, cultivation, and civilisation were Hutton's watchwords, with Christianity being largely absent from his imagined programme of imperialist 'improvement'. A *Voyage* combined ethnographic evaluations of people and cultures with good-humoured but arrogant dismissiveness of the social practices of the 'uncivilised'. He wrote to the *London Courier* to share his reflections on the defeat of Sir Charles MacCarthy at Nsamakow on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1824; the letter, reprinted in *The Times* the next day, described the Asante people and the Asantehene as 'barbaric' yet welcoming, suggesting that a British official residency at Kumasi would be worthwhile. He was sure that 'if the same King' he was acquainted with was 'still in existence', he could 'pledge himself for the safety of Sir Charles M'Carthy, being well acquainted with his sable Majesty's disposition, and having the utmost confidence in his humanity'.<sup>80</sup> This authority was soon undermined by confirmation of MacCarthy's death.<sup>81</sup>

Hutton viewed commercial opportunity and colonial administration as complementary pursuits. Blurring these lines placed him in conflict with the Colonial Office later in his career. As Acting Commandant of St Mary's Island, at the Gambia's mouth, in 1829, he initiated an expedition upriver resulting in treaties with the 'chief' at Kantalikunda and then the 'King' of the Wuli, Mansa Kwiri, both agreeing to permanent trading posts. The merchants approved, but overstepped the boundaries of his authority, and Sir Robert Hay quickly ensured Hutton's

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, pp. 134, 310.

<sup>80</sup> 'Defeat Of Sir Charles M'Carthy And The British Troops', *The Times*, 5 May 1824. 'British Troops...', *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 May 1824.

<sup>81</sup> 'Two arrivals were yesterday announced...', *The Times*, 16 June 1824.

replacement.<sup>82</sup> Hutton does not appear to have served the Crown after departing Bathurst. His death at 46 years old, at Wells, was reported in the *Bristol Mercury* on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1839.<sup>83</sup> Hutton demonstrated the imperial character of his British identity through his attitudes to beneficial trade agreements and the extension of influence and control over territory and people.

Henry John Ricketts also had some experience of the region. Joining the 2<sup>nd</sup> West India Regiment 1810, he made lieutenant the following year, served as Adjutant, and was promoted to Captain in 1820.<sup>84</sup> The regiment then transferred to West Africa and Ricketts was serving as Brigade Major for MacCarthy by January 1824. He was variously reported as victim, hero, and survivor of the Battle of Nsamakow as the first rumours filtered back to London in May.<sup>85</sup> The news of the defeat itself came to Britain via Barbados, initially printed in the *Liverpool Mercury* on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1824 and then around the country over the following week.<sup>86</sup> Ricketts' connection with the discovery of the 'macaroni' in place of the ammunition reserve was circulated, along with more detail and rumour from various 'private' correspondents, and

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<sup>82</sup> Sir Robert Hay was Permanent Under Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1825 to 1836. 'Treaty of Peace and Commerce...' and 'Agreement of the Merchants of Bathurst...', Serial No. 10, in *Correspondence relating to the limits of British jurisdiction in the Gambia* (London, 1877), pp. 14-15. J.M. Gray, *A History of the Gambia* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 341.

<sup>83</sup> 'Births, Marriages and Deaths', *Bristol Mercury*, 23 November 1839.

<sup>84</sup> 'Henry John Ricketts, Gent. to be Ensign, vice Cramer. 2d West India Regiment', *London Gazette*, Issue 16380 (23 June, 1810), p. 900. 'War Office... 2d Ditto, Ensign John Ricketts to be Lieutenant, vice Devonshire, deceased', *London Gazette*, I 16468 (26 March, 1820), p. 556. 'War Office – May 19... 2d West India Regiment – Lieutenant Alexander Gordon Laing; from half-pay of the regiment, to be Adjutant and Lieutenant, vice Ricketts, promoted', *Edinburgh Gazette*, I.2807 (19 May, 1820), p. 155.

<sup>85</sup> 'London, Saturday evening, May 1... We regret to state...', *The Hampshire Telegraph*, 3 May 1824. 'Defeat Of Sir Charles M'Carthy And The British Troops', *The Times*, 5 May 1824.

<sup>86</sup> 'Defeat Of The British Troops By The Ashantees', *Liverpool Mercury*, 30 April 1824. 'Melancholy News from the African Coast', *The Morning Post*, 3 May 1824. Various articles, *The Morning Chronicle*, 3 May 1824.

finally Lieutenant Laing's official dispatches.<sup>87</sup> The qualified successes of the British-led alliance, and the increasingly aggressive turn against Asante in the British press, formed the backdrop for Ricketts' full promotion to Major in November 1827, following his assumption of the role of interim governor of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast in September. This was a default appointment due to the deaths of several previous incumbents and Ricketts' position 'on the spot' when negotiations with Kumasi took place.<sup>88</sup> His actions drew domestic criticism, from the negotiated cessation of hostilities to the management of Sierra Leone and his appointments on leaving for England in December 1829.<sup>89</sup> As virtually the last officer standing, his was the only attempt to describe the First Anglo-Asante War to a British readership, but by publication interest had waned. Major Ricketts does not appear to have been mentioned again in the British press until his death was announced in *The Times* in 1838. He was on his way home from Ceylon 'on sick leave' from the 58<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, and 'landed at the Cape from the *Barrosa* in consequence of ill-health.'<sup>90</sup> Whether Ricketts had anything to contribute publicly on the administrative reform of colonial Ceylon following the Colebrooke–Cameron Commission was never to be revealed, but his experience as an army officer had been intimately tied up with these earlier British experiments in colonial occupation and administration.

Dr John H. Robinson drifted into and out of the public arena rather more quickly around the publication of *Journal of an Expedition* in 1822. He probably practised medicine in Scotland

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<sup>87</sup> 'Battles with the Ashantees', *The Times*, 17 June 1824. 'Capt. ALEXANDER G. LAING, of the Royal African Corps...', *The Morning Post*, 18 June 1824.

<sup>88</sup> 'Royal African Colonial Corps, Captain Henry John Ricketts, from the 2d West India Regiment, to be Major, without purchase, vice Maclean, who retires', 29 November 1827, *London Gazette*, Issue 18424, p. 2581. 'Ricketts departs Sierra Leone', *The Times*, 12 June, 1830.

<sup>89</sup> 'To the Editor, by An Enemy to Slavery', *The Times*, 15 October 1830.

<sup>90</sup> 'Major Ricketts of the 58<sup>th</sup>...', *The Times*, 27 February 1838.

until his departure for South America. He asserted that he had ‘passed’ examination to become Doctor of Medicine in Edinburgh in 1800; *Munk’s Roll* confirms this, and his admission as Extra-Licentiate to the Royal College of Physicians in 1807.<sup>91</sup> Robinson was, he said, examined in 1800 by a Mr James Anderson, who turned up on the examination board for licensing in Trinidad.<sup>92</sup> Robinson implied that he had spent his career to date working in or regularly returning to Edinburgh and references in his narrative demonstrate that he kept abreast of scientific debates in Edinburgh’s vibrant philosophical circles. The information provided by the author is not enough to determine whether there were any particular material reasons why he, a medical man probably in his late thirties, decided to join the Patriot cause, but he displayed distinct preconceptions about other places and people, a keen if not entirely focused interest in observing and evaluating the exotic environment, and a well-formed modern racist conception of human difference.

By contrast, there is rather a larger body of evidence with which to explore Thomas Edward Bowdich’s career aspirations, agenda, and sense of personal value. Bowdich was born in 1791, the son of a Bristol hat manufacturer and merchant ‘with a high commercial reputation’.<sup>93</sup> After trying his hand at the family business and a short stint at Oxford, his uncle John Hope Smith, on the Committee of Merchants of the Gold Coast, appointed Bowdich as a Writer with the African Company in 1814. A reasonable impression can be formed of how Bowdich wished to direct his career if it were not cut short by his death. His wife Sarah Bowdich published

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<sup>91</sup> The Munk’s Roll entry states, ‘John Robinson, MD, a doctor of medicine of Edinburgh, of 24th June, 1800 (DMI de Urinae) Secretione Suppressa), was admitted Extra-Licentiate of the College of Physicians 5th March 1807.’ *Munk’s Roll*, The Royal College of Physicians, Vol. III, p. 49. <https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians/john-robinson-0>. Accessed 12/11/2020. J. Robinson, *Disputatio Medica Inauguralis de Urinae Secretione Suppressa* (Edinburgh, 1800).

<sup>92</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, p. 44.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Obituary: Thomas Edward Bowdich Esq.’ *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, March 1824.

*Excursions in Madeira and Porto Santo* in both their names in 1825, completing a turn toward public discourse on natural history and away from the politics of imperial geography and diplomacy.<sup>94</sup> This posthumous account incorporated botanical and zoological descriptions, absent from *A Mission from Cape Coast to Ashantee* in 1819, as well as geographical observations, reflecting his intellectual pursuits after moving to Paris. Bowdich is the most widely published of these men. Between his return from the Gold Coast in 1818 and his death he authored a number of geographical and botanical papers and pamphlets, translations of French scientific works into English, and two polemical essays – one directed against the African Committee and its management of the Gold Coast, and *A Reply to the Quarterly Review* which defended his actions and narrative during the mission to Kumasi.<sup>95</sup> I will discuss these further later in this chapter. From 1824 and in partnership with his wife, he probably intended to pursue a career as an independent travelling scholar of geography and natural history, with less need for the sensationalism and self-justification evident in *A Mission* and its companion pieces. Nevertheless, it is the account of his time at Kumasi that has continued to draw scholarly attention due to its level of detail, often without much critical consideration of his motives, accuracy, or the extent of exaggeration.<sup>96</sup>

Richard Longfield Vowell missed the opportunity of an imperial career through established avenues of army, navy, or diplomatic service – nor did he draw on his family's connections to

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<sup>94</sup> T.E. Bowdich, and S. Bowdich, *Excursions in Madeira and Porto Santo*, preface.

<sup>95</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *The African Committee* (London, 1819). T.E. Bowdich, *A Reply to the Quarterly Review* (Paris, 1820). 'Obituary: Thomas Edward Bowdich Esq.' *The Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1824.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, references to this work in A.C. Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame* (Boston, 2005), pp. 83-84, 88-89. One example decontextualises the engravings in *A Mission* so fully that it describes two of them as 'French' - see R.J. Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters: An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Harvard, 2014), pp. 81, 131, 224. Often, Bowdich is considered a relatively reliable narrator – see G. Austin, *Labour, Land and Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807-1956* (Rochester, 2005), pp. 38, 41, 117, 120.

secure a more official 'place.' He was the son of Ann Evans and Major Richard Vowell, both from families with established Anglo-Irish heritages – the Vowells had their roots in Somerset. He was born in 1795, by which stage the family had moved to England amidst increasing unrest in Ireland. Vowell's biographer, Maria Paez Victor, notes that his upbringing in the former Bath home of the Herschels 'came abruptly to an end' with his father's death in 1806, and his mother's the following year. He attended boarding schools before going to Wadham College at Oxford University in 1814, his guardians intending a career in the clergy. Vowell did not share their ambitions for his future; inheriting £2000 from a friend of his father's in 1815, subsequent high-living got him expelled. His stated reasons for enlisting and travelling to South America were curiosity and sympathy with the cause of liberty. Victor asserts that Vowell had highly developed language skills due to his expensive and privileged education.<sup>97</sup> His books published in 1831 certainly prove that the thirty-six year old veteran of South American independence had a more nuanced literary ability than his early contemporaries in Venezuela, while his grasp of Spanish must have been accomplished enough to last him over a decade away from England.

Vowell's literary ambitions became apparent with his adventures detailed across three volumes. The first constituted the factual and authoritative personal narrative set within the context of wider events and incorporating the cosmographic, ethnographic, and literary elements of the travel writing genre. It was accompanied by two novelisations of his other anecdotes and the more outlandish tales told to him during his travels and service. These *Tales of Venezuela* were dependent for success on a renewal of interest in the Orinoco region, South American Independence movements, and the continent as a place of opportunity and

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<sup>97</sup> M. Victor, *Liberty or Death! The Life and Campaigns of Richard L. Vowell* (Ticehurst, 2013), pp. 1-12.

ambition for British interests.<sup>98</sup> Interest had waned since the early 1820s, following the sensational and contentious reports of the early returnees on the impoverished and ramshackle condition of Bolívar's Patriot movement. There is no evidence that Richard Vowell attempted to publish again after these three volumes. Victor has traced him to Australia, where he was working as a clerk by 1833, was dismissed and implicated in the escape of some prisoners from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cox's River Stockade, and was working, serving a sentence, or both, at Norfolk Island by 1835 – he appeared to have misjudged the nature of social conditions and expectations in the burgeoning penal colonies of New South Wales.<sup>99</sup> He achieved a more settled life, teaching in his later years, and died in Victoria in 1870.<sup>100</sup>

Captain Charles Brown has proved to be by far the most elusive of these men. The title page of his *Narrative of the Expedition to South America* identifies that he left England in late 1817, returned on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1819, and served as Captain of the Venezuelan Brigade of Light Artillery while in South America.<sup>101</sup> Brown revealed nothing further about himself, his age, background, or prior experiences, in his narrative, but his familiarity with other key figures in the first two expeditions can be discerned by his references to some of the senior officers in particular. He returned to England from Saint Thomas aboard HM Packet *Nocton*, but I have been unable to trace any more details about his movements from there.<sup>102</sup> The movements of extracts from his book, once published in 1819, demonstrate that, like his contemporaries, his account of South America was valued enough to advertise and to be quoted at length, although his

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<sup>98</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*. R. Vowell, *Tales of Venezuela, Part I, containing the Earthquake of Caracas* (London, 1831). R. Vowell, *Tales of Venezuela, Part II, containing the Savannas of Varinas* (London, 1931).

<sup>99</sup> M. Victor, *Liberty or Death!* pp. 135-143.

<sup>100</sup> M. Victor, *Liberty or Death!* p. 150.

<sup>101</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, title page.

<sup>102</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 186-187.

writing style was described as 'desultory' by *The Parlour Portfolio*, which nevertheless deemed its content 'important' enough to print ten pages of it in 1820.<sup>103</sup> More speculative points about Brown's background, encultured sense of self, and his self-made literary persona, can be extracted from his *Narrative*, as I will explore.

The backgrounds and careers of these authors, evident from their activities before publication and apparent in their books, were diverse in the detail of their experiences. They were of different ages ranging from at least their mid-twenties to their fifties. All, however, were performatively middle-class, aspirational, and outward looking in seeking advantage for careers and domestic position. They were encultured with a sense of aspiring entitlement, due in some cases to vaguely gentrified family connections and expectations, and in others to more clearly revealed early choices of career and intellectual or occupational focus. They were, as young men, junior officers in armies, diplomatic roles, or private colonial administration. They were not, after the experiences in their narratives, broadly successful, but their attempts at contributing to forums of public discourse attest to their ambitions to be so. Successful or not, their journeys into print as travel writers stand together as a cross-section of early nineteenth century aspirational upper-middle-class official careering, within a context of British National-Imperial enculturation, as their observations and judgements will further reveal.

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<sup>103</sup> 'Venezuela', *The Parlour Portfolio, or Post-Chaise Companion, Vol. II* (London, 1820), pp. 11-22.

### **Standards of Calling and Duty: Motives for going, Agendas for publishing**

One of the primary objectives in the writing of a travel narrative is to justify and legitimise the motives and actions of the author as protagonist. The first stage of that legitimisation must incorporate the agendas of the author before the authorship itself was a clear motive, alongside the correct representation of the objectives of their commissioners, commanders, or paymasters. After the period of travel, service, or adventure was complete, and the account was being written, or under the auspices of publisher or editor, one of the tasks was to present these motives and their driving forces in a manner that would appeal to the sensibilities, trends and socio-political leanings of expected readers.<sup>104</sup> They had to incorporate subsequent actions, agendas, official instructions or demands, and the expectations of interest groups among their eventual readerships, including editors, reviewers and correspondents of contemporary literary society.

I will now discuss how the authors struck a balance between these often competing demands, if and why they foregrounded their own motivations, how they set a precedent for their agendas in preface, introduction and opening passages, and whether they were forced to address particular pressures in an overly defensive or conciliatory fashion. The influence of the circumstances of their employment on their motivations might have manifested in a range of subtly different ways. Was the nature of the commission, that is the official capacity under which each operated, influenced by the stature of that authority in the eyes of a perceived British readership? Did the authority in question relate to a significant and influential enough audience in the metropole to warrant distinct subservience? Or, through degrees of distance,

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<sup>104</sup> P. Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism*, pp. 9, 11-14, 37-39. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 24-28, 100-104.

subsequent independence or cessation of the relationship, were an increased objectivity or an oppositional partisanship possible for the author toward former masters?

These conflicting motivations combined in different ways. While Hippisley served as a commander of his own force, raised under his own leadership and with his own finances, his was a commission of the embryonic Venezuelan state, under whose military command he agreed to place himself. That authority ceased with his discharge agreed and his return to London, whereby his attempts at reimbursement went hand in hand with his drive to tell his side of the story and protect his personal reputation.<sup>105</sup> Bowdich was a junior representative of the African Company at the Asante court; he assumed the leadership of the mission and was required to justify his doing so in the forum of public opinion if he wished to publish his account. Attacks on his behaviour, his authority, and his literary credentials were highly likely, so a strong case for his actions had to be made.<sup>106</sup> Subsequent to the mission the Company's authority on the Gold Coast was superseded by the Crown, transforming the relationships of command, and ensuring an eminence to the state position on authority in the region in time for the impending conflict. It was in this official diplomatic capacity that Dupuis eventually arrived in the region to take up his duties at Kumasi, following a considerable delay after his appointment but still prior to the completion of the transfer of responsibilities from the Company on the coast to the Colonial Governor at Sierra Leone. His was an awkward position on the spot because of the impending divestment of the Company, while late publication and the rapid escalation of tensions between the Crown's representatives and Kumasi threatened

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<sup>105</sup> For confirmation of his resignation, see Appendix, No. 35, 'Letter from Colonel Hippisley to General Bolívar', G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 624-626.

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, the letter signed by all three junior officers detailing the reasons for deposing Mr James. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 43-55.

to undermine his laboriously prepared account. He had to acknowledge this in Chapter VI of Part I of his *Journal*, which ended with the news of Sir Charles MacCarthy's defeat and death.<sup>107</sup> Hutton was present with Dupuis in a junior capacity as a local appointment and able to provide a distinct perspective – he also had his own agenda, aligned with the doomed Company's, explicitly declared as commercial and imperial, and his own self-interest to pursue.<sup>108</sup> Dr Robinson eventually arrived in Angostura as a private individual rationally employed by the Independent Government – his was a transactional exchange with the Venezuelan agent in London. He witnessed the troops he sailed with evaporate with desertions and resignations on the way through the Caribbean but stood apart from this erosion of affinity with the Patriot cause. He was more directly open about both his private status and his assumed intellectual objectivity as a son of Edinburgh's Enlightenment society, and was therefore quite unreserved in his critical condemnation of South American cultural and racial values.<sup>109</sup> Robinson's account was appended with a lengthy essay by 'the Editor', drawing on extracts from other accounts to paint a picture of hypocrisy and incompetence on the part of the Patriots.<sup>110</sup> All of these examples were moulded by the contexts of the public discourse to which they contributed, as well as by the deliberately portrayed agendas of their authors. The editorial shaping of the finished account was very much in the hands of the author in each of these cases, with the very notable exception of that lengthy anonymous editorial essay in Robinson's.

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<sup>107</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 194-223.

<sup>108</sup> W. Hutton, *A Voyage to Africa* (London, 1821), pp. 153-157

<sup>109</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 1-3, 193-194, 268-271.

<sup>110</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 273-376.

The timing of publication and the length of service and experience also reflected the intentions of the authors. Charles Brown and Richard Vowell arrived as junior officers in units recognised as part of the British contingent of the Venezuelan forces. Brown's narrative fitted well with Hippisley's and Robinson's in claiming affinity with the cause of liberty but blaming the desperate and under-resourced anti-colonial state for their sufferings and rapid return to Britain. It was, nevertheless, a more direct and less self-aware performance of constructed persona and worldview, making Brown's contribution something of a more subconsciously and less sophisticatedly encultured example of the British Imperial gaze at work in the region; he was less aware he was doing it.<sup>111</sup> Vowell's tale was a memoir of much longer service and adventure; he was circumspect about assigning blame for the resources and organisation of the young post-colonial states, and careful to demonstrate a far more sophisticated and disinterested understanding of the political circumstances of his wide-ranging adventures.<sup>112</sup> Another young officer, Lieutenant Hackett, made it no further than Grenada, producing an account on his return to England explicitly intended to discourage others from taking arms in the service of the Patriot cause.<sup>113</sup> Ricketts, the only army officer in the Gold Coast context, was already commissioned in the 2<sup>nd</sup> West India Regiment at the outbreak of war with Asante. A junior officer, although one of a limited number, in the region in 1823, he finished as the de facto commander of British led forces and the leader of the peace negotiations between Asante, their neighbours and the British allies.<sup>114</sup> Those that undertook their adventures in South America were without the official authority of the British state in any capacity, while

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<sup>111</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, preface, pp. 7, 178, 180-181, 188-192.

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, his account of social circumstances at Popayan, and other pragmatic reflections on political expediences. R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 216-221, 457-458.

<sup>113</sup> J. Hackett, *Narrative of the Expedition which sailed from England in 1817, to join the South American Patriots* (London, 1818), Introduction.

<sup>114</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 160-171, 178-180.

those acting in the region of the Gold Coast were subject to varying combinations of independent authority, subservience and responsibility to Earl Bathurst (and thus the Crown), to the African Company while it lasted, or to the Governor of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast. All of them, however, consciously or subconsciously reasserted the British National-Imperial gaze by writing *into* British public discourse these narratives of their travels and service.

An author writing in the broad school of 'travel' literature in the early nineteenth century had to understand the normative practice of their peers in order to negotiate the process of self-representation. A commissioned explorer in an 'unknown' region may find this relationship between personal motivation and the authority of their commissioner straightforward, illustrating the consequences of such a relationship clearly. Often subjected to greater official oversight of their published narratives, they were constrained by the social expectations of rank and official authority.<sup>115</sup> Officially endorsed accounts, usually by the senior surviving officer, were a common feature of the Arctic missions from the 1820s. Explorers in West Africa also undertook missions with the stated objective of publishing afterwards (if they lived).<sup>116</sup> Completing his famous account in 1799, Mungo Park expressed a pattern of self-motivation, defining the parameters of the work and the incorporation of experiences intriguing to contemporary readers. The stated motive informed the tone of the wider work. It was important for Park the author to define the drivers toward travel and encounter behind Park the explorer and justify the decision of the African Association to commission him. He declared a 'passionate desire to examine into the productions of a country so little known; and to become experimentally acquainted with the modes of life, and character of the natives'. The

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<sup>115</sup> J. Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*, pp. 12-17, 74-76.

<sup>116</sup> C. Withers et al., *Travels into Print*, pp. 34-36.

instructions he was given were 'plain and concise', underpinning the agenda of the Association with trust in its appointed man, objectively stating his qualifications.<sup>117</sup> In the preface, the author's personal motives for writing to the reader were defined with requisite modesty, as an account 'with nothing to recommend it, but truth', fitting with an already well established convention of the travel writing genre which would continue to be honed by authors into the next century. Park announced his 'plain unvarnished tale, without pretensions of any kind, except that it claims to enlarge, in some degree, the circle of African geography'.<sup>118</sup> His 'passionate desire' to discover place and people, and his practical or intellectual interests evinced no obvious contradiction with the open instructions of the African Association. The balance of an author's 'abiding curiosity' and official motivations may significantly affect the degree of subjectivity in travel writing for publication, and the potential for this conflict, according to Withers et al., could mean that 'the language of the text and the attention paid to the travel experience sometimes occluded the factual content'.<sup>119</sup> Literary modesty, alongside authority, objectivity and credibility, hinged on the ability to express itself not necessarily through the style or content of the writing, but by prefatory self-declaration, an unelaborated assertion of non-literary credentials, and the endorsement of an authority greater than the reluctant author. Sincerity is hard to tease out from these declarations, especially as they became such widely applied conventions of the genre.<sup>120</sup>

Also influential on authorial agenda were prevailing public discourses surrounding political or intellectual trends of the period, wider contexts of their encounters, or actions and

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<sup>117</sup> M. Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (London, 1799) pp. 2-3.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, Preface p. vii.

<sup>119</sup> N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, p. 37.

<sup>120</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 101-105.

consequences of contemporaries. The individual traveller or explorer may have faced limited competing perspectives to their own. Witnesses to Park's first mission had no voice in British public discourse, while Alexander Laing's account of his 1823 mission inland from Sierra Leone contained only the author as a legitimate voice of British authority, even in a retinue of over a hundred soldiers, porters, and guides. However, those in active diplomatic or military service around the Atlantic periphery were surrounded by contemporaries acting under their own motivations, forming their own agendas, and raising conflicts of interest with each other.<sup>121</sup> Thomas Bowdich travelled to Kumasi as the subordinate of Frederick James, with fellow Company officers William Hutchinson and Henry Tedlie. They returned to Cape Coast Castle in separately, each with their own perspective concerning Bowdich's 'necessary' usurpation of James' authority.<sup>122</sup> Hippisley faced the uncertain responses of former subordinates, peers in other mercenary regiments, press opinion and the eroded patience of his creditors, as well as obstinate representatives and advocates of the patriotic cause, another set of driving forces for a campaign of self-justification and defence that I will return to later in this chapter.<sup>123</sup>

Prefiguring and upholding of the author's principles and agendas is present in each account, necessary in order to match the expectations of a stratified, aspirational readership, and as a prerequisite for the moral authority of their subsequent actions. The accepted norm was to state this position, within the terms of a socially expected modesty, in the preface or introduction. Withers et al. have tracked this convention from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, noting key trends in the development of prefatory remarks, incorporating

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<sup>121</sup> A. Laing, *Travels in the Timannee, Kooranko, and Soolima Countries, in Western Africa* (London, 1825).

<sup>122</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 42-55, 382-383.

<sup>123</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, appendices.

claims to authenticity connected to an endorsement or relationship of authority, set in authentic terms by an apologetically non-literary author.<sup>124</sup> This is evident in each of these cases. Hippisley, for example, apologised for the minute detail in places and claimed his account to be ‘the plain one of a soldier’, soliciting a ‘favourable construction of its defects.’ A higher purpose must have motivated him to communicate his experiences; Hippisley’s is to warn his audience of the danger of entering into such an ‘ungrateful service’.<sup>125</sup> He asserted that necessity drove his desire to publish, and a sense of duty and responsibility was claimed to elide any selfish motivations. The more self-serving argument - that practical issues of debt remuneration and accusations in the press about raising the regiment may have been a priority – went unacknowledged, although it became blatantly obvious to any reader who made it through the book and its extensive appendix.

Urgency, self-legitimation, and professions of duty were significant to our African agents too. Thomas Bowditch, presenting an apparently plain and legitimate record with liberal use of original correspondence throughout, had his own personal case to make. In his preface he requested ‘sympathy in his diffidence and anxiety’ in rising to the literary task, and his achievement as a ‘private gentleman’ in meeting it.<sup>126</sup> The reviewers, even where positive, did not attribute modesty to him, and they were not necessarily favourable to his literary skill, despite his conventional disclaimers. The *New Annual Register* described the book as ‘ill written’, the reader being ‘continually interrupted and disgusted by the vanity and egotism of the author’.<sup>127</sup> Joseph Dupuis, as Bowditch’s critic and successor, quoted the words of Earl

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<sup>124</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 151-155, 190-194.

<sup>125</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. iii-vii.

<sup>126</sup> T.E. Bowditch, *Mission*, pp. v-vi.

<sup>127</sup> Anon, review of Bowditch, ‘Ashantee Customs’, *The New Annual Register for 1819* (London, 1820), p. 64.

Bathurst to authenticate his own professional qualifications.<sup>128</sup> He met another point of good form in dedicating his account to George IV.<sup>129</sup> This domestic-social-political legitimation is detailed and explicit in these cases but is also present in the first chapters of Hippisley's text in a subtler, more implicit manner. Hippisley was keen to highlight the approbation of people close to the British government for his activities in raising his Venezuelan regiment. He was driven by the same impulses to meet the expectations of the readership for this social legitimacy, as well as the importance for personal reputation of having the right endorsements and at least tacit approval for his actions.<sup>130</sup> He named no names but transparently wished his readership to know he was well connected. The centrality of the process of legitimation and justification to the production of this account is clear from the start.

### **Benefits of Hindsight: Justification in the memoirs**

Henry Ricketts and Richard Vowell, producing memoirs covering a greater scope in their respected theatres, had longer to consider their opening positions. Both published in 1831 and encompassed eight and thirteen years of experience, respectively. They were less encumbered by the immediacy of affairs and their objectives could be expected to differ from their predecessors; Hippisley's self-justification was central and urgent in the face of legal

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<sup>128</sup> Notably, Sarah Bowdich took the very deliberate step of dedicating *Excursions* to Earl Bathurst in 1825. T.E . Bowdich and S. Bowdich, *Excursions in Madeira and Porto Santo*, preface.

<sup>129</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. ii-vi.

<sup>130</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 5-11.

claims, Bowditch and Dupuis were in dispute over the conduct of the former, while Captain Brown justified his narrative 'to the Public' as a warning 'to his Country-men' from 'precipitating themselves into that misery' he had escaped.<sup>131</sup> These concerns lent Brown, Robinson, and Robinson's unidentified editor, a moral urgency that Hippisley had expressed for his own personal motives. Ricketts' motivations were certainly less pressing, a point utilised to make the case for authenticity in the preface of *Narrative of the Ashantee War*. The author had no 'view to publication' in mind when writing his account 'on the spot'. However, the opinion of 'competent persons' combined with 'various causes' that made Africa and Africans of interest justified the production of 'this narration of facts', but only because 'Providence had left [Ricketts] the only surviving officer who witnessed most of the events' in the account, 'published only from a sense of public duty.'<sup>132</sup> This seems to sum up the agenda and the claim to legitimacy that he then pursued. While his impartiality was contentious, the claim to exclusivity as the surviving (British) first hand witness (of respectable rank) was clearer. For Vowell, the uniqueness lay in the length and breadth of his adventures in South America, material enough for his memoir and for two volumes of fictionalised tales based on his experiences and stories told to him on his travels. These resulted from 'the mass of available matter' he had accumulated which he feared might garner accusations of 'plagiarism, or of the still less venial offence against many readers, – the "bestowing of all his tediousness upon them"'.<sup>133</sup> Where Ricketts produced his memoir at the behest of his contemporaries, for the 'public good', Vowell restrained his to avoid public distrust, fictionalising many experiences and stories and syphoning them off into separate volumes.

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<sup>131</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, preface.

<sup>132</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. iiv-iv.

<sup>133</sup> R. Vowell, 'Advertisement', *Campaigns and Cruises*, p. iv.

This self-censorship was another convention of the genre in this period, calculated to lend credibility to the more outrageous details that were included.<sup>134</sup>

The performance of an impartial, objective tone in Ricketts' *Narrative* is deliberately employed by the author from the start. The first chapter did not explicitly bridge personal and official agendas but instead legitimated the colonial governmental remit and the validity of the governor's actions leading to war. Ricketts' personal perspective, authority, and credentials in relation to the colonial government were definitively absent. He detailed the expansion of Governor MacCarthy's jurisdiction to encompass the 'British settlements on the western coast of Africa', including the Gold Coast.<sup>135</sup> His high regard of MacCarthy and the 'great rejoicing among the people' at his assumption of government at Cape Coast in 1822 preceded careful contextualisation of the disputes between colony, Fante and Asante state. The 'honest' efforts of British representatives – criticised by Bowdich and Dupuis – contrasted with the inconstancy of the Asantehene – praised in qualified terms as a reasonable figure by the three earlier authors.<sup>136</sup> This short opening chapter thus historicised the conflict, established the character of the major parties, but absented that of the author in a way that the retrospective account can and the more immediate, personally representative reportage of Bowditch, Dupuis and Hutton could not. Constructing the narrative from a third person perspective deliberately played into this claim to objectivity, albeit superficially. At times, the tendency of the author to refer to the actions of Major Ricketts in the tones of a military dispatch verges on the ridiculous.

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<sup>134</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 123-124, 128, 138.

<sup>135</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> The ruler of Asante. See H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 2, 10-13.

The first volume of Richard Vowell's writings on his experiences in South America switches between first and third-person narrative forms. Constituting the main narrative of his personal experiences and their context, Volume I opens with prefatory remarks that strike a similar balance between literary modesty and claims to truth as we have seen elsewhere. The circumstances under which each author constructed their legitimacy made each subtly different; Vowell's position is arguably the most distinct. The prefatory advertisement acknowledged just 'how numerous a collection of Personal Narratives, Journals, Tours, Wanderings, and Residences in that portion of the New World' had appeared.<sup>137</sup> This one had to stand out somehow; as 'one of the first volunteers' who had 'traversed the country' further, for longer and in 'such eventful times', an exceptionality was claimed. Another of Vowell's distinctions was that he had not formally served state or society before his adventures. His connections through his father's time in the army and his aborted stay at Oxford placed Vowell within the societal nexus between domestic position, respectability, career and foreign service or adventure. However, representative of the generation maturing immediately after the outbreak of European peace, and without the encumbrance of previous loyal service to reconcile, his 'not so imperial eyes' arguably lend him a different kind of more independent and objective authority.<sup>138</sup> This fresh legitimacy was expressed in his writing style without the preamble of lengthy introductions or the setting of a geopolitical scene assumed to be familiar to his readership. He was a junior witness of a collective endeavour. 'We' and 'our' expectations and courses of action show that our narrator concurred with some of the

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<sup>137</sup> R. Vowell, 'Advertisement', *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. i-iv.

<sup>138</sup> M. Brown, 'Richard Vowell's Not So Imperial Eyes', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 38:1 (Feb., 2006), pp. 95-122.

perspectives of his early companions. 'I' and 'my' were little used.<sup>139</sup> The reader may be confident that Vowell was foremost an observer and not the central hero of his story.

That expectation is, as Matthew Brown highlights, in need of qualification; the intention of Vowell the author in using the first person plural, and the expected response to this amongst readers of his works, was to legitimate the authority and objectivity of his observations. The critical reader of such works naturally calls into doubt that very authority; what experience belongs directly to the narrator, and what belongs to the collective experience and therefore potentially the ex-facto exchange of anecdotes amongst a set of protagonists, becomes an issue of concern.<sup>140</sup> In Vowell's case, there are clues to the veracity of his personal narrative that set it apart from his fictionalised volumes, where the balance of second-hand accounts is implied to be. There is a point of doubt about Ricketts' narrative too; the affectation of objectivity laid down from the beginning further removed or obscured his own agency, although he sometimes acknowledged that his knowledge in absentia was acquired from others. Describing the decisive Battle of Dodowa on August 7<sup>th</sup> 1826, while Ricketts was in Britain, he explicitly turned to the accounts of others but did not credit sources for his information. A sizeable passage belongs to correspondence on the battle and its aftermath published in the *Morning Chronicle* on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1826. He did not acknowledge this, and neither he nor the newspaper named the correspondent.<sup>141</sup> This article proved to be the first

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<sup>139</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 1-9.

<sup>140</sup> M. Brown, 'Richard Vowell's Not So Imperial Eyes', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, pp. 95-122.

<sup>141</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 116-125. 'BATTLE WITH THE ASHANTEES. \_ GOLD COAST, AUG. 12, 1826.' *Morning Chronicle*, 5 December 1826.

appearance in print of several of the more lurid details in the public narrative of the war, including the alleged fate of MacCarthy's corpse.

Richard Vowell, in separating his chronological personal narrative from anecdotes and told tales, made a deliberate and explicit division between his reliability as narrator of his travel writings and the figurative amusements of his further storytelling. Ricketts attempted to elide the distinctions between plagiarised second-hand correspondence written into his account, and his own experiences, by playing down his first-person voice in both. Both techniques required deliberate decisions on constructing the point of view that is not present in the rapidly published narratives of Hippisley, Brown, Robinson, or Hutton. For Thomas Bowdich, the reliance on reproduced correspondence in Part I drove the oppositional switch in point of view without any deliberate device of the author. Joseph Dupuis took ownership and claimed the authority of his own voice in the first part of his account. Both erstwhile diplomats assumed a third-person perspective as a matter of convention for their cosmographical second parts.

Through varying techniques but with similar phrasing to meet readers' social expectations, these author-adventurers and their publishers established their legitimate points of view, positioned their authority, then legitimated participation from the opening passages of their publications. While these elements depended on the character and circumstances of individuals, they shared many conventions and fitted within an established approach to writing and publishing 'real' versions of events. Across blurring class lines, readers shared a set of values and socio-cultural expectations which owed much to the emergence of middle-

class aspiration and characteristically Imperial ambition.<sup>142</sup> They were also influenced by circumstantial versions of British identity and patriotism, as were the authors they read.<sup>143</sup>

### **Justification and Legitimation: Facing (down) the Critics**

The use of travel writings for campaigns of self-justification could trigger desperate, defensive, and contentious responses to criticism of an author's work – to question or ridicule the fragile identities and authenticity of a travel narrative was, in British public discourse, to attempt a round dismissal of the author's own character, and therefore their worth as a representative of British values. This caustic trend, involving authors, reviewers and editors, and private antagonists, was rooted in the culture of anonymity, satire, and libel that began in the 1790s, and created several of the conventions of public discourse by the 1810s.<sup>144</sup> Correspondence in the daily press could lead to wider negative attention too, through long running arguments and the questioning of individuals' credentials or authority. To wade into any of this openly and with little prior experience as these authors did was to invite the harshest politically tinged

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<sup>142</sup> L. Davidoff, C. Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. xv-xx. M. Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain* (London, 2011), pp. 3-4.

<sup>143</sup> C. Kidd, 'North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth-Century British Patriotisms', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (June, 1996), pp. 361-382.

<sup>144</sup> P. Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism*, pp. 4-8, 18. W. St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, pp. 12-13. J. Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*, pp. 54-55, 70-71.

criticism and ridicule.<sup>145</sup> I will close this chapter by considering two examples of this phenomenon, involving Gustavus Hippisley and Thomas Bowdich.

Gustavus Hippisley held, in his belief, the longest experience of (putative) service to the British state, identity and worldview. He had transferred British moral principles into the mercenary service of the fledgling Venezuelan Republic. It was clearly difficult to strike the balance between his long-standing, precious, but shallow identity as a respectable British gentleman officer and his decision to act (in his view) generously in the Republican cause. He was also, to a significant extent, personally economically exposed by involvement.<sup>146</sup> By publication, Gustavus Hippisley had fostered several antagonisms with former subordinates, financial backers, and the British press. The exchange that heavily influenced the tone and focus of the *Narrative* took place between the erstwhile Colonel and the agent for the Venezuelan Republic in London, Luis Lopez Mendez. The point of dispute centred around the extent of promises made to Hippisley by Mendez concerning remuneration once he reached South America, for the raising and equipping of the regiment. It seems that whatever the truth of their agreements, Hippisley took a lot on trust, and was subsequently very public about this foolish and naïve position, both in confronting Bolívar and writing about it, endeavouring to have Mendez arrested and charged on return to London, carrying the argument in the papers, and then devoting hundreds of pages to the dispute in his book.<sup>147</sup>

The opportunity for subtle ridicule in reviewing the *Narrative* was inevitably taken up. As I noted earlier, Hippisley seems to have held a high public opinion of his own merits and

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<sup>145</sup> P. Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism*, pp. 4-9.

<sup>146</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 4-12.

<sup>147</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 299-300, 431-432, 439-453, 514-522, 595-600, 624-628, 633-637, 647-643.

authority; he was continually dissatisfied by the treatment he felt that he received from others. He consistently demonstrated his dual agenda of upholding his own character and airing his grievances fully throughout the account itself, showing a tendency to easy offence. By publishing his correspondence with Bolívar's representative in London covering perceived slights, absent payments and un-bestowed honours or credit, Hippisley managed to reinforce the impression of a touchy and self-important man. His expectation of fellow-feeling and sympathetic indignation at his perceived injustices further revealed his keen sense of self as a figure of his national heritage; he was making a stand for the respect he felt was due *as* an Englishman, a Gentleman, a British Officer, a figure of standing in landed society, an associate of unnamed powerful individuals of state, and the figure of authority that encompassed all of these measures of a man.<sup>148</sup> The responses of critics to his *Narrative*, following his own retorts to Mendez' public complaints, were therefore revealing of Hippisley's project of self-justification in action.

Hippisley went to extremes to defend his position. The appendix to *A Narrative* stretched to 124 pages out of 653. His avowed reasons for publishing were to respond to detractors – real, such as the Venezuelan agent, and imaginary in his perceptions of misinformed public opinion.<sup>149</sup> Oddly, for someone whose finances were so involved, he voluntarily paid to have his book published by John Murray, indulging in an initial run of 1500 copies. He had sold 827 of those by April 1819, but there were 100 left unsold according to the publisher's records in 1822.<sup>150</sup> The appendix included public exchanges with Mendez towards the end, but was

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<sup>148</sup> For an account of the construction of the English gentleman by the late eighteenth century, including through knowledge, manners, and ambitions, see J.D. Solinger, *Becoming the Gentleman: British Literature and the Invention of Modern Masculinity, 1660–1815* (New York, 2012), pp. 12-39, 66-89.

<sup>149</sup> G. Hippisley, Appendix, *Narrative*, pp. 529-653.

<sup>150</sup> MS 42725/6 Hippisley account ledger, John Murray Archive, National Library of Scotland.

preceded by supporting evidence that the author presumably thought was in his favour, in the form of friendly and respectful letters from subordinates, as well as sterner, more formal correspondence from Simón Bolívar. The author's pompous official letter to Bolívar runs to thirteen pages of demands and barely veiled threats if they were not met, in reaction to the defection of his own officers from his regiment and non-payment of claims on Mendez' original agreements.<sup>151</sup> It could only have been thought reasonable by a somewhat deluded and aggrieved individual, both at writing and then publication. He also included the initial agreement to raise the regiment and a list of the officers who sailed with him from England. The effect of this exhaustive body of material on the reader, following the untiring detail of the narrative itself, might be best described by *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*: 'the gallant Colonel Hippius keeps so constantly before our sight in one attitude of distress after another, that our feelings of sympathy are so worn out that we wish either he or ourselves had never been born'.<sup>152</sup> The reviewer maintained this tone of sneering ridicule between long passages from the book, lamenting the absence of an engraving of the regimental button, and mocking the celebratory tone the author took in reporting the ball in Angostura amidst his frequent complaints. The stung pride and financial woes of the author had led him to an extraordinarily indulgent public self-defence and invited the reputation that led to Lord Byron's alleged use of *A Narrative* as a soporific.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Item No. 18. (Page 429.) 'Copy of Letter to the Supreme Chief of the Venezuelan [sic.] Army,' Angostura, 8th June 1818, G. Hippius, Appendix, *Narrative*, pp. 591-604.

<sup>152</sup> Review of 'A Narrative', September 1819, in W. Blackwood, Ed. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (Edinburgh, 1919), p. 701.

<sup>153</sup> James Hamilton Browne alleged that Lord Byron, travelling by sea from Leghorn to Cephalonia in 1823, had a copy brought to the table at dinner due to its effects as a 'soporific' that 'surpassed any usual narcotic' and allowed him a 'comfortable siesta'. J.H. Browne, 'Voyage from Leghorn to Cephalonia with Lord Byron, and a narrative of a visit, in 1823, to the seat of war in Greece', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol 35, January to June 1834, p. 58.

Thomas Bowdich might have been expected to feel less secure in his personal authority, as a younger man, and one no longer employed by the time his book was on sale. Contemporaries may even have thought it imprudent to enter into a public row with powerful institutions and prominent individuals for those reasons. However, although it was apparent that Hippisley was far more insecure than he would actually openly admit to, Bowdich's public counter-offensives do suggest a young man bolstered by a heartfelt personal arrogance and a sense of grievance that comes across as far less affected than the Colonel's. Bowdich also went on the offensive, attempting to justify his actions in the face of public criticism and ridicule. In going to the effort of publishing rebuttals in the form of polemical pamphlets addressing his former employers, his critics, and their accusations, Bowdich sought to add to a reputation in print that he seemed convinced he had earned with *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*.

The first of these, *The African Committee*, was published in 1819 and aimed directly at his former employers.<sup>154</sup> From the very start, Bowdich directly assailed the judgement and intentions of the Committee. Given that he had, without doubt, usurped the leader of the mission and stridently justified this in print, he evidently thought that the best strategy in the court of public discourse was to attack. Taking the form familiar to any reader of *Mission*, the author presented reproduced correspondence and reports to construct the narrative he wanted to put forward, between passages in his own words. He collated a range of conciliatory and legitimating statements approving of his actions in taking control of the mission, as well as the prevarication and dishonesty he perceived in the Company's treatment of his initial application and employment, and then his following appointments.<sup>155</sup> Sir Joseph Banks' brief

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<sup>154</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *The African Committee* (London, 1819), title page.

<sup>155</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *The African Committee* (London, 1819), pp. 1-4, 8-9.

letter in praise of his manuscript was included. Bowdich protested, in conclusion, that he could not believe he was to be ‘punished for being the first who has had the good fortune to succeed and to establish a British consulship in that hitherto ill-fated and impenetrable continent’, before closing with quotes from a glowing review of *Mission*, published in *The British Critic*, that listed his “‘talents, energy, perseverance, and prudence’”. Bowdich’s argument against the accusations that he overstepped his authority, did wrong by his superior in Kumasi, and concluded an inadequate treaty, were fixed on formal proofs of good faith, exhaustive reproduction of correspondence used to justify decisions, and a carefully selected positive statement by a reviewer. He was naively convinced that overwhelming evidence would work in his favour, against criticisms that would, in reality, be quickly forgotten when the next partisan spat emerged in the reviews.

In highlighting the praise he had received, Bowdich did not address any criticism of his version of events in other publications. However, the remarks of the reviewer in the *Quarterly Review* prompted him to leap publicly to his own defence once again the following year and this time it was in direct response to the most personally critical article.<sup>156</sup> Direct public rebuttals of reviews and critiques in periodicals had become common by the early 1820s. The University of Colorado’s *Romantic Circles* project lists ten examples just for the *Quarterly Review* in 1820 alone.<sup>157</sup> According to John Murray III’s records, the article in the *Review* was probably written by Sir John Barrow, who was certainly not afraid to pen a provocative, insulting review, or to

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<sup>156</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *A Reply to the Quarterly Review* (Paris, 1820).

<sup>157</sup> ‘Bibliography of Contemporary Responses to the Quarterly Review: Published 1809-25’, in P. Youngquist, O.N.C. Wang, eds. *Romantic Circles: A refereed scholarly Website devoted to the study of Romantic-period literature and culture*, [https://romantic-circles.org/reference/qr/features/contemporary\\_responses.html](https://romantic-circles.org/reference/qr/features/contemporary_responses.html) accessed 23 November 2020.

instigate confrontations with authors with whom he shared a publisher, like Bowdich.<sup>158</sup> The tone of the review was set from the first paragraph; speculating satirically on the Asantehene's response to Bowdich's 'bulky volume', it predicts that 'like his black brother of Dahomey did to Governor Abson', he would say that 'white men make books about black men, whose customs they do not understand, and put in them a great number of very silly stories'. Despite this dismissiveness, which persisted throughout, the article with extracts stretched to twenty-nine pages.<sup>159</sup> The author made repeated disparaging remarks, mainly about Bowdich's literary imprecision and arrogance, but the crux of this character-assassination was his usurpation of Mr James. Misquoting *Henry V* to emphasise the low opinion held of Bowdich's assumed authority, the reviewer used terms including 'conspiracy', 'contempt and disobedience', and explicitly claimed that the junior officers got away with this because of Bowdich's family connection 'to the Governor in Chief'. In contrast to this, quotes from Commodore Sir James Yeo were used to put James' character beyond reproach.<sup>160</sup> It was very unlikely that Bowdich would not respond to such sneering condemnation.

He did so from Paris in 1820. Running to 110 pages, *A Reply to the Quarterly Review* consisted of an outpouring of self-righteous indignation and a barrage of quotations from favourable reviews. These included the *Monthly Review*, *The British Critic*, and *The Edinburgh Review*, which celebrated 'the light which the very diligent and laborious enquiries of Mr Bowdich have

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<sup>158</sup> He had low opinions of explorers he was responsible for at the Admiralty too, including John Ross, George Francis Lyons, and Hugh Clapperton. See C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 93-94, 124-127.

<sup>159</sup> J. Barrow, 'Art. I – Bowdich's Mission to Ashantee', January 1820, *The Quarterly Review*, vol XXII, November and March (London, 1820), pp. 273-302.

<sup>160</sup> J. Barrow, 'Art. I – Bowdich's Mission to Ashantee', January 1820, *The Quarterly Review*, vol XXII, November and March (London, 1820), pp. 277-279.

thrown upon the geography of Africa'.<sup>161</sup> Bowdich proceeded to answer some of the insulting accusations with endorsements from peers in Paris including von Humboldt, then accused the 'Geographer of the *Quarterly Review*' of pursuing him 'with spite and falsehood', seeking to 'slander' his character. He attempted to comprehensively recover that character and his authority as successful negotiator with the Asantehene with defences of the qualifications and actions of himself, Hutchison, and Tedlie. Hutchison had been replaced by Dupuis, then landed in an impossible position at Dixcove, and Tedlie had recently died – insults to their good characters were ungentlemanly and ill-informed. Lengthy reproductions of private correspondence follow, reproducing Bowdich's preferred literary approach to constructing credibility and aimed at proving James' poor conduct in negotiations, contrasted with public testimonies to his own achievements in securing the maligned treaty. He raised a few doubts about the necessity of Joseph Dupuis' current mission, before listing further examples of praise and congratulations for *Mission*, a repeat of the ringing endorsements of his character and abilities from von Humboldt, Rennell, Banks and others, and finally more hearty romantic praise of his comrades.<sup>162</sup> Bowdich's substantial rebuttal of the review seems calculated to maximise justification and approbation of the characters of everyone involved who had been criticised, while it also implied that Bowdich's position was the stronger for every one of his famed associations.

Actions of aggressive self-defence in the forum of public discourse were, in this period, fairly frequent activities for authors of travel accounts. Joseph Dupuis entered into discussions of his conduct and attempted to assert his authority in the matter of war with Asante in 1824

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<sup>161</sup> Review of *Mission From Cape Coast to Ashantee*, The Edinburgh Review, January 1820, quoted in T.E. Bowdich, *A Reply to the Quarterly Review* (Paris, 1820), p. 5.

<sup>162</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *A Reply to the Quarterly Review* (Paris, 1820), pp. 74-110.

and 1825, although recent diplomatic efforts seemed irrelevant once MacCarthy had been killed and British troops defeated.<sup>163</sup> William Hutton corresponded with the press at the time, a reassertion of authority on the subject of Asante that might also have seemed dated when his assurances of MacCarthy's safety as a prisoner of the Asantehene were firmly disproven.<sup>164</sup> Ricketts' *Narrative* itself was, like Hippiisley's, something of a deliberate attempt to tell his side of a contentious story, while Robinson and Brown contributed roughly the same 'public message' not to enlist for the Patriot cause that Hippiisley endorsed (when not preoccupied with his own frustrations). None of them engaged with their public attackers with such deliberate, focused, overwhelming vehemence as Hippiisely and Bowdich, though. While the Colonel's entire book was geared towards his self-defence and a riposte to his critics, Bowdich rapidly followed the bloated but ambitious narrative and history with two polemical pamphlets which did the direct work of addressing his enemies in the networked society of British letters and politics.

## Conclusion

Such efforts to engage with contentious facets of British public discourse were an extension of the constructed sense of self the agent or adventurer sought to publicly establish, which was itself inherently dependent on their encultured and enacted British National-Imperial

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<sup>163</sup> 'The Gold Coast and The Ashantees', *The Morning Chronicle*, 4 May 1824.

<sup>164</sup> 'British Troops,' *The Morning Post*, 4 May 1824.

identity and worldview. They were British because that was how they defined themselves abroad, and then in print, but also because that was what British public discourse demanded that they be if they were to have a chance at being successful authors. That national identity was also imperial because of the projected confidence and affected certainty of superiority over the subjects of their encounters, another expectation they had to meet as contributors to British National-Imperial public knowledge.<sup>165</sup> In order to successfully or even just acceptably engage with this forum of knowledge exchange, they had to integrate everything they knew and everything they encountered within the context of their National-Imperial identities – an Imperial gaze translated to cultural capital for a marketplace of ideas that had to meet with the expectations of that market.

Successful in their subsequent careers or not, these authors' journeys into print as travel writers demonstrate early nineteenth century aspirational upper-middle-class official careering, within a context of British National-Imperial enculturation. The consistencies of that process of enculturation, including recently invented yet strongly reinforced notions of national identity and belonging, demonstrated a consistency of influence on individuals across two to three generations, despite age differences and dissimilarities in career background, experience, and credentials as traveller, adventurer, agent or author. Across two theatres, one within the purview of British control and one just beyond formal influence, those who served British institutions and those who enlisted in those of different nations and cultures all demonstrated a self-conscious but ingrained belief in a superior Britishness, with the concurrent right to observe and claim authority for having observed. Whether the need to officially acquiesce in debates about Britain's Imperial ambitions would make a fundamental

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<sup>165</sup> N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, pp. 4-7.

difference to individuals' negotiation of these worldviews, or whether the freedom of service in the institutions of another nation might free those travellers from the 'Imperial gaze' of their counterparts in British service, is a question I will now explore. This will involve a close analysis of the geographical, ethnographical, and literary constructs of the authors' experiences.



## Chapter 2

### Narrative Geographies: Environment, Romanticism, Reason and Knowledge

From the panoptical and authoritative vantage point of such imperial landscapes, the world symbolically unfurls itself. In this way, visual ordering and exhibiting of the world is inseparable from a colonial and imperial imagination in which an informed, rational and enlightened Western observer gazes upon an Other simultaneously defined as exotic, irrational and so in need of ordering.

John Wylie, *Landscape* (London, 2006).

By the 1810s intellectual fashions from Romanticism and the Enlightenment were embedded in the minds of a generation of travel writers. These authors drew on the rational trend towards measuring, categorising, and knowing even as they attempted to meet expectations regarding aesthetics of foreign landscape, flora, and fauna. They also attempted to reconcile the exotic and the familiar. Often, the bridge between these demands was the centrality of the exotic. Charles Withers locates this, for the Enlightenment, in a 'geographical consciousness derived from Europe's view of itself in relation to the exotic Otherness of the so-called New-World'.<sup>1</sup> Studies of the English Romantic poets have made the exotic central to the development of a Romantic aesthetic of difference too. Saree Makdisi notes how Byron elided the glaring distinctions between Scottish Highlanders and Albanians because their primary appeal lay in their 'sheer difference from the standard of emerging European modernity'.<sup>2</sup> Both of these cultures were uniquely rooted in place yet represent general

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<sup>1</sup> C. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment* (Chicago, 2007), pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> S. Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 130-132.

understandings of exotic difference. The exotic familiarity of the Highlander made the Albanian knowable, while the Albanian represented a gateway to the Orient. Similarly interwoven representations of other people rooted in place were useful as signifiers of difference for the authors I study here, such as the 'Indians' glimpsed in the alien environment of the Orinoco delta.

The dissemination of a series of connected intellectual trends adjusted the character of this exoticisation. Peter Mason draws on Ian Netton's typology of the other as alien, as threat, exotic temptation, or field of study, along with Suzanne Pucci's Romantic internal other, to outline the shift from externalised exoticisms of Enlightenment thought to an early nineteenth century 'absorption of Oriental narratives' into scholarship.<sup>3</sup> Synthesising these elements, we can observe inconsistencies in their transitions, and conflicts between familiarity and difference caused by blurring of boundaries between time and place, as demonstrated in the confusion of cultural influences on constructions of landscape, place and environment in the writings of the authors I examine here. The exotic becomes a moveable feast which can be placed far away, rather than in the past, or can equally be displaced in the present by the pre-eminence of the familiar, by progress and Western civilised practices.<sup>4</sup> Roy Porter connects this to contradictory debates around rationalisation and idealisation of Oriental stagnation or the uncivilised savage – failure to move to agriculture justified taking land from indigenous nomadic people in North America, yet by the 1790s slavery was decried as a denial of the

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<sup>3</sup> P. Mason, 'Exoticism in the Enlightenment', *Anthropos*, Bd. 86, H. 1/3 (1991), pp. 167-174. I. Netton, 'The Mysteries of Islam', and S. Pucci, 'The Discrete Charms of the Exotic', in G.S. Rousseau, R. Porter, Eds. *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 36-42.

<sup>4</sup> P. Mason, 'Exoticism in the Enlightenment', pp. 167-174.

'rational nature' of enslaved people.<sup>5</sup> Powerful discursive influences of current affairs, including anti-slavery, 'legitimate' trade, colonial governance, and domestic political reform were also influential. The process of taming the exotic and familiarising difference, or failing in these endeavours, became common within imperial relationships of knowledge exchange. Arguments could be explicit, like those of leading anti-slavery campaigners like Thomas Clarkson, but were also explored allegorically – Samuel Taylor Coleridge on slavery, or Leigh Hunt and *The Examiner* on political criticism.<sup>6</sup> In the broad sense of the behavioural definition I have outlined in my introduction, this is an imperial process. It is what Said calls, in *Orientalism*, 'a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony'.<sup>7</sup> It is based on inequality in the power of representation, revealed in close readings of my selection of published narratives.

This chapter will address aspects of the human other *as* landscape and environment, while the subsequent chapter will deal in more detail with human geographies, along with other disciplinary categories of useful knowledge. While non-European people frequently embodied exotic difference, were romanticised, and thus familiarised in travel writing, it was through a categorical familiarisation of the form and function of landscape and environment that authors 'tamed' the places they travelled through. People of the 'periphery' were, in any case, very often features of those 'untamed' landscapes, or were absent altogether. They could be

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<sup>5</sup> R. Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, digital edition (London, 2001), pp. 409-420.

<sup>6</sup> For Coleridge's sophisticated uses of representation in anti-slavery rhetoric, see P. Kitson, "'Bales of Living Anguish": Representations of Race and the Slave in Romantic Writing', *ELH*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (Summer, 2000), pp. 515-537. In *The Examiner*, the explicit and the allegorical were often bound together; see M. Eberle-Sinatra, *Leigh Hunt and the London Literary Scene: a reception history of his major works, 1805-1828* (London, 2005), pp. 43-46, 56, 82.

<sup>7</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 2003), p. 5.

peripheral, ornamental, indistinct, or even integrated elements of the flora and fauna.<sup>8</sup> This was already an established aspect of British literary views on rural landscapes – Beth Fowkes Tobin notes that Alexander Pope’s georgic landscape was ‘nearly devoid of the depiction of the labourer’s toil’.<sup>9</sup> At home, people and their rural labour were generally naturalised, often idealised, and very frequently absented. Where a local population was perceived as exotic and uncivilised, their presence or even their recent absence became a question of their blending into the wild environment around them. Both Joseph Dupuis in the Gold Coast, and many of the travellers up the Orinoco, observed this in their accounts when they pointed to the primitivity of settlements recently abandoned, or the speed with which forest or marsh reclaimed recently occupied and cultivated land.<sup>10</sup>

The travel writing genre during this period was already expected to blend exotic difference, acquisition of knowledge, the aesthetics of landscape and environment, and an empirical, rational understanding of these factors together, with von Humboldt as the exemplar and Park as the British trailblazer of observation and adventure together. Von Humboldt and Park both suffered in the environments they passed through, and both claimed lessons learned from that suffering in their accounts of their travels.<sup>11</sup> The consequence of writing about these experiences at colonial peripheries was an often self-consciously proud attitude of imperial superiority – of culture, judgement, identity, and purpose. It allowed for Park to be the exposed and vulnerable civilised figure lost in ‘savage’ lands, and for a domestic readership to

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<sup>8</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 64-65, 124-125. G. Alù and S.P. Hill, ‘The Travelling Eye: reading the visual in travel narratives’, *Studies in Travel Writing*, 22:1 (2018), pp. 1-15.

<sup>9</sup> B.F. Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters* (Philadelphia, 2005), p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 9-10. G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 225-228. J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 63-65, 76-77.

<sup>11</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 65, 125. T. Fulford, D. Lee, ‘Mental Travelers: Joseph Banks, Mungo Park, and the Romantic Imagination’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 24:2 (2002), pp. 117-137.

view, with a distinctively male gaze, the exotic 'other' as an environment in need of civilising, including the people, while making the observers of this imagined geography of the periphery into the agents of this required process of improvement. This objective superiority, with its possessive masculine gaze, had to be blended with several contradictory elements to satisfy the conventions and expectations of works of travel writing.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, modesty, plain truthfulness, and the establishment of authority are all genre conventions that these authors aspired to. In their engagement with the geographies of their travels and adventures, there were several further conventions of narrative and empirical observation. When engaging with landscape and environment on the periphery, it was first necessary to dramatise the experience of arrival, of going into a new place and encountering an alien or exotic environment. Wherever the familiar could be found in this first contact, it was to be integrated for the comfort and self-assurance of the readers. In the broad context of 'exploration, colonialism and imperialism', John Wylie says that 'the very visual structure of conventional landscape art has the effect of subduing strangeness, of making the faraway and the topographically alien familiar to European eyes.' This familiarisation process can also be found in textual descriptions of landscape on the periphery, at first encounter.<sup>12</sup> Arrival was followed by a related convention, travelling through. Entering the Orinoco delta signified arrival in Spanish South America; threading the delta's waterways and the walls of mangrove moved the travellers into this second stage. Finally, departures demonstrated familiarity and understanding of the foreign and exotic, carrying acquired knowledge and aesthetic experience onward or home. They drew conclusions, as well as

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<sup>12</sup> J. Wylie, *Landscape* (London, 2006), p. 132.

distancing the other from the metropole in authors' and readers' minds.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the actor-author came home, or failed to; both could serve an important narrative function, leaving the hybridising experience of encounters behind, or carrying it to the parent society in all its essentialised colonial potential. Coming home raised anxieties of identity while also offering a projection of confident imperial expansionism onto the regions of travellers' encounters.<sup>14</sup> Where an author did not make it home, but their account did, this meant unfinished business.

Arrivals could be repeated and recontextualised; the South American mercenaries penetrated the Orinoco delta, landed in Angostura, and departed upstream to turn up the Apure – from wilderness to city to wilderness.<sup>15</sup> Arrival at Cape Coast Castle was not generally seen as exotic. Departure from the aegis of the fort further normalised the coastal settlement and exoticised Fante country; arriving in the forest heightened this. The Asante border, then Kumasi, repositioned departure and arrival again. These successive restatements of arrival, newness of observation and anxieties of difference characterise all the accounts as, to some degree, journeys into the unknown or unknowable. Accounts of 'travelling through' use intervening spaces between key sites to comment further on the 'potential' of place, absence of 'civilisation', or danger.<sup>16</sup> In my examples, they also allowed the narrator to focus on details of moving through an unfamiliar landscape, a very male taking of ownership of both the material encounter with place, flora and fauna, and of testing their own resolve.<sup>17</sup> These

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<sup>13</sup> As a more distinctly human exchange in these accounts, this will be addressed further in Chapter 3.

<sup>14</sup> R. Young, *Colonial Desire: hybridity in theory, culture and race* (London, 1994), pp. 4. C. Festino, 'Hybridity and travel writing in English: the grand tour and the imperial frontier', *Letras & Letras*, 26:2 (2010), pp. 325-343.

<sup>15</sup> See, in particular, G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 230-241, 345-362.

<sup>16</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 146-152, 170-195.

<sup>17</sup> W. Beinart, 'Men, Science, Travel and Nature in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century Cape', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24:4 (1998), pp. 775-799.

stages might incorporate attrition and determination into the experience, making strong moral cases for the personae of authors and companions, including their vulnerability.<sup>18</sup>

Whether the environment travelled through was 'empty', underdeveloped, or poorly developed, or whether it was dangerous and endurable or dangerous and overwhelming, it was foreign and exotic as well as imbued with scientific or material value to travellers, readers, and their imperial culture. This could be through forms of welcome, integration, indifference or antagonism, using objectifying ethnographic and geographic observations.<sup>19</sup> Departures and returns signified a break with the safety or danger of any given destination or environment. They tended to mix a fostered sense of familiarity with the prevailing narrative of difference that both claims some ownership of the subjects they have come to know and keeps them at a suitable racial and cultural arm's length from their observers.<sup>20</sup> Arrival within the narrative was then also situated alongside the ultimate arrival of the narrative, in published form, anticipating confrontation or hospitality (often both), without knowing how they will play out.<sup>21</sup> The characteristics of the return to the centre, to 'come home' and to publish, however, were also shaped by the 'philosophical justification of the moral and physical risks of distant travel'.<sup>22</sup> Getting arrivals, departures and journeys into the unknown correct, then, was a requirement that involved meeting expectations in the account in order

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<sup>18</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, p. 99. M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 78, 85. For the importance of identifying personae as distinct from authors and narrators, see B. Korte, *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages To Postcolonial Explorations* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 11-13.

<sup>19</sup> M.L. Pratt, 'Fieldwork in Common Places', in J. Clifford and G.E. Marcus, Eds. *Writing Culture: the poetics and politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, 1992), pp. 27-49.

<sup>20</sup> C. Festino, 'Hybridity and travel writing in English: the grand tour and the imperial frontier', *Letras & Letras*, 26:2 (2010), pp. 325-343.

<sup>21</sup> S. Clark, 'Arrival', in C. Forsdick, Z. Kinsley, K. Walchester, eds. *Keywords for Travel Writing Studies: A critical glossary* (London, 2019), pp. 16-18.

<sup>22</sup> N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: 'From an Antique Land'* (Oxford, 2002) p. 22.

to live up to them in the arena of public discourse and demonstrating the required British National-Imperial worldview.

### **Coastal Encounters: Entering the ‘mighty Orinoco’**

The mouth of the Orinoco river presented the first-time observer with an extraordinary set of sights, sounds, and new sensory experiences to engage with. It was a first continental landfall for European volunteers in the Patriot forces and a first encounter with subtropical South America. Responses engaged with the unusual geographical layout of the delta, evoked romantic visions of landscapes, and described flora and fauna in terms of their strangeness. Any description or evaluation was viewed from a water-borne perspective, significant to how newcomers engaged with the landscape and its contents. The variable impact on perspective and effect on the gaze of the traveller of the Delta Amacuro’s hundreds of river mouths and waterways prevented a definitive account of arrival.

There was a preconception of the region as exotic, abundant and dangerous. Margaret Ewalt describes Joseph Gumilla’s ‘textual painting’ of the delta in his *El Orinoco Ilustrado* of 1744 as a place of exotic profusion and fascination, connecting intellectual trends of European curiosity and wonder with imperialistic cultures of ‘acquisition and possession’ that would characterise later writings.<sup>23</sup> Alexander von Humboldt consciously avoided judgements and

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<sup>23</sup> M.R. Ewalt, *Peripheral Wonders: Nature, Knowledge and the Enlightenment in the Eighteenth Century Orinoco* (Lewisburg, 2008), pp. 37-38.

recommendations concerning ownership and control of this environment across his writings on the 1799-1804 expedition. He did, however, set precedents for encounters with the Orinoco, both as ambivalent hybrid of the cruel and brutal human-mediated ecosystem, and with an impressionistic Romantic view of the whole where the human figures were transitory.<sup>24</sup> The popularity of von Humboldt's works ensured this conflict in the imagination of subsequent visitors, while the 'bursting' Cabinet of Curiosities as a metaphor for the basin's environment was established by first Gumilla's and then von Humboldt's liberal use of it.<sup>25</sup> The region was prefigured in well-distributed literature as an alien place, filled with underutilised natural riches, tainted by human mismanagement.

There was another influence on the extraordinarily similar descriptions of journeys upriver for Angostura in 1817-1818. Agendas for establishing the authors' own characters and principles foregrounded certain interpretive views including awe or wonder, but also pragmatic assessment of entrances, courses, and environmental threats. Gustavus Hippiisley, arriving at the mouth of the Orinoco with the remnants of the first expedition, implied his empirical mastery over terrain. He confidently cited his knowledge of the delta's geography, commenting with assumed authority on the 'soft black oozy ground on the larboard side', and the 'hard ground' across the channel where the 'water deepens and shoals continually thereon'.<sup>26</sup> He gave no credit to his acquisition of this knowledge, but imparted a distinct 'I-told-you-so' message characteristic of the author's inflated sense of personal authority and

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<sup>24</sup> L. Walls, S.T. Jackson, M.W. Person, 'Introduction: Reclaiming Concilience', in A. von Humboldt, *Views of Nature* (Kindle Edition) (Chicago, 2014), Loc. 170-205.

<sup>25</sup> M.R. Ewalt, 'The Legacy of Joseph Gumilla's *Orinoco Enlightened*', in M.A. Bernier, C. Donato, H. Lusebrink, Eds. *Jesuit Accounts of the Colonial Americas: Textualities, Intellectual Disputes, Intercultural Transfer* (Toronto, 2014), P. 357. N. Safier, *Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Science and South America* (Chicago, 2008), pp. 57-58.

<sup>26</sup> G. Hippiisley, *Narrative*, p. 220.

wisdom. The water at the bar had a 'light brackish taste', so Hippisely 'attempted to reason with the people on the impropriety, nay, certain danger, of taking too copious draughts of this liquid,' but was roundly ignored. He was soon vindicated; 'their stomachs became filled by those incessant potions, and nausea and vomiting succeeded, most fortunately for their constitution.'<sup>27</sup> In the review of the *Narrative in Blackwood's*, this incident was elevated to the level of permanent damage to the expedition, leaving the few men who made it to Venezuela 'feeble and dispirited' before they even arrived.<sup>28</sup> The first encounter with the environment of mainland South America was constructed as definitively damaging by Hippisely, who rose knowledgably above its consequences.

John Robinson, by contrast, had no fear of the water; he 'drank "to liberty and independence"' with no after-effects. Other features were to bear far heavier on the negative tone of his experience. Fear of place came from the threat of concealment of 'wild Indians' and shadowy Spaniards, such as those who 'massacred' Colonel Macdonald.<sup>29</sup> It is notable that Robinson's mention of this incident was based on rumour and lacked detail, given its use to invoke the threat of place. Richard Vowell eventually provided details of Macdonald's end at the hands of a 'gang of robbers', demystifying it.<sup>30</sup> The river was dangerous because of what it could hide. The danger set a precedent for the violence of place and climate and the mastery that authors could gain from knowledge. The overt, 'treacherous', violent threat posed by the river was outlined by Hippisley through the real physical jeopardy of the man overboard, who

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pp. 220-223.

<sup>28</sup> Anon, 'A Narrative of the Expedition to the rivers Orinoco and Apure in South America', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, April to September 1818 (Edinburgh, 1819), p. 703.

<sup>29</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, p. 53.

<sup>30</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 48-50.

‘possessed strong resolution’ but was forced to swim against the current. Captain Hill’s fear of alligators injected some urgency. None were seen, but the horror posed by a potential encounter with such exotically atavistic creatures needed no embellishment. The familiarity of its uncanny, otherworldly monstrosity brings the peril of the colonial frontier alive.<sup>31</sup> It would also return later in the account, while the alligator served similar purposes in other narratives, especially in William Hutton’s.

Having asserted the value of practical knowledge and its application along with the violent threat of environment, Hippisley assessed his surroundings more aesthetically, turning his gaze from narrator of events to observer of landscape with the necessary fixed perspective. The lower reaches of the Orinoco were ‘beautiful; from the margin of the water, as far as the low land permits you to survey the shores, on either side is one immense forest; as is, indeed, the whole extent of the land from the first moment it appears in view’, while the river ‘forms so many branches... and so many islands wooded, that it is a difficult matter... to keep its course...’.<sup>32</sup> Exotic danger was also aesthetic threat, through the ‘immense forest’, and filled with mystery through the labyrinthine elaboration of river channels. From arrival, Hippisley made the place inherently wild, dangerous, and unsettling, established knowable elements and asserted his self-consciously imperial authority in relation to it. He demonstrated the potential to master this place through reason, caution, and control.<sup>33</sup> Mysterious threats of

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<sup>31</sup> For the legacies of the alligator as symbol of the ‘colonial uncanny’, see R. Giblett, *Landscapes of Nature and Culture* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 17-26.

<sup>32</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, p. 224.

<sup>33</sup> J. Wylie, *Landscape* (London, 2006), pp. 134-136.

'other' lands and their knowableness were recognisable tropes to intended readers, resonating broadly enough to be found in the writings of his contemporaries.

Robinson also entered Venezuela through 'one of the mouths of the Orinoco', enough to impress him with an 'idea of the grandeur of this mighty river'.<sup>34</sup> The banality of the dense riverbanks preoccupied him, mirroring the awe shown by Hippisley at the 'thick and impenetrable foliage of immense height which crowded every inch of both sides of the river', and the physical trial of warping the ship through the channel.<sup>35</sup> Another typical representation of the exotic foreign shore, he saw an opaque, crowding, overbearing landscape which demanded great exertion for Europeans to surmount or circumvent. Vitality, though, it was conquerable, and available for transformation from a state of '[unimaginable] wilderness into a cultural landscape' that can be understood and controlled, as Herman Wittenberg concludes of later accounts of the sublime in colonial Africa.<sup>36</sup> Robinson did not claim that he was the man to do so, but the impression was made that this wild place *could* be tamed.

Publishing in 1822, Robinson had time to consider his predecessors' impressions before transferring the authority of direct experience into the printed book. Charles Brown followed sooner on the heels of Hippisley in transit and print, passing him in the delta on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1818.<sup>37</sup> Brown's impression of the South American mainland evoked the same encultured sense of perspective as Hippisley and Robinson. He 'observed immense forests of mangrove and other

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<sup>34</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, p. 53.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>36</sup> H. Wittenberg, *The Sublime, Imperialism and the African Landscape* (PhD, University of the Western Cape, 2004), p. 108.

<sup>37</sup> G. Hippiisley, *Narrative*, p. 483. C. Brown, *Narrative*, p. 51.

trees, extending as far as the eye can reach in every direction, with their roots sunk at a great depth below the surface of the water.’ He was astonished to be told that this was not, in fact ‘Terra Firma’, and that they were still ‘some leagues from any land’.<sup>38</sup> Disturbing exoticism was pushed to the fore with the rhetorical effect of the tension caused by the familiar (solid dry land and vegetation) turning out to be strange, unfamiliar and threatening (the submerged mangrove environment). In an encultured, subconscious way, he drew on tropes of disruption and subversion within European ‘Male Gothic’ literature during the ‘Age of Revolution’, where the revolutionary threatened patriarchal cultures.<sup>39</sup> Describing the mangroves as an environment suspended between land and sea, both impenetrable and strangely unrooted, the authors constructed the uncertain coastal landscapes as atopic spaces – unassimilated geographies with no obvious human value, but a test of character to behold and penetrate. An encultured imperial perspective defined such environments as barriers to probing beyond the periphery.<sup>40</sup> Brown explored the mysterious environmental threat further through the anxiety of the vessel’s captain to avoid Spanish naval patrols and hostile raiding parties in the estuarine channels, the violent threat of the river, the sinister power of its currents, and the rumour of malignant creatures in the water. Brown’s man overboard was not as fortunate as Hippisley’s. A determined fisherman, attempting to feed the passengers before a storm, was washed overboard, marked only by his floating pocketbook, assumed to have been pulled under by a large fish and become ‘prey to one of those alligators with which the Orinoco

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<sup>38</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>39</sup> A. Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 56, 172. These tropes were prevalent in later novels of South American travel and migration. See R.T. Schmidt, ‘Difference and Subversion: Gothic Migrations in Nineteenth-Century Latin American Novels’, in J.D. Edwards and S. Guardini, Eds. *Tropical Gothic in Literature and Culture: The Americas* (London, 2016), p. 221.

<sup>40</sup> For a detailed discussion of atopias from a British colonial perspective, see S. Carroll, *An Empire of Air and Water: Uncolonizable space in the British imagination, 1750-1850* (Philadelphia, 2015), pp. 6-11.

abounds, and which are always waiting to seize upon any incautious being who may venture to bathe in the river.' The victim of the river, of course, had 'gained the esteem' of all on their voyage.<sup>41</sup>

Richard Vowell had the benefit of over a decade to reflect on this experience.<sup>42</sup> He noted the low-lying Guyanese shoreline approaching the river mouth, and its remarkable 'sameness', as well as the multitude of river entrances. To invoke the visionary sense of reaching their intended landfall, Vowell wrote that 'nothing but the tops of the tall trees, by which the land is covered, are visible on the horizon, apparently floating in the air; being seen through the medium of an atmosphere charged with watery vapours, raised, by the excessive heat of the climate, from a humid soil.'<sup>43</sup> He noted with surprise that 'the Indians themselves, who inhabit the woods in the neighbourhood, are frequently bewildered among the intricate creeks', enhancing the sense of unknowable strangeness, while also moving the primitive behaviours of those bewildered natives out of time. Vowell found the main river channel 'strikingly beautiful', a 'magnificent moving panorama' flanked with 'impervious forests of majestic trees'.<sup>44</sup> This striking effect of the landscape made a lasting impression, while both the maturing of his memories and greater love for South America from Vowell's longer and more satisfying adventure enhanced the depth of romantic allusion in his writing. The sense of a

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<sup>41</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 53-54. The 'man overboard' was clearly an important symbol of maritime jeopardy and manly assertion to, for example, Frederick Marryat, in the early nineteenth century. See P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, pp. 48-52.

<sup>42</sup> He had travelled via Florida and Grenada in a bizarre turn of weather induced events which saw his party narrowly missing Sir Gregor McGregor. R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 28-35.

<sup>43</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

timelessness that his descriptions imply has a long history in relation to Africa and South America in the British imagination, communicated through landscape and its inhabitants.<sup>45</sup>

In each of the three contemporaneous accounts, the same associations were presented in closely related terms; the labyrinthine nature of the river mouths, threat of hidden enemies in the landscape, immense and impenetrable shoreline and riverbank vegetation, and the enigmatic latent threat of indiscriminate violence posed by the water and the frequently unobserved creatures in it. The later memoir plays further on the other-worldly impression of this strange coast. Still on the river, the Venezuelan authors had already engaged with many of the tropes of an impenetrable and malevolent landscape and environment, demanding great effort to conquer and subdue, concealing exotic encounters and tribulations. These were core imaginaries of the European conception of the untamed periphery, associated with contemporary and later nineteenth century British imaginaries of Africa. Legitimising the processes of conquering, colonising, and ordering was a key stage in the imagining of masculine European Imperial identities in relation to the 'untamed', 'wilderness', 'savage', and 'uncivilised'.<sup>46</sup> These interpretations of experience were alive with foreknowledge. Brown acknowledged this, while Robinson had ample time to consider the similar experiences of his contemporaries as well as the reception of their printed accounts. Vowell had much longer to reflect. Considering the first geographical and aesthetical impressions of observers in West Africa may be expected to reveal similar preconceptions, or even reflexively stronger

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<sup>45</sup> N. Whitehead, 'South America / Amazonia: the forest of marvels', in P. Hulme, T. Youngs, Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 122-138.

<sup>46</sup> S. Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (London, 1997), pp. 53-55. P. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British ideas and action, 1780-1850* (London, 1965), pp. 56-87. J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 268-273. N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, p. 292.

constructions of Africa as 'other' due to established geographical associations. This was likely to be stronger in the sphere of official British interest, while allusions to the knowable and tameable, and connections to a National-Imperial superiority of perspective, were certainly brought to bear.

### **The Gold Coast: Established bridgehead and point of departure**

Arrivals in the West African accounts differed in their circumstances, agenda, and landscape, not at an open but mysterious entrance to the continent. Instead, this coastline had established meanings for British travellers, including an historical knowledge from the slave trade that was no longer appropriate to recognize in British public discourse. The coast was imbued with value and marked with footholds by centuries of slave transactions. This was strongly implied through the ways in which it was recognised by visitors, but without explicit attention from these authors. Lip-service to abolition was expected by the late 1810s, but tarring Britain as a recent slave trading nation was certainly not in fashion, even while economic entanglement continued, profits accrued from ongoing regional associations, and slavery itself continued under British colonial rule.<sup>47</sup>

This prior knowledge required a greater degree of artifice in our actor-authors in constructing an experience of arrival. The geographical threats perceived at landfall on the Orinoco were

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<sup>47</sup> M. Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the slave trade since 1807* (London, 2007), pp. 23-24, 109-110.

latent and mysterious but at Cape Coast they were immediate and practical; the former had labyrinthine waterways, impenetrable vegetation, and the unseen current, while the latter had a dangerous beach landing followed by the hospitality of merchant society at Cape Coast Castle.<sup>48</sup> The unsuitability of Cape Coast as a port was key to debates between ‘Africanus’ and ‘Investigator’ in *The Times* in 1820, while a definitive assessment of the danger of the ‘surf’ and the risks of beach landings was presented by Captain George Collier in his annual report as Commodore of the West Africa Squadron in 1819. Collier found all the existing British holdings on the Gold Coast to be inadequate long-term ports, although Accra did have a reef that could support a breakwater. His evidence was taken up in the debates about the relative values of Sierra Leone or the Gold Coast as a British colony and base; Cape Coast’s unsuitability as a port was highlighted again in the Select Committee Report of 1842.<sup>49</sup>

While the South American mercenaries tracked their troubled courses through the Caribbean in variable detail, expressing clear separation of geographical character between their island-to-island prequels and momentous continental landfall, journeying down the western coasts of Africa was inhabited with a sense of continuity through generalised character traits already associated with the imagined continent. William Hutton sailed on a coastal route to Cape Coast Castle in December 1816.<sup>50</sup> He arrived in Africa at Gorée, which he paid little geographical attention to, although his stay was characterised by a frightening storm that demonstrated the inherent violence of African climate. He was keen to establish his

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<sup>48</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 40-43.

<sup>49</sup> Copy of letter from Cmdr. Sir G. Collier to J.W. Croker, 8 September 1819, in *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, Volume 12* (printed to order, 1820), pp 319-326. Africanus, in *The Times*, 12 January 1820. Investigator, in *The Times*, 22 January 1820. Africanus, ‘To the Editor of The Times – Letter II’, *The Times*, 3 February 1820.

<sup>50</sup> They had been ‘driven with the greatest of velocity under bare poles’ south from the Isles de Los, now part of Guinea, just off the coast of Conakry. W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 31.

credentials as a surveyor of British opportunity. Gorée itself was admired for its functional location, while the Isles de Los were 'healthy and pleasantly situated', and on his journey south-east past Sierra Leone, Hutton concisely assessed the 'kingdom' of Cape Mount and its capital Couseea.<sup>51</sup> This coastline with several navigable river mouths was ideally situated between Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, with 'industrious and harmless' people in a 'country eminently calculated to produce abundance of cotton, rice, and other articles of trade.' Hutton considered it 'an essential advantage to Great Britain to have a small establishment here.'<sup>52</sup> To the east of Cape Mount, Settra Croo received Hutton's careful assessment as well; the people were 'remarkably industrious, and are well known to Europeans', making this too an ideal location for a 'new colony', or a point of access for 'composing a force to march into the interior'.<sup>53</sup> This was direct and opportunistic encouragement to colonisation. Hutton saw clearly through coloniser's eyes, with opportunity, expansion and British impunity taken for granted as admirable principles. He cited G.A. Robertson's *Notes on Africa*, making further cases for the establishment of British coastal colonies at Cape Palmas or Cape Lahou, and to call for the acquisition of the Dutch fort of Axim.<sup>54</sup> Robinson's wider regional detail and opinions on colonial activity clearly influenced Hutton; both claimed authority of long

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<sup>51</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 30. Six weeks at Sierra Leone excited little comment, comparably, to the days or even hours spent in the vicinity of subsequent stopping points. Further, the official capacity in which Hutton returned north to the Isles de Los from Freetown before continuing on his way to the Gold Coast is not laid out in the narrative, despite the authority it could have conferred on his role and presence. It may have undermined his stated agenda to discuss at length a place of British influence that he did not see any potential in.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 36-40.

'residence'.<sup>55</sup> The coast and immediate hinterland, to African Company officer William Hutton, embodied purpose and potential for colonial expansion, all in the name of but by no means limited by objectives of trade and discovery.<sup>56</sup>

Hutton's account avoids characterising Africa as dark, mysterious, and threatening; the coast is not impenetrable to him. He did meet expectations on the violent threat of the African land and environment in other ways, encapsulated by an anecdote from Dixcove, on the British Gold Coast – 'a fort superior to the generality of our outforts'.<sup>57</sup> Having earlier observed the coastal 'natives'' lack of fear of sharks, this evocative tale of physical jeopardy contains a crocodile. The closeness of the human inhabitants at Dixcove to the environment in which dangerous animals live is highlighted: 'They worship the crocodile, and any person going ashore here, may see one of these animals at the expense of a fowl and a bottle of liquor, which is given to the fetish man', Tando Cudjoe. There is a subtle implication that Cudjoe may be more worshipful of the commercial opportunity presented by the credulous traveller. Hutton describes a ritualistic rather than pragmatic method in using 'a white fowl', the colour 'the natives have most faith in', and a call by the priest, to tempt the beast out of the water. The sacrificial bird escaped so the crocodile chased Hutton and Captain Leavens instead, 'so closely for a short distance, that had not a small dog been behind me, which it laid hold of, and was thus satisfied, the animal would, in another minute, most probably have taken a fancy

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<sup>55</sup> G.A. Robertson, *Notes on Africa: Particularly Those Parts which are Situated Between Cape Verd and The River Congo : Containing Sketches of the Geographical Situations, the Manners and Customs, the Trade, Commerce, and Manufactures, and the Government and Policy of the Various Nations in this Extensive Tract : Also a View of Their Capabilities for the Reception of Civilization, with Hints for the Melioration of the Whole African Population* (London, 1819).

<sup>56</sup> J.P. Rubiés, 'Travel Writing and Ethnography', in P. Hulme, T. Youngs, Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 251-252.

<sup>57</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 40-41.

to one of my legs!<sup>58</sup> On the narrow path, hemmed in by the ‘thick underwood’ on both sides, Hutton and Leavens struggled to make a hasty escape. The violence of the ‘wild’ crocodile was enhanced by an impenetrable characteristic in the landscape, while the threat was posed by the environment toward the traveller. Hutton himself was able to dismiss danger with levity.

There was no drama in arrival at Cape Coast, just cool and careful geographical observations about borders with Wassa, but Hutton noted the improved amenities and defences within the castle, credited to the incumbent governor. Although hospitality was cordially extended, beyond a subscription library and billiard table the enclave and town were ‘barren of amusements’. The town consisted of ‘irregular’ and ‘huddled’ mud huts, like Elmina, but civilising improvements were visible in stone cottages for officers and merchants. The ‘parade ground’ could be improved, and objections of the town’s inhabitants to removal of the ‘fetish tree’ that stood in the way were of no consequence to Hutton, ‘when the natives have so many other places to worship their wooden gods’.<sup>59</sup> Again, Hutton saw potential in the landscape despite the local populace. Improvement through cultivation again featured high on the list of priorities, and the vegetable gardens beyond the town – for the benefit of officers and merchants rather than the general (Fante) population – drew Hutton’s praise. Like his earlier observations he saw a landscape in the process of improvement, through human effort, with cultivation and civilisation at the core of this process, the development itself ongoing, driven by the better intentions and best interests of the British presence. This echoes those arguments in the British press on the relative salubrity of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast. The belief held by some that ‘improvement’ of land use, cultivation and local amenities would

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, pp. 41-42.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, pp. 58-59.

reduce the climatic disease of the West African coast was put forward.<sup>60</sup> For Hutton, this theme was nurtured throughout in positive predatory terms. An alternative contemporary view, to the same end, expressed by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and other prominent contributors to British public discourse, was that Africa was characterised by fertility 'overwhelmed by waste'; this constructs the indigenous communities as inherently inadequate neglectful custodians, undeserving of this fecundity and unwilling to properly tame it.<sup>61</sup> Hutton saw it rather as an as yet unimproved potentiality, and the locals were part of that rather than at fault for neglect.

For Thomas Bowdich, neither his sea voyage nor arrival at Cape Coast Castle play any role in the narrative part of his exhaustive book. His journey began at Cape Coast, where he was already employed before being appointed to the Kumasi Mission. Tales of arrival were confined to the very human spectacle of his entry into Asante, and Kumasi itself. His intention to appear intellectually complete, objective, and authoritative throughout his account and empirical analysis was pushed to the fore. Attempts at emoting a romantic response to the landscape and environment, or a further process of mystification and exoticisation of place, were of less importance than intellectual legitimacy. Geography was dealt with systematically, for the gentleman expert, with confidence in personal observations expected to stand up against the close scrutiny of other experienced men of exploration, as well as 'armchair geographers' who contributed at least as much of value to the theory and analysis of

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<sup>60</sup> For a report on the mortality at Sierra Leone, see Anon, 'Sierra Leone Gazettes...' *The Times*, 8 December 1818. As an example in the debates on the relative merits of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast for settlement with freed slaves and development under British control, see 'Africanus', 'TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES - LETTER II', *The Times*, 3 February 1820. For reference to the subsequent committee investigations, see P. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The health of European Troops in the conquest of Africa* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 14-16.

<sup>61</sup> T. Fulford, D. Lee, 'Mental Travelers: Joseph Banks, Mungo Park, and the Romantic Imagination', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 24:2 (2002), pp. 117-137.

geographical knowledge.<sup>62</sup> Bowdich tried to accommodate both factions, at odds with each other over such great geographical mysteries of the day as the source and termination of the Niger river. For areas beyond his personal experience, he employed accounts of others extensively to construct a comprehensive account imbued with the authority of intellectual rigour favoured by domestic geographical readers.<sup>63</sup> The reader must reach Part II's section on 'Geography' (in the purest cartographical sense), before Bowdich turned to the environs of Cape Coast Castle, and chose to '...seek the best descriptive authorities, in aid of the observations which have been made by the Commissioners and others, for the maritime geography' of the region.<sup>64</sup> What follows is a catalogue of the known geographical features from west to east along the coast between Assinee (Assinie-Mafia, Cote d'Ivoire) and Lagos, with occasional but inconsistent acknowledgement of sources. The coast was not a place of beginnings or arrivals and evoked no impression of mystery or first encounters. It did however provide a richer measurable area for authority to be claimed than the author's composited observations and measurements inland. The coast was measured in miles, positions by accepted methods of observation. Authorities called on and compared were European and their techniques established. By contrast, his interior distances and features were measured in 'journeys' and positions were fixed by speculative methods, at best directly made by Muslim merchant travellers. Acknowledgement of their authority was grudging while less respect was accorded to any 'native' anecdotal evidence. Whatever was lost in translation was not admitted to but blame for shortcomings was due to the questionable character of Muslim traders, or the illiterate anecdotes of the 'heathen'. Bowdich bought into a hierarchy of

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<sup>62</sup> D. Lambert, "'Taken captive by the mystery of the Great River": towards an historical geography of British geography and Atlantic slavery', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 35 (2009), pp. 44–65.

<sup>63</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 167, 176, 214.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p. 214.

authority for his sources, placing anything he worked out or observed for himself at the top and disregarding information by local people as childish or primitive. He had the imperial arrogance to insist that he was right.<sup>65</sup>

Dupuis did not begrudge his Muslim sources. During his diplomatic service at Mogador he acquired knowledge of the trans-Saharan trade networks, mastered Arabic and learned about the social and economic practices of Saharan merchants. His sense of diplomatic authority was expressed from the point of his encounter with the coast before arrival at Cape Coast. While Dupuis also composed a geographical survey of the region in his Part II, this was not the only engagement with the coast that held such evocative importance to contemporary readers, and which Bowdich had not narrated. The observations in Dupuis' Part II are framed by explicit criticisms of Bowdich's composite geographical essay, continuing debates around authority and accuracy that his predecessor was so keen to engage.<sup>66</sup> This debate extended to discussions made in reviews and extractions in the periodical press, characterised as we saw in the previous chapter by reviewers' relative assessments of Bowdich's authority versus Dupuis'.<sup>67</sup> The early stages of Part I, the narrative of Dupuis' journey and the mission itself, included some account of his sea voyage and coastal cruises in the region for the benefit of his fragile health. The physiological threat blended mystery and the self-knowledge of personal weakness for the foreign traveller. The inexorable danger of climate and tribulation

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, pp. 215-224.

<sup>66</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, Part II, pp. I-LXXV.

<sup>67</sup> See Chapter 1 on authority, justification and legitimacy in the narratives and reviews; the imperial nature of this relationship of knowledge depends on such authority and legitimacy, and an author's own justification of their observations and judgements related directly to the extent of that authority.

of consequent disease was closely aligned with the character of place and environment. It was particularly pertinent for Dupuis.

### **Coastal Climate and Sickness**

If there is a unifying theme in the early stages of Dupuis' *Journal* it is of delay, sometimes inevitable and sometimes engineered by Company antagonists at Cape Coast Castle. Postponed arrivals and departures lend a character to the landscape in which they played out, reflective of some recognisable tropes used by the Venezuelan arrivals. Dupuis was 'detained in England about nine months' following his appointment in February 1818, arriving at Cape Coast Castle nearly a year later in January 1819.<sup>68</sup> This is all the space Dupuis gives to his journey and initial arrival, but his period of coming to terms with life on the Gold Coast is drawn out by the creeping spectre of disease. Although his health was initially 'unimpaired by the effect of climate, while many sunk under the influence of tropical diseases', something he credited to deliberate 'exposure to the air by night as well as day, and by others to the 'seven or eight years of "seasoning"' he had undergone in Mauritania (a theory Dupuis does not endorse), the advent of the 'periodical rains' saw him 'instantly assailed with a fever, which for severity or duration, was of the most dangerous character'. This lasted two months, followed by a 'convalescence...under symptoms of extreme debility' which drove him to retirement in the nearby country, where the 'season of fogs, mists and exhalations' caused a

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<sup>68</sup> Dupuis, *Journal*, introduction, pp. iii-v.

relapse 'under the malignant influence of the period'.<sup>69</sup> The climate, it seemed, undertook a sustained campaign against his health.

A 'change of air' was now the only hope of regaining strength to continue the mission, and Dupuis embarked aboard HMS *Pheasant* for a coastal cruise.<sup>70</sup> The character of land, atmosphere, and climate is again one of danger, and through malevolent weather the *Pheasant's* crew were pursued by death along the coast. Dupuis' personal encounter with the African coastline became a delay, during which he was assailed by the 'climate' and driven back to sea for survival. Prevailing weather conditions were prominently associated with the sickness of Dupuis and the crew: 'the rains chased from the coast to the bight of Benin... and for five ensuing weeks the strides of death among the crew were considerable'. Transferring to HM brig *Snapper* to return to Cape Coast, he arrived in late November 'little improved in health'. However, a week after the end of the rainy season, Dupuis' 'disorder wholly subsided'.

The inherent menace of life-threatening illness in the coastal regions of West Africa was an established characteristic central to the ongoing contentious debate around British colonial presence at Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast throughout the 1820s.<sup>71</sup> While Dupuis made little of the quantitative effect of vulnerability to illness and death, many contemporaries manipulated statistics and individual sufferings. The public debate carried out in the pages of *The Times* in 1820, while Government worked to dissolve the Company and take control of the Gold Coast, was conducted through letters to the Editor using counter-arguments and critiques. The pseudonyms 'Africanus' and 'Investigator' were used, with further

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. vi.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, pp. v-vii.

<sup>71</sup> P. Curtin, *The Image of Africa, British ideas and action, 1780-1850* (London, 1965), pp. 161-163.

contributions by 'J.M.H.' in support of Africanus, and by 'A Lover of Truth'.<sup>72</sup> Africanus, if it was the same individual, had previously corresponded on the 'horrors of the slave trade' as it continued near Sierra Leone in 1818, and took an adamant position in defence of maintaining that colony under British rule and continuing the Royal Navy's activities against slavers.<sup>73</sup> Investigator favoured moving the base of that campaign, regional British government, private and state investment, to the Gold Coast. Whether Sierra Leone was the 'grave of Europeans' as he declared, or whether in Cape Coast it was 'scarcely possible to imagine a more degrading, disgusting, and revolting spectacle,' as Africanus countered, formed the heart of their debate.<sup>74</sup> Both detailed the option they wished to condemn in terms of its insalubrity, inexorable threat to health and life of Europeans stationed there, and limitations of geography and environment on future development. Anecdotal and deeply self-interested descriptions by Captain Collier, Sir James Yeo (Collier's predecessor), the African Committee of the African Company, other merchants and visitors, were utilised to highlight benefits or shortcomings of each respectively, while variable figures on rates of sickness and death were invoked.<sup>75</sup>

This inherent threat to European travellers was well established in public discourse on the region and British involvement there. It belonged to recognisable tropes on the African environment found in many contemporary representations which continued to the end of the century, renewed by the impact of tropical diseases on a succession of European incursions and establishments.<sup>76</sup> The putatively empirical domestic discussion of the inherently

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<sup>72</sup> See *The Times*, various, 4 January 1820 to 19 August 1820.

<sup>73</sup> 'Slave Trade - (From the Sierra Leone Royal Gazette)', *The Times*, 18 September 1818.

<sup>74</sup> Investigator, 'Sierra Leone - TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES. LETTER III.' *The Times*, 22 January 1820. Africanus, 'TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES - LETTER II', *The Times*, 3 February 1820.

<sup>75</sup> This is covered in various 'Today in Parliament' articles, *The Times*, 1818-1820.

<sup>76</sup> P. Curtin, *Disease and Empire* (London, 1998), pp. 68, 79, 87.

dangerous African environment continued through the 1820s. James Macqueen, characterised as an ‘armchair geographer’ by David Lambert, made a vociferous case against both of those primary bridgeheads to the region in his open letter to *Blackwood’s* in 1827, combining the arguments of both sides of the Freetown versus Cape Coast Castle debate.<sup>77</sup> Macqueen collated nearly a decade of regular reports in the dailies on mortality rates of both colonies to make his case against ongoing British commitment to ‘that fatal and worthless coast’ and its garrison with good British officers and merchants, exhorting Under-Secretary of State Mr R.W. Hay (and the *Blackwood’s* readership) to ‘look at this appalling list, and let the boldest champion of pestilence and death say what advantage either this nation or Africa reap from this horrid waste of human life!’<sup>78</sup> Landscape and environment were inexorably hostile, people and place as one were ‘savage’, and the ‘benefits’ were indefensible in the face of such waste of European life. It is interesting to note that Macqueen, keen extrapolator and synthesiser of the observations of others (as his accuracy in theorising the source of the Niger showed), was able to take a position which may have appeared at odds with his generally imperialistic worldview, although as a fully invested advocate of the continuation of plantation slavery in the Caribbean, the balance of his own interests might be clear.<sup>79</sup>

The imagined barrier of coast and climate to projected wealth and healthier conditions in the African interior was prominent in the minds of British domestic authorities, prevalent in the press, and of serious practical consideration to the African Association, African Company, and

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<sup>77</sup> D. Lambert, ‘Taken captive by the mystery of the Great River’: towards an historical geography of British geography and Atlantic slavery’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol.35 (No.1), (2009), pp. 44-65.

<sup>78</sup> J. Macqueen, ‘Civilization of Africa – Sierra Leone,’ in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 21, Issue 123, March (Edinburgh, 1827), pp. 315-329.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 315-329.

Sierra Leone government.<sup>80</sup> Concerns were for exploration, trade, governance, and settlement, respectively. Those organisations were either in the position of shaping opinion on investing greater resources in the region, or the subject of critique within broader public discourse on British involvement. ‘Climate’, disease, and extraordinary death rates of non-native groups from Freetown to Lagos predominated.<sup>81</sup> According to Charles Withers, intellectual antecedents can be traced to Montesquieu’s connection of climate with cultural and physiological development, rooted in associations between climate, health and disease embedded in classical thought. By the early nineteenth century, these concerns were reflected in their association with place and race at the point of encounter. Withers notes intellectual disputes of this interpretation in the eighteenth century but the permeation of the association through broader European intellectual culture seems to have made it a generally accepted concept.<sup>82</sup> It could resonate with a broad domestic readership and proved an affecting personal experience for Dupuis. He was encultured with this sense of physiological danger, and his experiences joined many others in firmly entrenching this within British imperial imaginaries of the West African frontier. Floating around the fringes of the region trying to keep disease at bay locates that threat. Subsequent journeys through the territory where the dangers lie would then be used to justify discourses on colonial cultivation, ‘improvement’ and ‘civilisation’ of the wilderness that formed a substantial aspect of British travel writers’ imperial gaze.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See coverage in *The Times*, *The Morning Chronicle*, and the associated regional imprints of the latter, 1818-1826.

<sup>81</sup> P. Curtin, *Disease and Empire*, pp. 14-16.

<sup>82</sup> C. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*, pp. 140-148.

<sup>83</sup> D. Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, pp. 160-161.

### **Climate, Flora and Fauna: Danger and disease through the terrain**

After the delays of illness and political manoeuvrings at Cape Coast Castle, but still recuperating from further bouts of 'fever', Dupuis finally departed for Kumasi on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1820.<sup>84</sup> It took a quarter of a mile before the disruptiveness of the untamed landscape impinged his progress. He was 'compelled to alight' from his palanquin by 'rugged cliffs' which 'overhung the water and 'created serious impediments'. Dupuis' description attempts technical accuracy alongside efforts to evoke the fixed gaze of the observer that is comparable to Hippiely and Robinsons' encounters with the Orinoco. He covered the changing geology of the terrain, including pinnacles 'chiselled by the hand of art into the fanciful forms it exhibited', then 'jutting cliffs' and tall precipices, 'ramparts of stone shooting upwards into ridges little short of perpendicular elevation' that had to be climbed 'with hands and feet'.<sup>85</sup> Here Dupuis provided early warning that this terrain was, beyond the immediate confines of Cape Coast, untamed and challenging without the cultivation necessary to accommodate the British gentleman. He incorporated architectural imagery familiar to his readership, alongside terms that suggest a technical eye in the observer's gaze. This suggests a confident expression of authority through knowledge, while also performing the act of 'hybridization' that turned his encounter with this landscape into a representation of this contact zone.<sup>86</sup> Dupuis brought himself back into the scene, made the experience a fundamentally physical one, and spoke to his own implied character as a refined thinking man and skilled diplomat (frustrated by those of lesser talents around him) who was determined to commit physically to the success of his

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<sup>84</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>85</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 7-9. J. Wylie, *Landscape*, pp. 134-138.

mission, even under the stresses of his illness and rehabilitation. Finding himself in a 'helpless state', his attendants were 'compelled to lift [Dupuis] over the obstructions as they occurred' – there is no sense of irony in his subsequent complaint about a dispute between his Fante 'carriers' over the 'distribution of equal loads'.<sup>87</sup> An impression of underdevelopment pervades much of the author's assessments of local engagement with the landscape, taming of it, and maintenance of such 'main routes' as this path. Inadequacy of paths was a failing ascribed here to the local populace, even on the coast and long within the purview of the European trade posts.

Comfort, convenience, journey times, and access beyond the coast had, in Dupuis' case, influenced his sense that the terrain was unsafe, untamed, and therefore a direct threat to the traveller. For William Hutton, the need to civilise and cultivate this landscape was explicitly stated as he described the same early stretches of the journey in very different terms. Not so preoccupied with his health and discomfort, Hutton enjoyed the hammock ride by the coast and thought one section of the path excellent. However, he took the opportunity to report on the underdeveloped condition of the area, formerly under Dutch influence. This was Hutton's opportunity to forward his conviction that 'cultivation and civilisation' had to go hand in hand, that the Crown's assumption of the Company's outposts on the Gold Coast was an ideal opportunity, and that 'no country is better provided for by nature' than (west) 'Africa'.<sup>88</sup> For Hutton, more the modern administrator in his narrative than the genteel authority Dupuis shaped for himself, everything else needed to be provided for by a superior civilisation – he called for British '*farmers, mechanics, and labourers*' (his emphasis) in order to teach the

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<sup>87</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>88</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 145-152.

natives the correct ways to maximise potential, as ‘missionaries alone will never succeed in civilising Africa’.<sup>89</sup> This theme is developed throughout. The persona that Dupuis projected belonged more to that turn-of-the-century cultural swirl of Enlightenment and Romanticism, and he occupied the sentimental role of passive responder to circumstances that Pratt identified in Park’s persona – the ‘victim-hero’, ‘un-hero’, or distinctly Romantic protagonist.<sup>90</sup> His deputy, by contrast, prefigured the colonialist science and order rhetoric of Victorian expansionists, and their anxieties of mismanagement or neglect. These remained real issues to, for example, Joseph Lugard, a century later.<sup>91</sup> Hutton comes across as an unapologetic opportunist, yet he qualified this with a justification on principle, by calling for a prototype of later ‘civilising missions’ that needed more than missionaries or merchants.

The degree to which each of our authors saw opportunities for themselves in the regions they travelled through seems closely linked to general perceptions of opportunity for civilisation, improvement, or advancement they observed. The positions of the ‘culturally superior’ observer in this respect, as well as ongoing tensions between the exotic and familiar, encultured British gaze, and frontier of imperial knowledge, are focused through allusive material and emotional reactions to alien flora and fauna. Plants, animals, and insects presented the traveller at the imperial periphery with something both materially tangible and entirely other on which to pin anxieties, fears, empirical authority, and masculinity. According to Fulford and Lee, for both Park and male poets whose work was influenced by his adventures, Africa was constructed as a ‘place of power... through which hidden depths in the

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, pp. 148-150.

<sup>90</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 78-79, 87.

<sup>91</sup> H. Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory* (Chicago, 2011), p. 70.

self could be imagined'.<sup>92</sup> The trend for observations on natural history or geology in the travel account, and the pull of market expectation for danger, jeopardy, and those 'depths of the self' in the actor-author, were strong motivations for travellers to confront exotic nature with wonder and hybridised familiarity. The amateur or non-specialist might not have the technical skills or instrumentation for more detailed scientific observations but could make the kind of contribution readers demanded with careful notes and a sketchbook, situated within a personal, affected description of an encounter.<sup>93</sup> Struggle against nature began to assist elision of colonised cultures and facilitate adventure-tales of travel writing already expected in the 1820s and standardised by the end of the century. It pitted default expectations of the masculine western colonial gaze against feminine subjects of nature at the loci of the colonised, or places adjudged as requiring colonisation.<sup>94</sup>

Some authors had little inclination to make their male traveller persona 'at home' in the places through which they travelled. Like Dupuis in relation to climate and sickness, some were keener to point out that the exotic environment was entirely unsuited. Dr Robinson became preoccupied with his discomfort. First encountering the people of the Orinoco, he noted that the 'Guaraunos' were painted red all over, which gave them 'a singular appearance', but was also useful in preventing 'bites of insect vermin, of which there are millions'.<sup>95</sup> This gives little clue as to how fixated the doctor would soon be on the painful and infuriating effects of abundant subtropical invertebrate life. Two days later he received a rude awakening: 'I was

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<sup>92</sup> T Fulford, D. Lee, 'Mental Travelers: Joseph Banks, Mungo Park, and the Romantic Imagination', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 24:2, pp. 117-137.

<sup>93</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, p. 96.

<sup>94</sup> L. Wright, *"Wilderness into Civilized Shapes": Reading the Postcolonial Environment* (Athens, 2010), pp. 7-8.

<sup>95</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, p. 56.

roused from sleep by the biting of a sort of clumsy black or rather very dark green flies... it was the occupation of the day to keep these insects from resting on one or other part of the body, by which I was kept in a sort of torture.<sup>96</sup> Robinson evoked a vivid sense of physical horror at the interminable experience of being assailed by such 'hordes' of creatures, making the river journey intolerable. These 'monstrous tormentors' inflicted a night of 'biting, blistering, and intolerable itching', which was 'enough to make a man mad'. He intended to express the sinister and unknowable condition of the sub-tropical alien environment, declaring that 'on surveying these impenetrable forests, filled with every kind of vermin that can annoy the body or depress the heart of man', he had thought the 'misery any traveller' must 'have been exposed: yet we scarcely find him note these pregnant sources of distress as worth mentioning'.<sup>97</sup> He imagined the forest as a landscape of secret torture to non-native travellers. He was told the mosquitos favoured the 'European' over the blood of the 'Spaniards, Mulattoes, and Blacks', whom they 'spare' as 'their own countrymen'. Captain Brown also described the experience of dealing with the mosquitoes. 'Almost maddened with torture' by their attentions, he noted that 'the Indians were greatly amused' that the insects seemed to prefer the newcomers.<sup>98</sup> Robinson increasingly emphasised this sense of being an alien in a place that was hostile to him.<sup>99</sup> By the 4<sup>th</sup> September, though, even being 'stung almost to death by insects of every kind and of every loathsome shape' seemed almost commonplace and entering the main course of the river the following morning, which 'rolled on in a most majestic and truly beautiful manner', was 'worth all the troubles' he had been through so

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p. 57-58.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

<sup>98</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>99</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 65-66.

far.<sup>100</sup> He acknowledged openly what many men did not wish to admit, but he also survived the ordeal, which served a clear purpose. Alexander von Humboldt preceded him in this, addressing the relative ‘toxicity’ of the ‘black clouds’ of mosquitoes and other insects in the region, highlighting what Dettelbach has called the ‘peculiar animal economy of the naturalist-traveller’, or physiological vulnerability as well as rational durability of the scientific mind to such assault.<sup>101</sup>

Robinson seemed unable to contemplate how predecessors through the region and into print may have avoided such insectoid horror or found a way to bear their nightmarish attentions without becoming preoccupied with the memories when writing. Alexander von Humboldt was the archetypal traveller into the tropical regions of South America recognisable to Robinson. The great geographer and naturalist was the superstar of European intellectual achievement and his concepts of biological geography formed the existing impression of the region in the minds of successive generations of European travellers to Venezuela.<sup>102</sup> That von Humboldt’s work fused the empirical and rational analyses of Enlightenment proto-scientific disciplines with his encompassing, holistic, polymathic approach to exploration and discovery – a distinctly Romantic philosophy to underpin the science – is telling in the light of subsequent travel writers’ attempts to observe and conflate place, people, landscape, environment, nature, culture, and economy. Von Humboldt used his encounters with the mosquitoes of the river basin to experiment on the strength of the various species’ venom on himself.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 73.

<sup>101</sup> M. Dettelbach, ‘The Stimulations of Travel: Humboldt’s Physiological Construction of the Tropics’, in F. Driver and L. Martins, eds. *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire* (Chicago, 2005), pp. 46-49.

<sup>102</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>103</sup> M. Dettelbach, ‘The Stimulations of Travel: Humboldt’s Physiological Construction of the Tropics’, in F. Driver and L. Martins, eds. *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, pp. 47-48.

Robinson's purpose was never so clear to him despite his frequent allusions to scientific credentials. The difficulties of his experiences were not outweighed by immediate intellectual reward, even if as narrator of his travels he made the attempt to cover the diversity of observational subject matter that von Humboldt had made into an expectation for the genre. The complete picture of the environment through which Robinson moved upriver reflected the acceptance of ideas first Gumilla and then von Humboldt injected into the mainstream of intellectual thinking on South America.<sup>104</sup> For Robinson, invertebrate torturers and all other creatures were part of it, as were indigenous people. That night, 'the air was filled with the screaming of thousands of every kind of animals, which rendered the scene one of most perfect wildness,' while the Indian huts on shore and even in the 'morass' of the high water did not tell whether their inhabitants were 'wild or not', but certainly did imply to them that they belonged in and were a part of this landscape.<sup>105</sup> Creatures in the waters and along the banks of the Orinoco, such as 'serpents of all colours and sizes', were integrated into the image of the landscape, in this case swimming or 'twisted around the branches of the trees which hung over our head'. Others, including a rather unpleasant tasting seabird and a 'large red monkey', were indicative of both exoticism and poor material bounty offered by the fauna. Robinson's cataloguing of its wildness and its degrees of threat or alien difference added to the impression of an untamed country.

This sense of wonder and practical interest widely disseminated by the works and the fame of von Humboldt did not have an equal impact on all these writers. For Charles Brown, the rich and strange life of this environment had more immediate and rather irreverent appeal: 'we

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<sup>104</sup> M.R. Ewalt, *Peripheral Wonders*, pp. 178-180. L. Walls, S.T. Jackson, M.W. Person, 'Introduction: Reclaiming Concurrence', in A. Von Humboldt, *Views of Nature* (Kindle Edition).

<sup>105</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 64-65.

amused ourselves as we approached the trees, with which both sides are entirely covered, by shooting at the monkeys that were gambolling in the branches'.<sup>106</sup> The monkeys were not targeted reluctantly for a pragmatic purpose, but as an amusement to young men lacking an outlet for their energies. His description of these ill-fated creatures, possibly freed by a lack of real interest in exploring the 'character' of the country for his readership, is remarkably to the point. He described them as 'about two feet and a half high, of a deep red colour, with long tails, with which they suspend themselves from the extremities of the branches and drop down from an amazing height upon their prey' of 'large insects'.<sup>107</sup> This is a plain objectivity without the exotic wonder expressed in descriptions of the fauna by his contemporaries. Informative of the howler monkeys' behaviour, he also avoids imbuing it with any cultural meaning or engaging the creature as a metaphorical representation of strangeness or savagery. However, Brown did not connect the unfortunate howlers he took pleasure in shooting from the trees with the cacophony of noises he experienced that night. Their contribution to the terrifying sounds of the nocturnal delta was hard to reconcile with the small red anthropomorphic figures witnessed during the day, and only Vowell became aware of the connection.<sup>108</sup>

The delta night was portrayed as more disturbing still, with the frightening proximity of 'tigers' and alligators, revealed particularly with the roars of the former. That universal monster of exotic horror in the travel account, the crocodilian, returned to represent imminent danger, but it was the 'tiger of South America' that captured Brown's attention as exotic

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<sup>106</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p. 55.

<sup>108</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, p. 19.

representation of nature and place. These fierce inhabitants of a violent terrain were indicative of struggle in nature, a trope that would become prevalent in colonial writings later in the century. He acknowledged it was 'rather small' but was keen to characterise it as 'if possible more ferocious than the royal tiger', as it would, when starved, 'frequently attack the alligator when it meets it on shore'. The alligator's way of escaping was 'by making a precipitate retreat to its water abode with its antagonist, who having once fastened on its throat or belly (the only penetrable place), would not let go' and could be drowned.<sup>109</sup> In reality, the jaguar, often referred to as the 'South American tiger' throughout the nineteenth century, is significantly smaller than lions or tigers. Nevertheless, the label stuck in general usage as a signifier of the exotic danger of the region's creatures. Descriptions accompanied wild anecdotes in many subsequent publications.<sup>110</sup> Brown made no claim to having witnessed this himself but described it as a common occurrence. The danger was not limited to the war between apex predators though, the alligators 'frequently attacking' boats, particularly with only one 'Indian' aboard, 'observing a probable advantage' and mounting the vessel to tip its inhabitant into the water, wherein the 'poor Indian quickly meets a most horrible death in the voracious jaws that are open to receive him'. This was, by the terms of our author, an ever-present threat in the daily lives of the people who lived and worked on the river. The immediacy of the danger was then brought home again by Brown, who did not expect to 'pass a very agreeable night, from our momentary dread of being sprung upon by a tiger from the bank, or taken out of the boat on the other side by the alligator'.<sup>111</sup> This inexorable dread was an aspect of life on the Orinoco for Robinson too. It was 'by no means uncommon for these

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<sup>109</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 60-62.

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, J. Parish Robertson and W. Parish Robertson, *Letters on South America* (London, 1843), pp. 257-258, and Rev. W. Bingley, *Animal Biography, or, Popular Zoology* (London, 1820).

<sup>111</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 61-62.

monsters' to come close among bathers' on the outskirts of Angostura 'and carry one or more of them off'. He claimed to have seen a 'little female child carried off', bringing the terror right into domestic life in the city.<sup>112</sup> Such dangers, and the dread tension they engendered, became an emotional expression of the whole experience of travelling through this untamed dangerous place, while also forming part of an atmosphere of constant anxiety made ubiquitous to the lives of local residents of the river region.

Hippisley's experience upriver to Angostura was distinct from Robinson's in the relative lack of discomfort posed to him by the insects.<sup>113</sup> Instead, it was the geography of the river itself which contained the threat of their undoing as they encountered shifting sandbanks and shallows, ran aground several times, then faced the rising tide of the main channel of the river and several narrow rapids.<sup>114</sup> He attempted lengthier expositions upon the nature of the riverine flora and fauna as he travelled upstream with the army for the Apure and their first encounter with the enemy, presenting a recognisable, admirable, familiar landscape with 'noble views of hills, valleys, mountains, and forests' to the reader, while the dense woodland even gradually 'assumed more the appearance of timber', acceptable and much more 'useful' compared to the walls of foliage in the delta. This stately progress allowed the Colonel to observe creatures that caught his eye, with the confidence of the self-assured but entirely untrained observer. The 'feathered tribe' ranged from 'carrion crow to the grand vulture' (the former may have been a grackle, the latter the King Vulture or one of three other species) and included 'the black bustard, or country scavenger' (there are no bustards in the Americas)

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<sup>112</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, p. 87.

<sup>113</sup> Their numbers, even in the coastal tropical region of northern Venezuela, were probably significantly fewer in March, while Hippisley rank had the luxury of the *Tiger's* cabin in which to repose. G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 221-242.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p. 231.

which were 'as tame as barn-door fowls' and 'impudent, bold, and fearless' from having never been hunted. Wild waterfowl flew over in large numbers and 'all the parrot tribe din you with screeching their wonder at the approach of man'. The plumage of many of these 'is beyond description beautiful' – our author made little attempt to try, a likely disappointment to the armchair naturalist.<sup>115</sup> Stated with confidence but no accuracy of taxonomy or observable appearance, Hippiusley seems to have made no attempt to inform his ongoing list of avian wonders with either local names or established Linnaean nomenclature. Instead, the purpose of this passage was to invoke the clamouring abundance of life in an untamed region; the presence and effect of any local human population in informing the author or interacting with the fauna were absented.

The pseudo-objective but scientifically barren style continues and his subsequent cataloguing of the reptile, aquatic, and invertebrate life reflected important aspects of his character, as he was at pains to highlight. The Colonel did not intend to appear fearful of the 'land serpent' he met; his reasons for not pursuing this ten foot long 'monstrous reptile' (which would 'easily have taken between its jaws the head of a sheep') were a lack of firearms, otherwise he would have followed it into the bushes. It was not, he said in apparent contradiction of his preceding description, an example of the 'large serpent, or "boa constrictor", of which South American travellers give so marvellous an account'.<sup>116</sup> He seemed doubtful of this snake's existence; Hippiusley may have truly believed only what his own eyes had seen. He was certain of the danger posed by such invertebrates as the eight inch centipedes he had 'met with and destroyed', the 'other stinging and poisonous reptiles' that were 'all enemies to man', or the

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, pp. 346-348.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 349.

‘devil sticker’, which was ‘not unlike the large slug of England’. This last was brought into dwellings with firewood, prone to fall on its victims with its barbed fangs, the consequence of which was ‘dreadful’. The impression created by this superficial insectoid horror on those who encountered Hippisley’s oddly and banally sensational description is interesting. This passage can be found usually without credit to its author (who has himself rarely credited his own informants) in a variety of periodicals, miscellanies, natural history compendiums, and similar books over the next thirty years.<sup>117</sup> In this way, a seemingly less striking anecdote in the *Narrative* had an ongoing influence on the perception of South America by British readers of a variety of minor publications for some time after broader interest in the wider themes co-opted by Hippisley had waned. Even the least informed accounts by the most inexpert of observers can have a surprising afterlife and influence.

To Richard Vowell, the flora and fauna were a source of wonder, but they were not the same agents of inherent threat or purveyors of torture described by his predecessors. He had time to enrich his recollections and a more positive experience of his longer adventure. Exoticism was appealing in retrospect. ‘Impervious forests of majestic trees’ were held upright by the giant creeping *bejuco* plant, which in turn resembled the ‘huge water snakes that lurk in the swamps beneath’. Size was emphasised to strike the reader with an impression of awe. Other elements were stressed for abundance and lively character so that the landscape was teeming with life, rather than swarming with pain and torture or proving itself limited for subsistence. In contrast to Brown, he could name ‘the *arguato*, a large red monkey, always seen in herds, the young ones clinging to their mother’s shoulders’, a ‘mischievous’ and charming

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<sup>117</sup> See, for example, *The New Jerusalem Magazine* (London, 1827), p. 350. Anon, *The Wonders of the Universe, or Curiosities of Nature and Art* (Exeter, 1836), pp. 52-53. The latter was itself reprinted and extracted.

creature.<sup>118</sup> This monkey, the Guyanan Red Howler, was probably the same species shot by Brown for sport, and by Robinson in his hunger. For Vowell it encapsulated that kind of observable phenomenon that impressed and astounded, and that connected themes of natural history, ethnography, geography, and contemporary experience in a richly evoked personal anecdote. Vowell used this encounter to bring perspective to the experience of the foreign mercenaries in this environment; he was keenly aware of the perception of its exotic threat among his compatriots, noting that their 'howling, during the night, is much louder' than the size of the monkey would suggest, and 'may be easily fancied to proceed from panthers, or other large beasts of prey'. Looking back on the entire mercenary experience, he recalled that after leaving Angostura, some English deserters were 'so terrified by the noises made by these animals in the night, that they hailed the boats which had anchored out in the stream, and begged to be taken on board again, declaring that they were surrounded by tigers'. Vowell could see in his compatriots the kind of overwhelmingly negative experience of the landscape that his personal perspective did not contain.<sup>119</sup>

Vowell ascribed fear born of ignorance to the English mercenaries, rather than fear of the unknown and unknowable in the environment itself. His contemporaries in service and predecessors in publication carried preconceptions of 'other' places into their experiences bodily and explicitly. Vowell, as his awareness of the impact of place on his companions shows, was not apart from this encultured view, but he was intuitively more aware of its effects and managed to take a more than superficially objective view of those encounters he experienced and observed. This did not make him independent of the assumptions of an encultured,

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<sup>118</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, p. 19.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 19-20.

educated middle-class British traveller, as his depictions of racial character and social composition reveal more explicitly.<sup>120</sup> He did however describe a land more closely related to the curiosity and wonder of von Humboldt's worldview than Hippisley, Brown, or even the more self-reflecting Robinson attempted. Those who wrote about travelling inland through comparable environments from the Gold Coast applied those prescribed values, and incorporated their own declared agendas, still further in the names of their official roles and in relation to environment, flora and fauna, danger, and the compilation of knowledge within the character of place.

### **Danger and Jeopardy: animals and terrain in West Africa**

For Thomas Bowdich, his adventure into Asante presented a golden opportunity to fulfil an ambition. It was intended to form the basis of a philosophical reputation, centred on the perceived empirical value of direct experience, and to this end he included in *Mission to Ashantee* a substantial volume of observations across the fields of geography, regional history, law, social custom, cultural practice, and language. Many of these were aimed at a proto-ethnographic/anthropological overview of the societies he visited and various other polities in direct contact with Asante about which he was able to learn. These very human-centred sciences included a chapter on 'Materia Medica and Diseases', while the impression of rigour and accuracy was written into the geographical focus of much of the rest of Part II, but direct

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<sup>120</sup> See chapters 4 and 5.

and detailed engagement with the flora and fauna of the region is notable by its absence from the contents list.

It is possible that the absence of a chapter on taxonomical knowledge and observations collected on the mission may reveal a lack of confidence in this area, in an otherwise over-confident man, or a lack of interest or ambition in this area prior to 1820. Bowdich, while resident in Paris from 1820 until his return to Africa in 1823, became acquainted with the Cuviers and von Humboldt. He wrote *An Introduction to the Ornithology of Cuvier*, and wrote or contributed to other volumes, including his own *Elements of Conchology* and *An Analysis of the Natural Classifications of Mammalia for the use of Students and Travellers*. This volume was explicitly intended as a preparatory exercise before his return to West Africa in pursuit of career defining taxonomical field observations.<sup>121</sup> Bowdich's interest in this field came to the fore in the years after the publication of the *Mission*, maybe in response to the stimulating intellectual environment he enjoyed in Paris, as well as the likely scientific route of his next opportunity to travel. A further clue to the shift in direction, his wife Sarah shared his growing association with Cuvier, while her own published works were largely concerned with natural history and taxonomy, and her first credited work *Taxidermy* in 1820 was marketed for 'the use of museums and travellers'.<sup>122</sup>

In *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, however, the creatures encountered were observed in a manner closer to the incidental or anecdotal and used to construct the kinds of

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<sup>121</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *An Introduction to the Ornithology of Cuvier* (Paris, 1821). T.E. Bowdich, *An Analysis of the Natural Classifications of Mammalia, for the use of Students and Travellers* (Paris, 1821). T.E. Bowdich, *Elements of Conchology* and *An Analysis of the Natural Classifications of Mammalia for the use of Students and Travellers* (Paris, 1822), p. iii.

<sup>122</sup> S. Bowdich, *Taxidermy: or, The art of collecting, preparing, and mounting objects of natural history, for the use of museums and travellers* (London, 1820).

tropes concerning environments of difference that his contemporaries in South America drew on. Throughout the extensive account, mentions of flora and fauna are limited, brief, and of less interest to the author than the human geography of his journey to Kumasi, residence, and subsequent self-justification. They further the impression that the character of place, as well as culture of the people, were inherently foreign and uncivilised. In the exotic terrain of the forest, 'the fire-flies spangled the herbage' and excited both 'the apprehension of wild beasts, and the hope that we approached the resting place' they were headed for. People in their party were greatly afraid of the 'spirits of the woods' and rivalled each other in yelling to 'keep up their courage'; this row 'mingled with the howls and screeches of the forest' and 'imposed a degree of horror on this dismal scene'. The forest, the mostly unnamed creatures 'howling' within it, and the comparable racket of 'native' guides and porters, combined in a representation of place and inhabitants which implied primitive and superstitious relationships between an admittedly discomfiting and unknowable environment and the humans traversing it. In this case, though, the key difference is that absence of attempts to identify the denizens of that ecosystem; they were nameless yet immediate.<sup>123</sup>

The creatures of the return journey also remained an anonymous threat in the 'darkness of the forest', where the 'howlings and screechings of the wild beasts startled us as we groped our way'. Bowdich and Tedlie nevertheless made a habit of walking ahead of the main party and became stranded in the marshlands one night, attempting to make torches 'to keep off the beasts', losing their shoes in the 'continued bog' and being assailed by a 'violent tornado' which separated their group of four, leaving our author fortunately in the company of the only Asante in their accidental advanced party. As this man 'dragged' him 'through bogs and rivers,

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<sup>123</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 21.

exactly like an owl tied to a duck in a pond', the assault on the senses in the darkness included more 'howlings' and the crashing of a falling tree, until Bowdich reached exhaustion and rested in spite of himself until being dragged on in the same method the following morning. They reached a 'drier corner of the forest', and subsequently Akrofuom.<sup>124</sup> The jeopardy of exposure to a hostile environment, isolated from the protection of a main party of allies and supporters, can also be found in Richard Vowell's description of his journey through the forest following the Patriot defeat at Cabrera, when a chance encounter with another fugitive and shelter provided by indigenous residents probably saved him from Spanish patrols and the environment.<sup>125</sup> In 1824 Henry Ricketts went through another similar trial of fortitude when wounded and cut off from help in the aftermath of defeat at Nsamakow.<sup>126</sup> Like these other examples, Bowdich's traverse of the marsh represented a familiar image of the European in exotic tropical and subtropical lands. They contained the inherent threat of the terrain, haunted by indeterminate 'howlings' of unseen creatures, and made the imagined dangers of the place experientially real.

There is a stoicism and self-abnegation in the self-ascribed intrepidity of the traveller-narrator in these circumstances, whose survival is nevertheless reliant on a resourceful and determined 'humane' native companion (who goes notably unnamed in Bowdich's account). This intrepid traveller, who has treated his own extreme peril light-heartedly, brief as it was, is then at pains to state his determination to carry on afterwards as soon as able, and against the timid advices of local authorities. Including an experience such as these in a traveller's narrative enhanced

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, pp. 152-154.

<sup>125</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 80-100.

<sup>126</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 58-88.

empirical credibility and authenticity through physical trial.<sup>127</sup> Interestingly, while the second part of *Mission to Ashantee* goes to great lengths to demystify the western African 'other' in many respects, with mind-numbing detail and questionable method in places, the narrative-style first part had the opposite purpose when exploring Bowdich's direct encounters with place, terrain, flora and fauna. The lack of detail, and the wild auditory nature of encounters with the latter seem calculated to enhance that unknowability, even as the author proved his own credentials for conquering it with his determination and 'zeal'.

Bowdich's 'dragging' through the marshes, replete with useable tropes concerning Africa, the British traveller within it, and the 'humane' loyal 'native' companion, became a reusable anecdote. It found its way into some of the reviews, as well *The Percy Anecdotes* in 1822, compiled as the pseudonymous Percy brothers by Joseph Clinton Robinson and Thomas Byerley. This abridged version of the marsh interlude, without its wider context, foregrounded the darkness, violence and danger of place and conditions, even as it ended on Bowdich's self-consciously self-effacing comment that he and Tedlie could toast the end of their tribulations with 'an excellent duck soup, our grace to which was, "what a luxury to poor Mungo Park;" the name recalled sufferings which made us laugh at our own as mere adventures'.<sup>128</sup> This extract was one among an unstructured stream of exotic, dangerous, or resoundingly different tales of places and people by British travellers in the volume. In keeping with the intention of the miscellany to entertain and inform, the stripping of context may have been deliberate. The tone of the extracts, particularly in relation to the character of place, is also revealing. Of

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<sup>127</sup> D. Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 64, 93-94.

<sup>128</sup> Byerley was also editor the *Literary Chronicle*, *Star* newspaper, and *The Mirror of Literature*. J. Robertson, and T. Byerley, eds. *The Percy Anecdotes, original and select* (London: T. Boys, 1822) pp. 108-109. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 155.

about twenty pieces in this double volume which directly refer to 'Africa' as a location or destination, all contained elements of danger imagined or real, and the majority detailed some specific misfortune or threat to protagonists' lives. These included several shipwrecks, along with accounts of the deaths of Browne by native hand, Tuckey by ill-treatment followed by extreme 'fatigue and privations', Burckhardt (whose 'health gave way to his zeal'), Bruce's entire party (whose sole surviving companion was 'his faithful attendant'), and James Ritchie who died at Mourzouk in 1819.<sup>129</sup> These travellers, explorers, and agents of European interest across Africa had their experiences mined for anecdotes that would shock and amuse, while also evoking a 'dark' and threatening character of place.

His geographical interests in the region as expressed in *Mission* were dominated by an overwhelming occupation with relative distances between places as communicated to him by a range of informants and secondary sources in Kumasi and Cape Coast. In the section on 'Geography', a limited explanation for the lack of empirical detail about the environmental layout or ecology of the region was offered to the readers: 'with regard for natural history', Bowdich was 'less happy in making discoveries'. He observed the rarity of 'wild beasts' such as elephants, which he speculated were absent because of a 'scarcity of grass' due to the 'almost impenetrable forests'. 'Several sorts of birds', some apparently 'new', were observed, but the Thomas Bowdich of two years later must only have been able to lament the lack of attention he paid them once immersed in the scientific community of Paris.<sup>130</sup> The rest of this paragraph was given over to brief observations on the absence of mines, limited geology, soil,

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<sup>129</sup> See various entries in the two-volume publication of *The Percy Anecdotes* covering 1821 and 1822. J. Robertson, and T. Byerley, eds. pp. 16, 76, 105, 128.

<sup>130</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 167.

and relative (although disputed) salubrity of the atmosphere inland compared to the coast, before he returned to his endless observations of locations, routes and distances.

### **Taking the Systematic Approach: Dupuis on the Wilderness**

Joseph Dupuis was one of the most pointed critics of Bowdich's technique and accuracy in detailing locations, routes, and distances, as well as his linguistic and etymological interpretations, and much else of his actions and the content of his account. Dupuis' own approach differed too in cataloguing comparable encounters and observations. Drawing on the experiences of his North African diplomatic appointments to date, and with a more keenly developed eye for the kind of empirical detail that would engage the interest of the armchair ornithologist or botanist, Dupuis made more of each encounter with nature. The anticipatory fear of predators hidden in the landscape remained present, and the language used by Dupuis matched that of his predecessor in reflecting this particular anxiety, although Dupuis was indeed far more equivocal and aware of the real conditions, demystifying with the detail of his informed observations. Early in their journey from Cape Coast, entering the dense vegetation of the sub-tropical forest, they were 'seldom disturbed by the howling or appearance of wild beasts', consciously referencing the mysterious unknowing terms of Bowdich's account. Places on their route which were 'supposed to have been visited by hyenas were, on approaching them, easily recognised by the emission of a fetid effluvia which, it

would seem, the earth had imbibed from the exhalations of the hide of that animal'.<sup>131</sup> Although the 'rancid smells' were frequent, they were not able to 'discover their authors'. The threat at night, notably, was not posed by the 'wild beasts' of other traveller-authors, so distinct in Bowdich's interpretation of place as well as in that of Robinson, Hippiusley, or Brown.<sup>132</sup>

The greater level of observational detail on flora and fauna was also applied to the changing landscape. Where Bowdich skirted over much of his journey to Kumasi, noting with detail only the human habitation passed through, Dupuis made more deliberate efforts to contribute to the body of useful environmental knowledge offered to British readers. However 'imposing' the forest before Mouree had seemed it was not to be 'classed' with the stretch that followed, where 'every advancing pace seems to confirm the knowledge that the traveller is no longer on the confines, but in the heart of a great confidential wilderness, where nature governs on a scale of proportionate magnitude'.<sup>133</sup> Dupuis observed 'bamboo and dwarf palm' which made for 'thorny impenetrable barriers' and were the party's 'most formidable enemies'. Another tree, 'of the mimosa species also', could be found by the 'aromatic fragrance emitted from its pods'. These were desirable among the Fante population and were named 'cotamma' by the Asante. 'Fig trees' left a 'thick spread' of their fruit on the ground, but they differed from the known fig; although looking quite inviting they smelled and tasted 'exceedingly offensive'. Much of this kind of useful knowledge is detailed throughout the journey, although in this case his analogy to the fig tree was limited by the evidence of his senses.<sup>134</sup> More

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<sup>131</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, p. 19.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 17-18.

specifically, Dupuis identified the 'Mimosa Scandriensis, or Patagonian tamarind', which he considered a 'majestic tree' but not one of the 'first class of African growth'. The given name of the tree in the text, evidently erroneous, is corrected to the 'Bauhinea Scandens' in the errata; this is one of the most extraordinarily dissimilar corrections made in this list.<sup>135</sup> Dupuis appended an apology to the errata, that he had been ill and unable to correct some of the proofs as they arrived 'from the press'. Nevertheless, confidently stating an apparently 'Linnaean' taxonomical name and afterwards baldly admitting its non-existence, implies a speculative character to the author's detailed observations that was not made immediately clear to the reader in the text.

This confident detailing of the local environment continued as the author returned to that zoological preoccupation of the traveller through wild foreign landscapes, the 'superior beasts of prey'. In contrast to many contemporaries including Bowdich and, in the South American context, Hippius, Dupuis was keen to accord respect to his local sources. The 'Ashantees as well as the Arabs' corroborated the observation that the feline predators of this region, 'the lion, the tyger, the panther, the leopard... are delicate in the selection of their victims'. The list implies an abundance of mighty and dangerous creatures; his subsequent description of their feeding habits was again stated with the confidence of a man sure of his acquired knowledge, imparting the horror of this wild place within a rhetoric of objective accuracy. These 'superior beasts' made their own kills; 'the blood alone suffices their wants, unless indeed the rage of hunger be very great, in which case they will devour a small portion of the flesh' and leave the rest to scavengers.<sup>136</sup> There is a degree of admiration for these apex predators, an impression

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid, errata, p. cxxxvi.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

of objective observation without sensational exaggeration, and yet enough of the inherent danger of place and creatures, in terms recognisable within British cultural understandings of the geographical 'other'.

That other preoccupation of the tropical traveller, the swarming insect threat, was also treated to a brief but minute description by Dupuis. The 'red ant' seen frequently near the coast was admired by the author for its architectural skill. Their 'spiral erections' over ten feet high formed 'a striking feature', conveying 'the idea of little towns established in the wilderness by another order of the creation'. An evocative impression of romantic discovery, they were outdone as true reflections of the nature of place by the 'small black ant', which built its nests in trees. This excited less admiration than horror at their alien growth. Resembling a 'globular or cylindrical mass of black clay', the 'glutinous matter which cements the parts' bent the boughs to the ground or were 'cemented to the ramifications of several trees, which encrusted the whole in a solid mass of dripping mucilaginous matter'.<sup>137</sup> There is no question as to where Dupuis wished to direct the wonder of the reader, and where their disgust. By contrast, Bowdich made little of his encounters with 'troops of large black ants', which were 'too thick to be avoided, and stung us sadly'.<sup>138</sup> In keeping with Dupuis' associations between climate, disease, environment, and geography born of his own personal experience, he saw the rising density of the flora and increasing 'voracity' of the fauna in similar terms, associating decay in the 'corrupt effluvia' of the environs with the extant threat of swarming insects. As the 'black ants' became more ubiquitous, he was able to observe that 'the voracity with which they surprise their prey... exceeds that of locusts'. They were

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>138</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 19.

described as an inexorable threat to their own kind, devouring the 'red ants' on contact.<sup>139</sup> It seems that, in keeping with his lack of minute observation with the fauna of the forested regions, the ants were an irritation to Bowdich, who was not burdened with a preoccupation with his own health like Dupuis. There is a parallel between the differing priorities of age and experience here, and those of Dr Robinson and Captain Brown in the Orinoco Delta. An inexorable insectoid threat to the entire body, burning pain, and a sense that the victim was driven from the land by the ants combined. The admired red ants themselves were under threat here from this species, and Dupuis requested he be 'indulged in a whimsical comparison' between these 'diminutive freebooters and the Arabs, who alike migratory, rove over the surface of the country' and reside temporarily where they wish, 'often to the terror and defiance of neighbouring towns'.<sup>140</sup> The impression was of minutely yet abundantly embodied threat from the environment to all, but the comparison with migrating Arab merchants was likely to have been lost on much of his readership, while his admiration for their learning and culture was explicit later in the book.

After continuing his exploration of forest fauna with an account of swarming rats in the night, further compounding the impression of teeming, excessive, threatening abundance, the party progressed through a succession of settlements, into and out of the forest, following various routes by rivers and streams between villages on their itinerary. Dupuis continued the regular record of animals encountered and those expected but not heard or witnessed too. There was an assiduous attempt to note anything of interest, and each was recalled with confident detail. He cast doubt on the extent of the threat from grander predators and noted that the greatest

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<sup>139</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 27-28.

noise in the wood came from sloths and hyenas, no threat to their party. Amid the ‘snaky’ vegetation of the ‘torrid zone’, he went on to catalogue more exotic animals including ‘civet cats, baboons, monkeys, porcupines, ant-eaters’, as well as ‘an animal answering to the description of the cameleopard’, considered a ‘sacred quadruped’ and never hunted.<sup>141</sup> Here Dupuis took an anecdotal local description, allied it to classically informed European enculturation, and established a relationship of epistemic superiority over the reports and evidence at his disposal. He asserted the authority of his knowledge acquired in person and by collation, evoking the overwhelming abundance and strangeness of life in tropical environs, confidently pinning this to a quintessentially ‘African’ character which allied flora, fauna, landscape and difference in a recognisable representation of place.

Continuing the critique of Bowdich’s version of events, Dupuis noted that traversing one exposed ridge in the sparser, hillier northern reaches of the forest was no cool relief as Bowdich had declared, but just as oppressively hot and exposed as one might expect when passed in the height of daytime rather than early morning. Further, dismissing the Company man’s rare zoological speculation, Dupuis noted ‘in the midst of a thicket’ the discovery of ‘an elephant’s tooth of moderate size’, likely from a ‘young’ and “‘foolish’” wanderer from herds further west. He was told they were ‘only numerous in Sarem’, which he notes in the appendix is a regional title encompassing much of the inland region of the ‘Ivory Coast’.<sup>142</sup> It seems this commodified animal, though not often seen near the Asante border, was indeed known in the woods there, despite Bowdich’s assumption.

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<sup>141</sup> The term cameleopard (or camelopard) comes from the Latin *camēopardalis*, meaning giraffe, and literally referring to a camel-like long neck and leopard-like spotted pattern. J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 53-55.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 47-49, p. LXXXV.

The effect of this more deliberate account of flora and fauna, referring throughout to perceived errors in Bowdich's book, is to construct a persona for Dupuis that reincorporates the actor-narrator of the narrative part of the book with his public persona as experienced and respected diplomat and officer of the British Crown. This, for Dupuis, was about building authority on a firm foundation, not with the overt characteristics of martial masculinities, or the moral fortitude of the good Christian traveller, but by combining evidence of intellect and experience in a measured whole. This was an objective of all of these authors, but Dupuis had the social and political background along with the intellectual attributes to pull it off with some sophistication.

## **Conclusion**

Encounters with abundant animal life in both tropical regions led to an application of encultured assumptions, interpretations and anxieties on a wide array of complex and unfamiliar new experiences. Despite a broad spectrum of personal agenda, confidence, and knowledge in writing about ecologies of place, authors of both the South American and West African accounts engaged with the binary and oppositional in their encounters with environments on the periphery. They portrayed landscape, environment, and life within it as threats and challenges, dangerous and fascinating in many cases and a serious trial to their abilities to survive and succeed in their purpose. In doing so, with varying degrees of sophistication and self-awareness, they engaged with ideas about the primacy of empiricism,

the authority that came with performance of objectivity in cataloguing environment, and with connections between the perceived usefulness of all empirical knowledge and processes of familiarisation required to present it to a general readership. The authority of that empiricism, and relationships between experience, narrative and authenticity, were demonstrably important to all of these authors, whose success in publication and their careers was dependent on meeting societal expectations of how they communicated their experiences. To enhance this legitimation, they came into difficult and painful physical contact with what they were to report on. As Dane Kennedy states, travellers' and explorers' bodies and minds became 'privileged sites of truth and knowledge', with danger and physical harm ensuring that 'no armchair geographer or other domestic authority could challenge this aspect of their experience or belittle its significance'.<sup>143</sup> These authors were powerfully encultured with such expectations which inflected the tone, content and direction of the narratives of travellers and explorers throughout the subsequent British 'Imperial Century', solidifying into a coded set of prescribed physical, intellectual and spiritual personal attributes that would come to define the British Imperial explorer, agent and adventurer.

Equally, each of these authors grappled, consciously or not, with Romantic evocations of the Exotic in ways that allowed the fundamental separation of difference even as empirical detail attempted familiarisation. Central to this was the hybrid nature of their encounters, and their attempts to make sense of them – the familiarisation process that reconstructed each encounter with place and nature using the cultural understanding, the encultured gaze, of their national-imperial identity. This perspective, as John Wylie has stated, assumes as a default the 'panoptical and authoritative vantage point of such imperial landscapes'. It is from

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<sup>143</sup> D. Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, pp. 93-94.

that standpoint that 'the world symbolically unfurls itself'. He states that the 'visual ordering and exhibiting of the world is inseparable from a colonial and imperial imagination in which an informed, rational and enlightened Western observer gazes upon an Other simultaneously defined as exotic, irrational and so in need of ordering'.<sup>144</sup> The evidence of these accounts' engagements with these landscapes and environments might add that, in the case of the 'natural' worlds of these contact zones, an imperial eye tied to a distinct British National-Imperial identity was hard at work in the imaginations of travellers, authors and readers in the 1810s and 1820s.

Both the Orinoco and its surrounding dense forests, and the thick forest belt between the Gold Coast and open bush near Kumasi, were seen by these authors as intensely wild, as-yet untamed or conquered by people and cultivation, or otherwise inefficiently exploited by local people. These were deliberate, conscious elisions of existing or recent human habitation and activity in these landscapes, rendering them both inherently threatening and ripe for taming and harnessing to the goals of 'cultivation and civilisation'. There were, however, encounters in which these actor-authors were unable to deny the long-standing influence of successive human generations and societies on landscape and environment. In the next chapter, I will consider the invocation of useful knowledge further by examining the descriptions and evaluations these authors produced on the human geographies they encountered.

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<sup>144</sup> J. Wylie, *Landscape* (London, 2006), p. 135.

### Chapter 3

#### Human Geographies: Useful Knowledge and the Commanding Gaze

The path was exceedingly obstructed by thicket and decayed logs, from this place until we arrived at the ruins of Tibiassa, another habitation, as the Ashantees affirmed, of the spirits who roam at night. Nothing but a few straggling ruins, embedded in jungle, remained; yet it was said to have been a place of importance.

Joseph Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (London, 1824).

At some stage in the journey 'into' the environment of their travel narratives, the authors had to address the evidence of sustained human activity as they encountered it and find ways to make it familiar to the reader. They approached human geographies as travellers, explorers, diplomats, soldiers, and hybrids of these roles. Each of them outlined human geographies of imperial exchange, whether in a binary and oppositional relationship (Crown or Company against Asante, British mercenaries against Spanish Royalists, agent or adventurer against outsider or racial other), or in more complex networks of qualified interactions between imperial, national, and sub-national polities (British-Dutch-Fante-Asante; British mercenaries, Imperial Spain, the independence movements, and 'native Indians').<sup>1</sup> Beyond initial encounters, which tended to be reactive, processes of labelling, evaluation, and comparison familiarised and rendered 'useful' the human geographies of the two regions. The process of

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<sup>1</sup> S. Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An analysis of women's travel writing and Colonialism* (London, 1991), pp. 49-50.

'naming', and thus familiarising, was important, constructing places on models that made sense to the categorising observer.<sup>2</sup> This laid the foundations of a later colonial discourse (as distinct from a broadly imperial one), as well as a more immediate need for familiarisation.<sup>3</sup> Challenges were posed by the actual and perceived accessibility and accuracy of information, with a range of encultured conventions and developing ideas at play for dealing with the other in deciding whose knowledge could be trusted. The most immediately 'useful' knowledges for a domestic market shaped by its inherently national-imperial identity were the infrastructures, economies and interactions that determined the human geography of these two regions.

This chapter will consider these aspects of human geography and their representation as useful knowledge, dealing with the significance of infrastructure and geographical interactions, the risks of eliding or undervaluing them, and the close entanglement of these typical subjects in early nineteenth century travel writing with the ideas of accessibility to information, civilisation and culture, or evidence of authenticity. Building on the interactions between encultured elements of Enlightenment and Romantic intellectual culture discussed in the previous chapter in relation to landscape, environment, and the absencing of humans from the geographical picture, I will now discuss how the narratives dealt with the unavoidable evidence of human activity and interaction with their environment, both in order to report on this information practically, and to evaluate it through the imperial gaze.

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<sup>2</sup> C. Festino, 'Hybridity and travel writing in English: the grand tour and the imperial frontier', *Letras & Letras*, Vol. 26, no. 2, 2010, pp. 325-343. S. Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies: Natures, Cultures, Spaces* (London, 2002), p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> R. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in theory, culture and race* (London, 1994), pp. 151-157. S.J. Al-Azm, 'Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse', in A.L. Macfie, Ed. *Orientalism: a reader* (New York, 2000), pp. 221-222.

## Fixed Models and Ephemeral Encounters

The personal 'first encounters' in each of the books tended to be transitory, short-lived exchanges, or to be on the terms of an established European colonial culture of difference. The mercenaries who travelled to Venezuela all passed through the Caribbean, encountering people in ways that were mediated by their views of established colonial cultures. Their first encounters with the people of Venezuela, on the other hand, were generally at a distance, or fleeting, tense and oppositional, such as when the incipient threats of the 'Indian' or the 'Spaniard' manifested themselves on the lower reaches of the Orinoco.<sup>4</sup> For William Hutton, the coastal encounters he made in West Africa were also brief, stopping points on a journey to Cape Coast, which was understood as a British colonial outpost. That town and the surrounding settlements were viewed through the lens of established imperial jurisdiction.<sup>5</sup> The most ephemeral of these encounters, such as 'native' canoeists tentatively approaching to trade on both sides of the Atlantic, were described as aspects of their environment, rather than as agents of the wider human geography of the region. They were viewed in terms of their fringe position in relation to the human geography of the dominant culture (as social outsiders), or instead as examples of a non-hybridised geography of primitive human culture within a wild environment – as temporal outsiders, too primitive to exist within the progress of civilisation but able to be one with the untamed space they inhabited.<sup>6</sup> This can establish a pervasive legacy. In Australia, Sarah Whatmore defines the omission of 'uncivilised' or 'savage' indigenous people as an inherently racist imperialist characterisation. It progressed literally

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<sup>4</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>5</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 20, 31, 57-65.

<sup>6</sup> A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London, 1995) pp. 30-31.

and metaphorically from the 'evacuation' of the 'spaces of colonisation' in New South Wales, through the legal mechanisms of the colonial system and the configuration of 'the land' and 'the native' in Australian national identity, to the continued legal existence of these models of indigenous political and territorial illegitimacy in the later twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> A comparable approach with the same anxieties and imperatives to fulfil expectations and delegitimize indigenous inhabitants is evident in the writings of agents on British Imperial peripheries by the post-Napoleonic period and present here in the narratives from both theatres.<sup>8</sup>

Such 'hybrid geographies' bring the interaction between place, bodily experience, social practice and the wild or natural world to the fore, where a heterogeneity of actors come to bear on shaping geographies practically and conceptually.<sup>9</sup> Whatmore acknowledges the violence at the cutting edge of colonial hybridity in Australia, but her optimism for moving away from the consequences of post-colonial interrogation risks putting words in the mouths of those hybrid geographical others. Similarly, Pratt's consideration of auto-ethnography could set aside the question of whether the colonised have agency in the hybridisation process of the contact zone.<sup>10</sup> In the case of encultured British views of the human geographies of the Atlantic World in the early nineteenth century, those legacies of imperial relationships, hegemony and colonisation cannot be understood without considering the impact of that imperial imbalance of power, rooted in an epistemic violence of cultural dispossession. Declare indigenous people to be anything other than resident in time and place when they

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<sup>7</sup> S. Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies*, pp. 5, 64-68, 71-72, 78, 85.

<sup>8</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 59-64.

<sup>9</sup> S. Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies*, pp. 3-7.

<sup>10</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 7-9.

were encountered, and the precedent was set for the constructed continuation of their inert state of 'prehistoric' existence.<sup>11</sup>

By contrast, any established colonial structures travellers encountered were forms of social organisation comparable to British examples. The prevalent accusation of political inertia in the Spanish Imperial system suggested they had failed to do their duty of civilisation, or to exploit the raw materials under their control, as Coleridge and many contemporaries wrote of West Africa too. The entrenched colonial structures they read about prior to arriving outlined opportunities for actor-authors to establish some of the criteria of assessment by which they might then judge their destinations. From an encultured imperial perspective they could assess value, potential and mismanagement in evidence, against their own National-Imperial cultural norms and values.<sup>12</sup> This was often at its clearest when taking the 'commanding view', the perspective that lent itself most readily to the British travel writer when constructing a National-Imperial persona.<sup>13</sup> Comparisons of imperial competence, drawn from the observed human geography of colonies, played into the encultured preconception that a British approach, in principle and practice, was innately superior – there were varying judgements of Spanish colonial geographies across the South American sources, while infrastructure was prominent in the writings of Bowdich, Hutton and Dupuis. Discourses of progress became allied to increasingly essentialised ideas of difference, particularly where the latter would aid

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<sup>11</sup> Again, characteristically already applied to Australian Aborigines as well as Native Americans; see R. Grant, *Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800-1860* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 95-97.

<sup>12</sup> We will return to the idea of an inert cultural state in the next section, considering the idea of inertia in Spanish Imperialism in the Americas. For a counter-argument to this, see J. Luengo, P. Dalmau, 'Writing Spanish history in the global age: connections and entanglements in the nineteenth century', *Journal of Global History* (2018), 13, pp. 425–445. On Coleridge and Africa, see T. Fulford, D. Lee, 'Mental Travelers: Joseph Banks, Mungo Park, and the Romantic Imagination', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 24:2 (2002), pp. 117-137.

<sup>13</sup> D. Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, pp. 15-16.

the conception of a justifiable ongoing imperial relationship on the ground, between Civilised (British) Self and uncivilised, inert or regressive (native/savage/Asante/Spanish) Other. Charles Withers considers the development of 'geographies of human difference' in some detail, highlighting the importance of transitional conceptions such as Montesquieu's 1748 work and its 'comprehensive understanding of the laws and moral codes governing human conduct' with its focus on climate, "'the first and most powerful of all empires.'"<sup>14</sup> The vital role of 'progress' in understandings of human societies, and so interactions with environments, also provided an intellectual legacy for post-Enlightenment empiricists of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the authors in this study were encultured with generalised but potentially contradictory interpretations of human difference in relation to geography. These began to form the first biological concepts of race but had been thrashed out in opposition to each other through the cultural flexibilities of racialised difference 'on the ground' since the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Empirical contradictions were inevitable.

### **Constructing and Assessing Human Geographies in Travel Narratives**

Our authors had several methods for assessing the human and hybrid geographies of the places to and through which they travelled. They developed lines of observation and judgment

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<sup>14</sup> C. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 148-154.

<sup>16</sup> The essentialising of race went hand in hand with the racializing of superiority of European elites. The legacy of this will be explored further in the following chapter. See S. Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (New York, 2013), pp. 65-70, 165-167.

by using conventions of travel, exploration, diplomacy, and war. Their ideas of what these meant came from their understandings of British history, identity, and current intellectual trends. I have dealt with several of the conventions of travel and travel writing but in common with them were the effects of what Withers et al. call the 'hybrid-figure' of the 'explorer-writer', while travel writing is itself a 'hybrid genre, where both text and author resist simple classification and delineation'.<sup>17</sup> Considering this definition, in characterising exploration narratives as 'more regulated, more collective, and more dependent on co-present scribal and oral networks than was commercial print culture', Adriana Craciun risks ascribing the controlling mechanisms of a fluid and diverse genre which applied to many official and heavily sponsored accounts and projecting them onto the proliferation of independent, unofficial and less collectively 'important' publications, such as those I study here.<sup>18</sup> Encultured social attitudes and agendas led many authors to conform to expectations without the authority of the network of influences brought to bear on official authors of official expeditions. The consequence of this was that they usually offered fashionable evaluations of the human geographies they encountered, measured against imagined or embodied British comparators, precisely because they understood that the reception of readers and the forum of public discourse on travel and exploration held these expectations. Social position, career progression and reputation for independent authors depended more on those audiences in the period than it did on prescribed conformity to the demands and regulation of explorer-

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<sup>17</sup> A. Craciun, 'What is an Explorer?', quoted in C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, p. 122.

<sup>18</sup> A. Craciun, 'What is an Explorer?' *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 45:1 (2011), pp. 29-51.

author social networks dominated by, for example, John Murray, Earl Bathurst, Sir John Barrow and John Wilson Croker.<sup>19</sup>

This had further consequences for the writer of narratives of diplomacy and war, which could be more complex and less obviously binary fields of comparison. Where observing the new and exotic or cataloguing place and people can engage several intellectual fashions across social strata, negotiation with the political other (acknowledging organisation and agency) or conflict with the antagonist other (acknowledging the organised state of their military threat) was more difficult to navigate. Adjudging the poor state of the road and then having to address how a large and effective military force outflanked yours in such terrain is fraught with risk to the author's credibility, or that of the hero of their tale, such as with Henry Ricketts and Sir Charles MacCarthy.<sup>20</sup> One solution was to present a rounded body of useful knowledge that would be complete enough to enable decisions on further diplomatic, military, and of course most of all, economic, concerns. With the anchor of a suitably superior comparison to ensure the hierarchy of cultural difference was maintained, the authors were able to offer valid assessments of the human-centred environment in each theatre, while remaining morally critical of the subjects of their analysis. Bowdich, for example, could be comprehensive in his consideration of the travel and trade infrastructure of Asante that he was aware of, while also declaiming the horrible underdevelopment of roads he passed along or even just heard about.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 215-217.

<sup>20</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 47-49.

<sup>21</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 14-40, 161-228.

Mobility is intrinsic to any travel writing and vital to all these accounts. Its frustration was expressed in both Romantic and practical terms. Mobility is impossible without infrastructure, which Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst term the 'unlovely dimension of modern travel', but which to these encultured authors of a British-Imperial perspective was actually both romantically evocative and essential for the transference of useful knowledge to the metropole.<sup>22</sup> To varying degrees, the authors integrated both perspectives on roads, paths, settlements, agriculture, and so on. Caitlin Vandertop's analysis of modern travel writing and infrastructure observes its relegation to the unconscious of the travel writer as a 'second nature' due to its ubiquity, rejected when unavoidable as the overwhelming evidence of the man-made swamping the natural, but nevertheless confronted in discomfiting terms when its absence is jarring to the observer. She cites interwar examples to demonstrate this, including DH Lawrence's response to a lack of modern sewage infrastructure in Sardinia, highlighting the hypocrisy of the author's position on 'squatting by the side of the road' while also condemning the "'insanity of machine persistence'" of modern transport and utility networks.<sup>23</sup> These tensions are interesting to note in much travel writing from the early nineteenth century to the present. However, they do not allow the space for combining the celebration of 'civilised' progress, the material racism of colonial power structures, or the requirement of 'usefulness' in the knowledge imparted to their society of origin by travel writers from colonial establishments or imperial peripheries, from the affluent twenty-first century global traveller right back to these reporters of imperial opportunity in the 1810s and 1820s. Vandertop suggests that this infrastructure-unconscious stems in part from the

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<sup>22</sup> J. Kuehn, P. Smethurst, Introduction, in J. Kuehn, P. Smethurst, eds. *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 7-8.

<sup>23</sup> C. Vandertop, 'Travel Literature and the Infrastructural Unconscious', in J. Kuehn, P. Smethurst, eds. *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 129-144.

imperial need to erase existing infrastructure at the contact zone, in order to imagine blank space and primitive society as a driver for colonisation. This, nevertheless, cannot remove the need to adequately evaluate potentially profitable or antagonistic cultures. Constructions of space and mobility helped proto-imperial traveller-authors to effectively reimagine them as useful knowledges to be reported home, as Mariselle Meléndez has observed of Spanish colonial newspaper editors' efforts to construct a hybrid colonial culture for Peru and project it to the wider world in the eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup> They were 'advertising' their colonial project; travel writers were presenting opportunities and risks in the contact zone of their narratives. Infrastructure, motion, and accessibility were crucial, but the imperative to mediate their values with the 'commanding gaze' also had to be incorporated and this required a social production of time, space and mobility 'within fields of power and meaning'.<sup>25</sup>

### **Travelling Through: Movement, Infrastructure, Inadequacy**

Methods of travel and the ways they shaped experiences of the landscape are key to understanding how travellers in the vicinity of the Gold Coast interacted with and judged conditions and cultures of movement in the region. Landscape is not only seen by observers;

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<sup>24</sup> M. Meléndez, 'The cultural production of space in colonial Latin America: From visualizing difference to the circulation of knowledge', in B. Warf, S. Arias, eds. *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (London, 2009), pp. 173-191.

<sup>25</sup> On the inscription of social values onto abstracted concepts of time, space and mobility, including examples of historical constructions, see T. Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London, 2006), pp. 4-21.

it constitutes a 'way of seeing things', dependent on 'how we look'.<sup>26</sup> This is fundamentally altered by different modes of travel and transportation. Each of the authors knew that Company or Crown officers were not to move across the land under their own power if this could be avoided. A representative of British authority at the periphery was imbued with authority from the Crown (or, more ambiguously, the African Company in Bowdich's case). This affected the imagination of British adventurers abroad and manipulated the encultured values of National-Imperial identity which formed the mindset of British-identifying travellers. It meant the 'arbitrary construction' of an 'imaginative geography', as Said describes it, or the 'narrative construction of space' through differences and shifts of perspective and relative significance – what Nicklas Hållén terms 'narrative geography'.<sup>27</sup> Such perspectives are broadly and definitively imperial, constructs of difference made from views of the other by the gaze of the 'civilised' or the 'modern'.<sup>28</sup> They distorted the practical assessments of conditions and resources for mobility on the ground.

Practicalities of movement had to be settled, specific to the theatre and available resources. There were limitations to the accepted cultural norms of travel which had to be negotiated. Lamenting the unviability of bringing horses to the coastal region, William Hutton attributed their inevitable demise to 'a particular type of bearded grass', although he acknowledged that others blamed the dirty water they drank.<sup>29</sup> Without knowing the real causes of equine mortality (or indeed European rates of disease and death), the awareness that this was a

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<sup>26</sup> J. Wylie, *Landscape*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 54-57. N. Hållén, *Travelling Objects: Modernity and Materiality in British Colonial Travel Literature about Africa* (Umeå, 2011), pp. 89-92.

<sup>28</sup> D. Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>29</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 62.

territory antithetical to the keeping of a gentleman's expected mode of transport was an affront to British pretensions.<sup>30</sup> Ricketts also noted this mortality in animals imported from Europe or the Atlantic islands, although Accra was an exception.<sup>31</sup> Hutton nevertheless saw the introduction of carriages as a possibility concurrent with a permanent British presence and infrastructure. How he expected these carriages to be conveyed without a sustainable population of horses he did not explicitly say. However, Ricketts was more willing to acknowledge the detail, pointing out that a new road built 'by subscription' to Annamaboe was used by Sir Charles MacCarthy in the early stages of preparations to 'punish' the Asante 'perpetrators'. The governor and his 'suite' were 'conveyed in carriages drawn by the natives... at the rate of six miles an hour, which considering the unfinished state of the road, was astonishing, and the more so, as they were not at all fatigued on their arrival'.<sup>32</sup> On an unfinished road, at a steady jog, this twelve mile journey would have taken two hours. Other subjectivities at work in Ricketts' description here relate to the taming of the land, the assumption of authority and the need to be conveyed in service of it, and the uncritically accepted use of 'native' labour in place of horses. These men were assumed to fit their role, in keeping with their relationship with place and 'climate' in which European alternatives could not be utilised, while even an unfinished road in the British style, constructed by virtue of 'British' community funding (that subscription) by punitive (therefore useful) labour could further the practical mastering of geography to a level of useful efficiency. While not explicitly addressed by the authors, the 'useful' conception of people in this region as beasts of burden

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<sup>30</sup> The horse was widely utilised in West Africa throughout the period, but not without severe issues of welfare and disease. See R. Law, *The Horse in West African History: The Role of the Horse in the Societies of Pre-Colonial West Africa* (London, 1980). M. Osborne and S. Kingsley Kent, *Africans and Britons in the Age of Empires, 1660-1980* (London, 2015), p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 15- 16.

probably came from knowledge of Caribbean slavery.<sup>33</sup> Alternatively, particularly given MacCarthy's reputation as an enlightened governor, it may be read as a misjudgement of the value of Fante workers based on the ways they were valued by other British employers on the Gold Coast – knowledge and experience in trade, language skills and familiarisation with European culture are all suggested by Rebecca Shumway as valued attributes ascribed to the Fante, along with those stereotypes of duplicity.<sup>34</sup>

The unfinished eastward road was not due to be extended in any other direction from Cape Coast though, and along the coast a short sea journey remained the most practicable solution. Along the wider West African coastline, travel by sea remained culturally significant for British people as a mediated form of arrival, contact and departure. Hutton provided a brief glimpse of the perspectives of coastal populations, their concerns, and fears. Local people in canoes coming out to the ships to trade in the area of Cape St. Ann to the south of Freetown 'would not come on board from the fear of being kidnapped and carried off the coast'.<sup>35</sup> The ongoing threat of slavers across the bays flanking Freetown was raised with indignation in the leading British dailies during the period.<sup>36</sup> Hutton briefly recognised the local psychological impact of this; the people of St Ann were taking a calculated risk, in their eyes, in approaching any vessel rounding the headland. He strategically allocated the blame for such a piratical endeavour; 'in justice, however, to the British flag,' he had never experienced this in a British vessel there on previous visits and speculated that it may have been 'the American flag that alarmed them' this time. 'Kidnapping' was 'one of the cruelties practised during the slave trade', presumably

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<sup>33</sup> W.C. Rucker, *Gold Coast Diasporas: Identity, Culture and Power* (Bloomington, 2015), pp. 130-131.

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 4. R. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Rochester, 2011), pp. 53-54.

<sup>35</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> 'Extract from a private letter, dated Dec. 21, 1818,' *The Times*, 9 January 1819.

attributed to that American flag, conveniently ignoring the long standing connection between slave trading, the British flag, and this coastline.<sup>37</sup> Active European involvement in the trade on this stretch of coast continued, and the British flag's use by slave ships was a recent memory. Hutton's qualified partial acknowledgement of this is a small window onto the dissonance of oppositional perspectives on travel by sea between the agent of European interest and the justifiably anxious local trader, a reminder of the inherently imperial nature of the exchange in this transitional period and the continued integration of enslavement in the cultures of labour and power in the region.<sup>38</sup>

For journeying any distance inland beyond the immediate vicinity of Cape Coast, 'native'-drawn carriages and water-borne conveyances were not provided for. The alternative, a recognisable symbol of the privilege and superiority of the white British colonialist in Africa, was to be carried wherever possible by 'bearers', in as dignified a manner for the passenger and concurrently awkward a fashion as possible for local hirelings. Dupuis betrayed his unthinking acceptance of this mode of travel early in his account, by revealing the inconvenience, barely excusable by his health, of being forced to dismount from his 'hammock' by the terrain on the inadequate path.<sup>39</sup> Being carried by 'hammock' was taken for granted by the travelling British diplomatic officers; it was not addressed in detail by Dupuis or by Bowdich, except to acknowledge the inconveniences of dismounting for rougher terrain 'where the path, crooked and overgrown', was too great an obstacle. Bowdich and his companions 'were glad to dismount, and found it was much more comfortable as well as more

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<sup>37</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 31-32. M. Sherwood, *After Abolition*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>38</sup> This included the immediate vicinity of Sierra Leone. See P. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 163-164. A.C. Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame* (Boston, 2005), pp. 52-56.

<sup>39</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, p. 2.

expeditious to walk'.<sup>40</sup> Ricketts noted modes of transport in the region in habitually greater detail. He described the 'hammock', used 'where the paths are narrow' (and a carriage could not be drawn by a team of men), as a 'piece of board about two feet in length, and half as broad, having two holes at each end fastened to a bamboo pole', with room enough for the passenger to 'sit sideways on the board, with his feet resting on a smaller board below' and 'resting his arms on the pole, which is carried alternately on the shoulders and heads of two men'.<sup>41</sup> Ricketts noted that the method was used by 'native chiefs', who also travelled in 'baskets made like a child's cradle' which were 'carried on the heads of men'. Dupuis would have been keenly aware of the implications of using such local methods and the status they would naturally confer, yet no concern for the bearers was shown. The established practice carried much symbolic significance, as William Rucker notes, due to its use by rulers to display their elevation above 'commoner masses', making it a clear way to communicate Dupuis' and Bowdich's authority to the Asante people.<sup>42</sup>

Among the unacknowledged luxuries of being carried by others was the increased ability to observe and record the landscape and terrain as they passed through it, while others did much of the work of navigating the ground beneath them. In this position of disavowed convenience, Bowdich and Tedlie were able to put into action a plan for a more reliable method of calculating distance and position as they travelled. Tedlie, ahead of Bowdich, 'took the angles of the path by his compass', which Bowdich 'pencilled as he uttered them, with their several lengths, allowing four yards and a half for every six paces'. It seems that the

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<sup>40</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> W. Rucker, *Gold Coast Diasporas: Identity, Culture, and Power* (Indianapolis, 2015), p. 39. F. Sheales, *Sights/Sites of Spectacle: Anglo/Asante Appropriations, Diplomacy and Displays of Power 1816-1820* (PhD, University of East Anglia, 2011), pp. 87-89.

measurements were taken at their leisure and the 'six paces' were not marked out by their own stride; without being carried, they would have needed to watch their step rather more than to observe and record these regular measurements.<sup>43</sup> On the very shoulders and heads of the hired Fante hammock-men, casually maligned in the narrative, a portion of the data he produced for his geographical calculations as well as a substantial quantity of his observations of landscape and terrain on his journey to and from Kumasi were acquired.

The path from Cape Coast through Moree to Annamaboe was the first opportunity for travellers to Kumasi to assess the conditions of this 'main route'. They did so from a point of view that placed Cape Coast at the centre of an as yet inadequate network of routes inland and along the coast, with little consideration of the relative importance of these coastal paths to those whose main priorities for travel were not oriented around the British fort. This route would become that 'subscription' road, unfinished by MacCarthy's journey along it in 1823, but evidently considered necessary. The onward route north also concerned William Hutton, who desired an expansion of infrastructure and influence outward from the British base of operations. The limited traversable condition of 'native' paths or roads was a consistent theme for all four of the authors, as it was for many contemporaries across the continent who also relied on porters and 'hammock-men'.<sup>44</sup> Given the extent of reports from others accumulated by both diplomatic missions, it might be considered a strange distortion of perspective or a deliberate and political choice to heap criticism on existing travel infrastructure. Those reports would surely have left our authors in no doubt as to the relative importance of northern and eastern routes, and consequently their superior maintenance by

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<sup>43</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> D. Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, pp. 147-153.

the Asante authorities, their tributaries, and allies. The existence of this sophisticated network was known to Bowdich and Dupuis.<sup>45</sup> The geographical character ascribed to the area was nevertheless one of 'primitive' basic road networks, forest tracks more closely akin to those of animals, and a vast untamed wilderness forming a barrier between coast and interior. Ricketts repeatedly mentioned 'cutting paths' through the vegetation in order to move troops.<sup>46</sup> This denies the significance of Asante travel and communication priorities, ignores the west-east axis of Fante movement, and fails to engage with the nature of socio-economic relationships between the limited coastal enclaves of the European traders, their coastal intermediaries and trading partners, and the northward and eastward facing priorities of Asante even before the British officially declared the slave trade at an end.<sup>47</sup> The southern coastal outlets mattered, but they were not the highest priority for Asante at any point in this period. Even so, their military forces and messengers managed to move about the terrain effectively.

### **Imagined Infrastructure Improvements: William Hutton's Colonisation Agenda**

William Hutton's assessment of the conditions of travel routes out from Cape Coast is characteristic of his central agenda of 'cultivation and civilization'. His journey, initially ahead

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<sup>45</sup> This is particularly clear when looking at the two authors' geographical essays. TE. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 161-229. J. Dupuis, *Journal*, Part II, pp. I-LXXXVI.

<sup>46</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 48, 68, 92, 95.

<sup>47</sup> I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 1-36. R. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 10, 110-115.

of Dupuis, was 'delightful' at first. When in the afternoon his 'hammock-men' told him they wished to stop until the morning he insisted on pressing on. He soon discovered his error as the party 'found the path so bad, that the hammock-men frequently fell down'. They spent an hour in the woods trying to tolerate the dampening night before taking a detour to a small and unwelcoming village.<sup>48</sup> Hutton mirrored the lack of respect for the local knowledge of the hired Fante carriers shown by Bowdich before him and Dupuis on the same route a few days later. Although later aware of the impact of his insistence on continuing, it did not seem to improve his opinion of 'native' knowledge or alleviate his frustrations at their tiredness from carrying the British officers.<sup>49</sup> Their path onward to Paintrey passed through woodland and 'open plain' where, despite the 'pleasing effect' of the 'picturesque scenery and luxuriant foliage', the grasses and 'bush' were difficult and unpleasant to walk through. They found the path from the village to be 'not more than a foot wide' and blocked by fallen trees. Here Hutton highlighted the potential for improvement, his eye always seeking opportunity to maximise British interest: 'an excellent road might be made here at a trifling expense, which would be amply repaid by the pleasure and advantages that would result to the British merchants and officers of Cape Coast'.<sup>50</sup> He imagined Paintrey to be both a sight for factories to increase trade, and a 'delightful country retreat' that merchants and officers might ride to in their carriages at their leisure, 'if a good road were once cut'. He also foresaw an improving effect for 'the natives', as an incentive 'to keep the paths open, and make similar improvements'.<sup>51</sup> There is an assumption at work in this passage, on the part of a man who

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<sup>48</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 141-145.

<sup>49</sup> D. Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, pp. 147-153, 163-166.

<sup>50</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 145.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 147.

was yet to experience any significant contact with local people, that their objectives for travel and trade infrastructure could and should be subordinated to those of the British on the coast.

Hutton's tone of civilising and improving through setting a material example, taken up when describing the coastal journey, sought to establish an explicit manifesto for British expansion inland toward Asante. He judged local infrastructure by the standards and requirements of British commercial interest. Roads and paths were compared to a 'higher' standard and specific set of requirements, moulding the evidence of his experience to fit the 'cultivation and civilization' argument.<sup>52</sup> The potential of the land was apparent in the richness of the soil and the abundance of 'spontaneously' produced fruits, as well as 'beautiful lakes and rivers to refresh the soil' and six months a year of plentiful rainfall.<sup>53</sup> The untapped potential in this border region between the coast and Asante was declared fair game for British colonial improvement. Hutton declared with complete certainty that 'by cultivation and industry, our settlements in this part of Africa may not only be the means of civilizing the natives, but also become as valuable to our nation as any of our colonial possessions'.<sup>54</sup> Lamenting the absence of sufficiently skilled workers to realise these ambitions, it is unclear at this point whether Hutton was advocating an active settler colonial policy, or believed that the 'natives' should be 'improved' by instruction in the necessary farming and mechanical skills, or both. While his contemporaries did not explicitly foreground this agenda or construct it in this sophisticated and deliberate manner, the tone of their assessments remained just as fixed on their own perspective and the priorities of their peers. The geographical centring of their gaze on their

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<sup>52</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 146-148.

<sup>53</sup> Rainfall in West Africa, particularly in major river basins like that of the Niger, was historically made to suit larger scale agriculture. See M. Osborne, S. Kingsley Kent, *Africans and Britons in the Age of Empires*, pp. 5, 12.

<sup>54</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 150.

bridgehead, and the primacy of personal experience or verifiable sources of information (those on a recognisably European model) over the unwritten experiential knowledge of 'native' locals and regional travellers, fixed their perspective. It ignored regional centre-points and priorities, such as Kumasi as the hub of the Asante network or the high value of trans-Saharan trade.<sup>55</sup> While the roles of the other European powers along the coast in developing trade with Asante were acknowledged by all of the authors, their significance was also not adequately considered; the Dutch nearby at Elmina were ahead of Cape Coast in the list of Asante priorities to the south.<sup>56</sup> A British primacy of self-interest fixed arguments for development and improvement on their own model. Bowdich, Dupuis, and Hutton all argued for varying degrees of increased engagement with Asante, assuming they represented the best possible option for mutual benefit. Ricketts was later involved in attempting to construct this fundamentally imperial relationship, even if it was not very successfully applied. Reports and correspondence in *The Times* concerning the treaty developed by Ricketts as acting commander at Cape Coast Castle further highlighted the conventional correlation between trade and civilisation, as well as doubts about the efficacy of the efforts that were being attempted on the spot.<sup>57</sup> Imagining and justifying colonialist expansion was one thing; satisfying expectations of it in British public discourse was another.

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<sup>55</sup> I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 1-36.

<sup>56</sup> L.W. Yarak, 'Elmina and Greater Asante in the Nineteenth Century', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 56:1 (1986), pp. 33-52.

<sup>57</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 160-175. 'Sierra Leone – Some papers...', *The Times*, 15 April 1830. 'Sierra Leone – The next papers are those which relate to the "Black Troops."' *The Times*, 16 April 1830.

### **'Untapped' and 'Neglected': Cultivation and exploitation in South America**

Travellers who became authors were expected to survey and evaluate the land they encountered. William Hutton's colonialist agenda of 'cultivation and civilisation' can be appended with a third 'C', commerce, as a clue to the underlying reasons for this interest – he implied the close connection repeatedly.<sup>58</sup> Driving the interest in 'cultivation', commercial opportunity also justified a continued and even expanded British presence in the region of the Gold Coast, or any of the trading posts along the West African coastal region which were formerly focused on the slave trade. 'Civilization' and the sentiments of freedom attached to anti-slavery, as far as it occupied a role in the moral position of the British representative abroad, was expressed alongside commercial priorities, while each of these factors and their connections to each other were closely connected to geographical knowledge and agricultural status or potential. This spatial dimension in colonialist thinking was developed through the evaluating processes of travel and exploration writing. Looking at the long colonial history of imagining and inscribing absence and potential on the Australian landscape, Liz Stoler identifies the importance of a 'popular imaginary' for 'creating racial asymmetry across the divide of the lived interior and the lived exterior'. Prior to inscription in a domestic settler way of life, the 'unexploited' terrain had to first be reimagined through terms of racial or civilisational difference – very much the process of Hutton's expansionist and settler recommendations.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 147-150.

<sup>59</sup> L. Conor, "'Strangely clad": enclosure, exposure, and the cleavage of empire', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 35:2 (2011), pp. 185-200.

These factors, explicitly addressed by Bowdich, Hutton, and Dupuis, do not combine so consistently in the Venezuelan context. However, the authorial priorities remained, and comparable judgments were made at appropriate points. The agricultural potential of the land was considered, as per the expectations of readers of travel writing, but the conclusions did not explicitly address the kind of self-interested potential that was imagined in Fante and Asante rural areas. The implicit opportunity, however, was there. Discussing the Spanish-American Imperial economic system, John Fisher notes that attempts to 'rationalise the loss' of North American colonies might have been behind British interest in in South America, using 'commerce rather than conquest' even as Spanish control of the colonial economies was effectively severed by the 1810s.<sup>60</sup>

John Robinson described 'untapped' potential for cultivation in 'untamed' lands on his Orinoco journey and at Angostura. He observed that very near to major towns including Angostura 'the country looks as if it never had been cultivated'. He asserted that the harvestable and marketable crops in the area, including 'wild cotton', limes, and water-melon, were 'offered by nature, unassisted by the hand of man', evoking the image of tropical abundance and the validity of taming it for economic purpose. Robinson assumed, from the 'luxuriance' of growth, 'that the soil, with proper cultivation, would produce whatever the purposes of commerce or luxury could demand'. Also mentioning the 'immense quantity of fish' in this stretch of the river, he highlighted the absence of deliberate and rational management of such rich resources and drew together those same recognisable beneficial principles of 'cultivation' and 'commerce' as a solution.<sup>61</sup> Robinson mused on this again when

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<sup>60</sup> J. Fisher, *The Economic Aspects of Spanish Imperialism in America, 1492-1810* (Liverpool, 1997), pp. 207-208.

<sup>61</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, p. 86.

writing of the 'native' populace further upriver and in the 'interior' of the country, where an 'almost total stagnation of commerce' was explained by 'cultivation being wholly neglected, and the population, except the few connected with the army, being almost completely exhausted'. This judgement was, as the author immediately acknowledges, limited by his particular definitions of what constituted a truly useful or productive form of either cultivation or commerce; he did note that the 'native Indians' pursued 'a sort of business' by 'making very bad cheese, rearing a few plantains', and selling these locally.<sup>62</sup> It was the absence of highly visible and larger scale agriculture, and the limited evidence of active trade, in an atmosphere of war and cultural conflict that enabled the characterisation of inadequacy.

Gustavus Hippisley found a correlation between limited observable cultivation, colonial inadequacy and potential during his journey to South America. The course of his progress through the Caribbean took him to St. Barthélemy.<sup>63</sup> St. Barts was Swedish ruled but had a history of French occupation and consistent British maritime trade. Many aspects of Hippisley's ride around the island were described as 'beautiful', reflecting eighteenth century representations of landscape which idealised rural constructions of labour using terms of natural abundance.<sup>64</sup> He incorporated conventional observations on geography, and on the longevity of rural 'negroes' and colonists due to the healthy environment. The slaves inhabiting the island's interior were part of the picturesque view, akin to the role of the labourer in contemporary European descriptions, not as workers of the land, by force or necessity, but as embodiments of the character of place, apart from any reality of their lived

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 114.

<sup>63</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, p. 91.

<sup>64</sup> B.F. Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820* (Philadelphia, 2005), pp. 11, 36, 199.

experience.<sup>65</sup> Regular 'cultivation' of the island was on a small scale and extent, 'yet nature has not left it destitute of natural productions', implying some untapped potential as well as natural abundance.<sup>66</sup> Hippius also provided a defensive assessment of the port of Gustavia and its fort, concluding that the battery was inadequate.<sup>67</sup> The overall impression he created was of great aesthetic value allied to commercial and strategic potential, wrapped in the implied shortcomings of its current colonial regime. There was, from the British perspective, room for 'improvement'.

Hippisley continued to see something inherently desirable in the landscapes he travelled through. That close relationship between past and present management and level of cultivation reappeared in his observations on the 'Spanish missions', or plantations, 'surrounded with all the produce of South America' to imply good fortune in the proximity of natural abundance, 'and which the ecclesiastics, during the period that Old Spain predominated, had formed, built upon, and planted with every necessary which the soil, climate, and art could mature'.<sup>68</sup> These 'missions' described material levels of civilization, being 'almost the only spots in any degree of cultivation.'<sup>69</sup> He did not mention any method by which the land had been rendered so 'productive', again excluding those who work the land from any agency in shaping how it is seen through by visiting eyes. Hippius did see fit to temper this tone of admiration though. Considering the partisan political sensibilities of the

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<sup>65</sup> For the relationship between class and the perspective of the observer see A. Gilroy, 'Introduction', in A. Gilroy, ed. *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of travel 1775-1844* (Manchester, 2000), p. 4. B.F. Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, pp. 45-49.

<sup>66</sup> G. Hippius, *Narrative*, pp. 113-116.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 108.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 228-229.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p. 229.

wider British reading population, and possibly recalling his own declared interest in the cause of freedom, he reminded us that ‘the Patriots have, however, subdued the haughty spirit of all the ecclesiastics resident in their republic’, as they had historically manipulated those ‘Indians who had been reared under the auspices of the Fathers’ to die in for their wealth and privilege. It is easy to read in this his admiration of the cultivation of these plantations as an endorsement of their organisation of labour and resources even while condemning their colonial architects for being many things the author might be expected to disapprove of – Catholics, Spaniards, and religious manipulators of vulnerable subordinate populations. The absence of lengthy rhetoric on the relative commercial or agricultural effectiveness of British Protestantism over Roman Catholicism in colonial environments, in Hippisley’s account and in any of his contemporaries’ here, might reflect what John Gascoigne considers the lack of security and the fluctuating fortunes of the ‘marriage’ of ‘Christianity and empires’.<sup>70</sup> Alternatively, shallow hints of anti-Catholic sentiment may suggest more of an uncritically held encultured opinion, particularly in Hippisley’s case. This would have gone relatively unchallenged a decade before the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, which as John Wolffe points out is the point from which the organised and vociferous ‘defence’ of Protestantism becomes allied with the imperial ‘mission’.<sup>71</sup> In any case, while Catholicism was generally absent from considerations of the human geography of Spanish colonies, it was more readily invoked when it came to the Spanish ‘character’, especially in conflict.<sup>72</sup> What Hippisley considered missing from this landscape due to the limited extent of the plantations reveals

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<sup>70</sup> J. Gascoigne, ‘Introduction: Religion and Empire, an Historiographical Perspective’, *Journal of Religious History*, 32:2 (2008), pp. 1-20.

<sup>71</sup> J. Wolffe, ‘Anti-Catholicism and the British Empire’, in H.M. Carey, ed. *Empires of Religion* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 43-63.

<sup>72</sup> See Chapter 5.

more about his broader assessment of the success of the Spanish Imperial system for the taming and utilising of the land. It also reflected both his own entrenched sense of imperial hierarchy, placing declining Spanish colonial rule much lower than rising British maritime and economic hegemony, prefiguring a long and effective 'imperialism of free trade' and capital investment in Spain itself and former Spanish colonies, throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>73</sup>

The influence of Spanish rule on the wider region was also evident on the Isla de Margarita, an encapsulation of climatic and environmental otherness, poverty, uncivilised habitation, and destructive colonial rule. Charles Brown declared that 'in every object that presents itself in Margarita misery is strongly depicted; a few miserable huts were erected on the sand, covered with the boughs of the cocoa-nut and plantain tree'. The area of the main town 'was formerly a delightful spot, having a beautiful range of cocoa-nut trees to the extent of a quarter of a league', which shaded the buildings until the trees were destroyed by raiding Spanish loyalists. The 'uncivilised' inhabitants, 'who are of a dark copper colour', and 'favourable to the Royalist party', could not be dislodged from the island by the Patriots due to the 'impenetrable' nature of the forested and mountainous inland regions they inhabited.<sup>74</sup> These same inhabitants came to the Patriots when the inadequate rations were handed out to the soldiers during their stay (the officers were well served with food sent ashore from Admiral Brion); 'hundreds of the natives' would beg for a share and fight for 'the little morsels that remained in the sack'.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> N. Sharman, 'Spain and Britain's Informal Empire', in J. Grady, C. Grocott, eds. *The Continuing Imperialism of Free Trade: Developments, trends, and the role of supranational agents* (London, 2018), pp. 34-46.

<sup>74</sup> The perceived loyalties and the conflicting interests of the 'racial' groups in the region, as assessed by the authors, will be discussed in the next chapter. For a detailed examination of the loyalties and motivations of populations groups of African and mixed-ethnicity origins, particularly those from the slave populations who fought on both sides of the Spanish-American Wars of Independence, see P. Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave soldiers and the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America* (Pittsburgh, 2008).

<sup>75</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 36-39.

In these observations Brown witnessed the relationship between European colonial control, poverty and a lack of sufficient food production, but cultivation was not explicitly noted for its inadequate extent or absence among the indigenous population, or posited as a solution to local poverty. Physically and biologically, food shortages and famine should not have been a problem for settlers in the Caribbean, yet the effect of ignorance and mismanagement quickly evaporated that Columbian image of islands of plenty, just as much in British colonies as in Spanish ones, in peace as well as war.<sup>76</sup> The deliberate correlations made by the diplomats in Fante and Asante territory, or by Robinson and Hippiusley on the developmental extent of agriculture around the settlements and the 'mission' plantations, were absent throughout Brown's narrative. Although Brown saw with an 'imperial' arrogance, he may not have done so with a concurrent 'imperial' agenda. He was less aware of his enculturation with his National-Imperial identity, even as he performed the masculine traits of it through his narrative persona, affecting a light-hearted mood of superiority.<sup>77</sup>

With his more developed knowledge of the countries through which he passed, Richard Vowell recognised the evidence of decline in agriculture. He first revealed this while travelling up the Orinoco when, at 'most turns of the river', particularly where they found 'the soil favourable to agriculture, the blackened rafters and tottering walls, of what was once a village church, met the view of our incensed criole (*sic*) troops'. Landing at these abandoned settlements, 'every street and garden was found to be completely choked by the wild cucumber, and wild castor oil shrub', while the few remaining inhabitants 'appeared sickly,

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<sup>76</sup> D. Watts, 'Cycles of Famine in Islands of Plenty: The Case of the Colonial West Indies in the Pre-emancipation Period', in B. Currey and G. Hugo, *Famine as a Geographical Phenomenon* (Dordrecht, 1984), pp. 49-70.

<sup>77</sup> J.A. Hobson later made the criticism that a 'light-hearted, casual mood' allowed European imperialism to 'open up' countries and regions for exploitation. P. Cain and M. Harrison eds. *Imperialism: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies, Vol. 1* (London, 2001), pp. 119.

and incapable of the exertion necessary to clear the ground for tillage'. Where his contemporaries described only isolated 'huts' of 'uncivilised Indians', and little creditable agriculture, Vowell saw a river region that had been devastated and depopulated by waves of conflict. He saw no men and speculated that they were either with one army or the other, hiding for fear of impressment, or with the 'numerous gangs of robbers that infested the river'.<sup>78</sup> Vowell was aware that habitation and cultivation had recently existed in the abundant tropical environment. When discussing geography and observing human presence and effect, he again considered the wider context, limiting any judgement he put forward on the manner or value of the social and economic activity he observed, particularly in rural regions. This may represent an absence of that 'imperial' perspective, which might be due to youth, his restlessness in the metropole, or the greater depth of his experience in South America before he wrote his account.<sup>79</sup> The scant evidence of an 'imperial' imagination at work on this subject at least, and lack of a tendency toward assessment or comparison to a British approach, might have more to do with the more independent nature of his personal loyalties as they were formed and refigured through his life and career across Venezuela, Columbia, and Chile, and then back to England. As I will explore in the next chapter, beliefs about hierarchies of civilisation and race were present in his observations of the different groups of people he spent time with, to the extent that seeing with an imperial gaze was unavoidable.

A pragmatic view was taken of the suitability of the landscape later in his adventures too. He again focussed on evidence he witnessed without speculation, when laying out for the reader what and where food could be grown away from the forested tropical river valleys. There was

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<sup>78</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, p. 48.

<sup>79</sup> M. Brown, 'Richard Vowell's Not-so-Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Adventure in Nineteenth-Century Hispanic America', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 38:1 (Feb. 2006), pp. 95-122.

little cultivation on the high plains or in the foothills, but 'on ascending higher' he saw 'some beautiful vallies (*sic*) and glens', where local farmers reared 'crops of potatoes; small, indeed, in size, and poor in quality, as the ground is rarely and scantily manured, but, such as they are, forming a principal part of the mountaineer's nourishment.'<sup>80</sup> There was no judgement here of agricultural practices, just recognition of the challenging conditions and the necessity of growing what can be grown. These small potatoes were boiled with coarse maize, while the 'aracácha root' was also grown and eaten, being 'an exceedingly productive and hardy root' as well as a 'pleasant and nutritious food'. Vowell limited himself here to simple description, with a little admiration for the efforts at cultivation, and a note to usefulness of the latter root for producing *chicha*, 'which is pleasant and strengthening, and is commonly drunk by the mountaineers'.<sup>81</sup> It is worth considering that the mountain dwellers may naturally have appeared more 'civilised' than any inhabitants of the dense and humid forest and their agriculture was far more visible to a passing observer. Their ways of life were not encountered by any of Vowell's contemporaries, who returned swiftly to Britain and never visited the *Llanos* or the mountains. More explicitly, while Vowell avoided a discourse around levels of savagery, civilisation, and improvement in relation to the regions passed through in the early part of his travels in Venezuela, his fascination with the powerful 'part-savage' otherness of the *Llaneros* once he reached the plains in the following year's campaigns revealed the powerful effect of proto-racial perspectives on the hierarchy of peoples on his Romantic gaze.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, p. 160.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p. 161.

<sup>82</sup> The *llaneros* were the plains dwellers of the isolated Venezuelan highlands, living by the herding of cattle and horses and blending a range of characteristics that were perceived in populations of open country peripheries, resembling Spanish partisans of the Peninsular War on one hand, and North American cattle herders or hunters later in the century on the other. Descriptions of them are discussed in Chapter 5.

### **Cultivation, Population, Displacement**

The effects of depopulation on the effective 'cultivation' of any landscape are obvious; farming or even harvesting of wild produce ceases. In tropical regions land is 'rewilded' at a far quicker rate than on an abandoned smallholding among the market gardens outside London. Denying depopulation's impact, while ascribing the state of agriculture to a wider set of issues around the relative sophistication of societies, or an absence of 'civilising' effects that come from commercial exploitation, fits with agendas influencing a distinctly imperial imaginary of how 'other' places should and could be utilised. It does so by negating the presence or history of indigenous human presence, and any form of cultivation or exploitation of the environment that does not reflect the cultural pre-eminence of the observer.<sup>83</sup>

It is significant, then, that where a visitor to either region took note of the conditions of agriculture, as they were able to comprehend them along recognisable lines, the connection between sophistication and extent of cultivation of the land was explicitly related to the extent of 'civilisation' of the people resident on the land. In the South American context this was a deliberate judgement on the standard of development undertaken within the Spanish systems of imperial rule. The apparent potential shown by the tropical abundance of uncultivated stretches of terrain 'proved' inefficient management. This was despite the creeping material improvements made before the wars for independence, and the devastating impact on haciendas and other hierarchical imperial communities during wartime from 1810 onward.<sup>84</sup> In the Gold Coast region, particularly in the vast stretch of forest inland from the

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<sup>83</sup> D. Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, pp. 92-97.

<sup>84</sup> J. Fisher, *The Economic Aspects of Spanish Imperialism in America, 1492-1810*, pp. 215-216.

European coastal outposts, the lack of extensive agriculture was adjudged to be a strong incentive to British expansion. The absence of a population, or evidence of the ephemeral character of human habitation in sub-tropical conditions, enhanced this impression of emptiness or neglect, while press reports implied links between the slave trade, underdevelopment, and levels of civilisation in evidence among the Fante and Asante before the British missions.<sup>85</sup> Joseph Dupuis paid some attention to the effects of depopulation, noting recent evidence of destruction and displacement from recent Fante-Asante clashes. There was, however, a dispossessing tone to the descriptions of these no-longer-inhabited places, where practices of abandoning the land by local people, or of obliterating those people and their entire settlements, by Asante assailants, was commented on.<sup>86</sup> The abandoned or razed settlements, with their bleached bones, tales of suicidal Caboceers, or former milling crowds of slaves, slavers and guards, gave Dupuis ample material to suggest that the human geography of the area was extraordinarily fragile and prone to complete collapse.<sup>87</sup> He did, briefly, note signs of human suffering. Hutton generally took a different approach in his characterisation of human activity in the same landscape as they headed into the dense forests. While Dupuis described the devastation wrought on Mansue, its decline was more functional in the eyes of his deputy, who viewed the place as dilapidated rather than devastated; settlements were temporary to Hutton by virtue of the transient nature of Fante settlement and regional trade, rather than regional volatility.<sup>88</sup> Abandonment of former European forts and trading outposts along the coast was discussed and endorsed earlier in his

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<sup>85</sup> 'ASHANTEES AND FANTEES', *Caledonian Mercury*, 18 July 1816. 'ASHANTEES AND FANTEES', *La Belle Assemblée; or, Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine*, 1 February 1817.

<sup>86</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, p. 9.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>88</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 170-171.

narrative, whereas the rapidly disappearing remains of recent Fante settlements were incidental to him in their impermanence.<sup>89</sup> Thomas Bowdich also had little to say of Mansue, and no reflection on the human consequences of its former use or collapse, but comments on other destroyed settlements did note the impact of wars on Fante infrastructure, if not on their lives. In this manner, Bowdich manages to suggest the material suffering and fear of violence that hangs over a place wracked by conflict, albeit coldly; the poverty and fear of visitors at Fousou, reduced in 1807 by an Asante army, elicited no sympathy from him.<sup>90</sup> The three diplomatic narrators described varying degrees of under-utilisation of the land and ascribed the blame to the fragility or wastefulness of local people. While recent fundamental economic changes were recognised, including what Gareth Austin describes as the complex shifting dynamics of labour coercion by Asante, connections were not made between those and the state of agriculture or occupation by these observers in passing through Fante territory.<sup>91</sup>

Henry Ricketts had opportunities to test these characterisations first-hand, though he also had time to reflect the recent history of rhetoric about Fante and Asante cultivation and civilisation in British public discourse before publication of his account in 1831. His comment on the issue concerned the situation of the Fante population of Cape Coast and the nearby settlements inland. Bowdich saw the same region as neglected under the pressures of conflict and economic shifts. Dupuis observed that it had been razed by those same forces, while Hutton

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, pp. 42-47, 64-65, 71-78, 106.

<sup>90</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>91</sup> Austin's broad point is valid – Asante was an expansionist state and a colonial subjugator of neighbouring populations. However, Austin's rigour in considering region and issues is questionable; he mentions Bowdich over thirty times, but he claims Hutton accompanied him, rather than Dupuis. G. Austin, *Labour, Land and Capital in Ghana from Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807-1956* (Rochester, 2005), pp. 122-123, 126-127.

thought the region filled with untapped potential. The people of Cape Coast, Ricketts observed, had 'enjoyed freedom under the British flag for two centuries', even though they continued to pay tribute to Asante, who had 'never conquered' them, but had forced them to retreat from the interior and abandon their own terms of subsistence frequently enough to be severely disruptive.<sup>92</sup> This observation was fairly objective, yet the human trauma once again went unacknowledged. Nevertheless, an element notable by its absence from his predecessors' descriptions is highlighted, as the loyal soldier describes the triumphant procession of Governor MacCarthy through the villages of the Fante country. The evidence of the sheer abundance of rich and exotic foods appeared to be widespread, as they were offered as gifts to the Governor and his party along with cheers and salutary musket fire.<sup>93</sup> Of particular note to Ricketts, for its relative salubrity and visible affluence, was the town of 'Assamacow' (Nsamankow), where the fateful defeat by the Asante army would take place a few days after their stay. It was 'delightfully situated', with houses that reminded him of 'an English village of the better class' – MacCarthy's accommodation contained recognisable and appealing furnishings, suggesting a level of affluence in Fante territory that the previous observers had assumed was entirely absent.<sup>94</sup> It was, unfortunately, burnt down by the enemy in the aftermath of the battle, when Asante soldiers swept through the village and seized the unused ammunition reserves that were missing from the battlefield.<sup>95</sup> A different kind of desirability was assigned to the human environment Ricketts encountered; not one of

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<sup>92</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p. 50.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 87.

remedying the wasteful, protecting the fragility of uncivilised communities, or of bringing the enlightening benefits of trade, but of something that was worth defending.

The effects of colonisation and war were also inevitably encountered in each of the South American accounts, although paying attention to these led several authors into some wild inconsistencies. Tensions between the rhetoric of unrealised potential (and incumbent neglect), the victimhood of resident communities, and the worthiness of protection, were expressed by the authors. Beyond the purview of formal colonisation, an encultured imperialism of opportunity was active in the gaze of all the authors. Gustavus Hippiisley made these types of observation early, throughout the tortured progress of the first expedition through the Caribbean, especially at St Barts where he contradicted himself by pointing out agricultural 'inefficiency' and Romantically extolling 'natural abundance'.<sup>96</sup> On the Orinoco, he continued to demonstrate confused prejudices, viewing the effectiveness of agriculture at the 'Spanish Missions' and showing good Tory admiration for 'the period that Old Spain had predominated', which had established a productive colonial infrastructure using 'every necessary which the soil, climate, and art could mature'. Characterisations of the Spanish, Creoles, slaves and indigenous people were held quite rigidly within a framework of racial preconceptions that continued to be reflected in British imaginaries of the region later on in the century. An anonymously published narrative of Alexander von Humboldt's travels in the region, published in 1840, made much of the 'idleness of the Indians', even those 'mild and tranquil tribes' who were well suited to agriculture, without the forceful guiding hands of the Jesuits.<sup>97</sup> This did not reflect von Humboldt's own descriptions of the indigenous population –

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<sup>96</sup> G. Hippiisley, *Narrative*, pp. 104-112.

<sup>97</sup> Anon, *Humboldt's travels and discoveries in South America* (London, 1840), pp. 191-192.

his critiques were directed without overtly using the racial typing of the Spanish colonial system or European intellectual debates, forming instead an early critical example of the awareness of the environmental damage that empires could do to the ecologies of the places they occupied.<sup>98</sup> From Hippisely through to this 1840 Humboldt narrative, some form of colonial management of otherwise idle indigenous populations was often deemed necessary across South America. Alternative views were, however, put forward in criticism of the Spanish regime for restricting agricultural and economic growth. American traveller Henry Brackenbridge described this as the 'bonds and chains' of the Empire. He did not mean the subjugation of indigenous labour or enslavement of African people. He referred without irony to the limits on migration and trade which drove the settler inhabitants and their subjects 'back into the shepherd life, the second stage of civilisation'.<sup>99</sup> Moveable hierarchies of civilisation (as applied to populations of European origin) and risks of degeneration appeared, along with the essentialised state of the 'Indians', again prone to poverty and 'indolence'. Brackenbridge was happy to extrapolate these characteristics from the indigenous people near Buenos Ayres or Peru and apply them to the entire continent.<sup>100</sup> From these examples, with their closely related rhetoric of wasted resource and Spanish colonial decline, a trail can be followed through later nineteenth century colonial discourses of civilisation and improvement, to the twentieth century application of the term development with its postcolonial 'frames of international geographical reference' which, John Leary argues,

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<sup>98</sup> P. Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World, 1768-1840*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>99</sup> This polemic against the colonial closed market was addressed in an open letter to the US president, James Monroe, and placed in the appendix. H.M. Brackenridge, *Voyage to South America, Volume 2* (Baltimore, 1819), pp. 315-317.

<sup>100</sup> H.M. Brackenridge, *Voyage to South America, Volume 1* (Baltimore, 1819), p. 212. H.M. Brackenridge, *Voyage, Volume 2*, pp. 151, 326.

constitute the Anglo-American relationship with Latin America (as well as much of Africa, and indeed the 'Global South') to the present day.<sup>101</sup>

Evidence for such 'regression' of civilisation, as a critique of the incumbent colonial authorities, was easily found in a region at war. John Robinson was keenly aware of the conflict's impact on trade and cultivation around Angostura. Trade was reduced to livestock and hides, with 'little other commerce here, but what is done at the card-table', apart from 'a sort of business' pursued by the 'native Indians', raising and selling some crops and 'very bad cheese'. Cultivation was 'wholly neglected' by a population 'completely exhausted'.<sup>102</sup> Earlier, Robinson had declared that it looked like no cultivation had ever taken place near Angostura in particular; an abundance of valuable crops grew with 'luxuriance' seemingly 'by nature' alone, leading him to the familiar judgement that 'with proper cultivation' the soil would 'produce whatever the purposes of commerce or luxury could demand'.<sup>103</sup> The implication here was that alternative governance after the war could lead to a fuller exploitation of this tropical environment, and a 'hybrid geography' was imagined in the observer's eye, demanding civilised standards of development. Brown took a more positive view of the efforts towards food production in the area of Angostura, having observed at nearby Tortola ('a delightful and romantic place') continued cultivation of 'the earth during the time of a cruel and exterminating warfare'; they even transported their produce 'a hundred miles' upriver by canoe (it is nearer to 130 miles).<sup>104</sup> He witnessed something functional in the efforts of

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<sup>101</sup> J.P. Leary, *A Cultural History of Underdevelopment: Latin America in the U.S. Imagination* (Charlottesville, 2016), Kindle Edition, loc. 291-314. J. Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development,' Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis, 1994), p. xiii.

<sup>102</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, p. 114.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p. 85.

<sup>104</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 69-70.

indigenous labourers and suggested a resilient level of effective trade was able to continue. He did not note the conditions of their labour, but descriptions of deprivation and looming starvation in Old Guyana were laid out for the reader to ensure that the current infrastructure of the country was portrayed at breaking point.<sup>105</sup> Hippiely, on the other hand, saw the shortage of provisions and the air of desperation that came with it as something of a personal insult and a damning indictment of the Republican leaders' ability to govern, attributing to the available diet the cause of his own discomforts and the serious sicknesses of many of his regiment's men.<sup>106</sup> This variation on the theme indicated that the Patriot infrastructure was at that breaking point, reinforcing the impression of degeneration, from warfare or colonial misrule, or both.

Once the diplomatic officers entered Asante country the characterisation of the human geography shifted considerably. Thomas Bowdich gave the impression of entering a country of strong government with the appearance of recognisable, efficient agriculture in the form of the 'first large plantation of corn' they had seen since leaving Anomabo.<sup>107</sup> He was keen to highlight, too, the 'despotic' and arbitrary nature of rule in Asante, a mix of 'superstition' and avarice governing many decisions made by the Asantehene for his own enrichment. The paths, however, were always 'well cleared', the settlements laid out in a uniform and logical way, and messages to and from the Asantehene himself frequent and swift. The 'rich black mould' of the soil was used effectively, with regular planting, drainage, and weeding. Presents at each of their stops and plenty of visibly ordered cultivation gave the impression of an effective state

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, pp. 70-71.

<sup>106</sup> G. Hippiely, *Narrative*, pp. 296, 313-314.

<sup>107</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 28.

infrastructure that Bowdich had no concerns about setting alongside sensationalist rumours of tyranny, sacrifice and collective punishment.<sup>108</sup> For Dupuis, crossing the ridge into Asante was itself a more dramatic, romantic experience, but the first ‘hovel’ they encountered was not impressive, while the second village, Fomanah, was not in fact ‘once a very considerable town’, contrary to the claim Bowdich had made about its violent reduction by the Asantehene. The welcome was, however, warm.<sup>109</sup> It was regular human habitation that made the best impression of the infrastructure of civilisation on Dupuis; he saw the landscape as still very much wild, noted little organised cultivation but was impressed with the ‘majesty’ and ‘wild aspect’ of the ‘vegetation in the torrid zone’, again until he reached Dompouse, where corn plantations had ‘tolerable’ fencing against the wild animals and free-roaming pigs.<sup>110</sup> He noted that the town allegedly had a population of some fifteen thousand, though it was rather more poorly and confusingly laid out than Bowdich had suggested. Hutton thought the layout more comprehensible and found their quarters comfortable. He observed, as did Bowdich, that the town was ‘formerly much larger’; it had been ‘partly destroyed by fire, “in consequence of the cabocceer having intrigued with one of Sai Cudjoe’s wives”’.<sup>111</sup> Curiously, he made no observation of agriculture, but did note the crafts and manufactures on display there, and made several ethnographic observations on the way of life of the people, before picking up on the increasingly ordered network of neat settlements, clear roads, and large plantations of food crops – he also assumed, with a customary telling arrogance, that the road had been ‘cleared purposely for us’.<sup>112</sup> At this stage, the talk of civilising place and people, of the

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>109</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>111</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 192.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 195-197.

inadequacy or decline in the human geography of the landscape they travelled through, ceased in the face of an undoubtably organised state. The inferred despotism in Bowdich's descriptions, the urban disorder in Dupuis', or the assumption that it looked this way because of the British delegation in Hutton's, made their presumptions of capability for civilising the land carefully limited by their prejudice. The stark difference to the disrupted Fante lands, or the impenetrable and wild forests in between, could not be obscured. Similar contrasts, viewed with the same 'commanding gaze', were constructed by the South American authors between metropole and colony, Caribbean and Spanish-American mainland, and even urban environment and native village.

### **Urban Geography and Civilisation: Angostura and Kumasi**

Angostura represented most of the adventurers' characterisations of urban Venezuela, more or less in full, as neither Hippisley, Brown, Robinson, nor any of their contemporaries who returned to Britain within a year or two were able to observe Barcelona, Caracas or other major cities first-hand. Richard Vowell saw much more of town, country and 'wilderness' in his decade of service, and observations on urban infrastructure were made when they struck him as significant, indeed useful to, the readership.<sup>113</sup> Santo Tomé de Guayana de Angostura del Orinoco (now Ciudad Bolívar), was characterised by Vowell as particularly constrained by

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<sup>113</sup> These included towns and cities across modern Venezuela, Columbia and Peru. R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 28-20, 106-115, 139-145, 171-180, 215-220, 279-285.

its landscape and environment. He noted it was surrounded by ‘high rocky land’ on both sides, where the lower Orinoco is comparatively narrow, between one and two miles wide along the city’s stretch – Vowell noted it to be two miles, and sixty to seventy fathoms deep. To British readers this must have seemed still rather sizeable, although just west of the city the river bulges to over four miles wide, while some flooded sections at the height of the rains can be over three times that.<sup>114</sup>

Vowell described the relatively confined but still vast river as ‘very rapid and turbulent at this place’, and dangerous to cross. The grazing lands, he pointed out, became waterlogged and infested with alligators in the spring, with livestock losses as a result. The city and the surrounding country struck him as beautiful, including a ‘picturesque little convent’ being used as a military hospital, while he enjoyed the breezes and views from the steep streets of the city.<sup>115</sup> The natural rock harbour was shrewdly noted, along with the convenient placements of gunboat moorings and the customs house. He was impressed by the tree lined promenades, necessary for the exercise of the ‘naturally indolent’ Creole residents, but not by the awkwardly positioned plaza, or the plainness of the palace where the ‘Congress of the Republic was subsequently assembled’.<sup>116</sup> The lagoon to the west, after the floods subsided each year, was blamed for exhaling ‘the most pestilential miasmata’, partly because of the ‘half-civilised Indians’ practice of throwing their dead into the water. Vowell was aware that

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<sup>114</sup> To provide some perspective, the Thames is less than half a mile across at Gravesend, and Ciudad Bolívar is further up the Orinoco than the source of the Thames is from its mouth. ‘Orinoco River,’ *New World Encyclopedia*, [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Orinoco\\_River&oldid=1016878](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Orinoco_River&oldid=1016878) accessed 30 November, 2020.

<sup>115</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, p. 30.

<sup>116</sup> This was the Congress of Angostura, famed for Bolívar’s inaugural address on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1819, proposing a constitution with a parliament on the British model. See chapter 1 for a discussion of Bolívar’s approbation of British political methods. On the Congress and address, see J.E. Rodriguez, *The Independence of Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 189-191. G. Andrade and J. Luigo-Ocando, ‘The Angostura Address 200 Years Later: A Critical Reading’, *Iberoamericana – Nordic Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, X (2008), pp. 1-9.

'yellow fever' caused these annual epidemics, especially in foreigners, but considered the causes infectious.<sup>117</sup> The character of the tropical city was thus closely related to that of the dangerous climate of disease that Europeans feared, yet in Vowell's eyes it also had a great beauty to recommend it, while the temporary significance of the city as an interim capital and seat of government was positively recognised, lending a legitimacy to the human geography of the independence movement by assigning it an urban heart from which to construct its identity during a transitional stage. Urban spaces had long been 'crucibles of political conflict' in Spanish Colonial America and continued to be sights of anxiety around the formation of the post-colonial state through the rise and decline of Bolívar's Republican vision.<sup>118</sup>

The more immediate reflections of the other authors picked up on many of the same elements of the spectacle of the city but given their shared interests in condemning the nascent republic for misleading European mercenaries into signing up to their cause, it is no surprise that negative impressions were stronger. Gustavus Hippisley eschewed the evocative detail of Vowell's memoir; the town was 'situated on the side of a hill' which summited half a mile from the river, was one line of houses 'about one hundred paces from the highest water mark', irregular but with some nice houses mainly belonging to foreign merchants, along with the customs house and artillery commander's residence.<sup>119</sup> This terse description contained the kind of bland practical observations that an adjutant might notice, before the aspiring country-gentleman in him moved swiftly on to a detailed description of the interior of 'the admiral's house', dismissal of the plaza as a building site, then the stock of the better shops, before he

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<sup>117</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>118</sup> J. Smith, *Europe and the Americas: State Formation, Capitalism and Civilisations in Atlantic Modernity* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 203, 286-288.

<sup>119</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 330-332.

reached the unpleasant prospect of the stagnant lagoon. He returned to military practicalities that might lend authority to his persona, placing the fort at the highest point of the town, yet overlooked by a hill across the river from which it could be bombarded. Hippisley was keen to assess the vulnerability of the city to attack and ended with a couple of detailed suggestions as to how the Royalists could indeed retake it, possibly forgetting himself again over whose side he was on.<sup>120</sup> John Robinson opened his description with the latitude of the city (8°, accurately), and, continuing his preoccupation with physical discomfort, the temperature ranges day and night. He noticed the bamboo and mud constructions of the poorer residents, which Hippisley made no mention of, and other neglected buildings. The lagoon was noted for its defensive value, and he considered the town unassailable. The engraving that formed the frontispiece of his book, however, gives the impression of a very small, sparse and scattered settlement, both recognisably European and somewhat suggestive of limited development.<sup>121</sup> The style of the engraver employed to illustrate Robinson's account might have played a role in sanitising the far busier written descriptions in his and his contemporaries' accounts. Alternatively, it could have been the limited information provided by any sketches made by the author – the volume does not confirm this, but the image of the 'Indian Soldier' might imply it.<sup>122</sup> Robinson also speculated that the climate was 'healthy, during the dry season', and free from the 'miasmata' due to the vegetation; drawing on von Humboldt's authority, it was the rainy season he saw as a threat to the health of residents and visitors. Robinson's description was the reverse of what Hippisley and Vowell had observed, but all three had the

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<sup>120</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 331-339.

<sup>121</sup> I. Clark, 'Angostura' Engraving after JH. Robinson, in JH. Robinson, *Journal*, frontispiece.

<sup>122</sup> See Chapter 4.

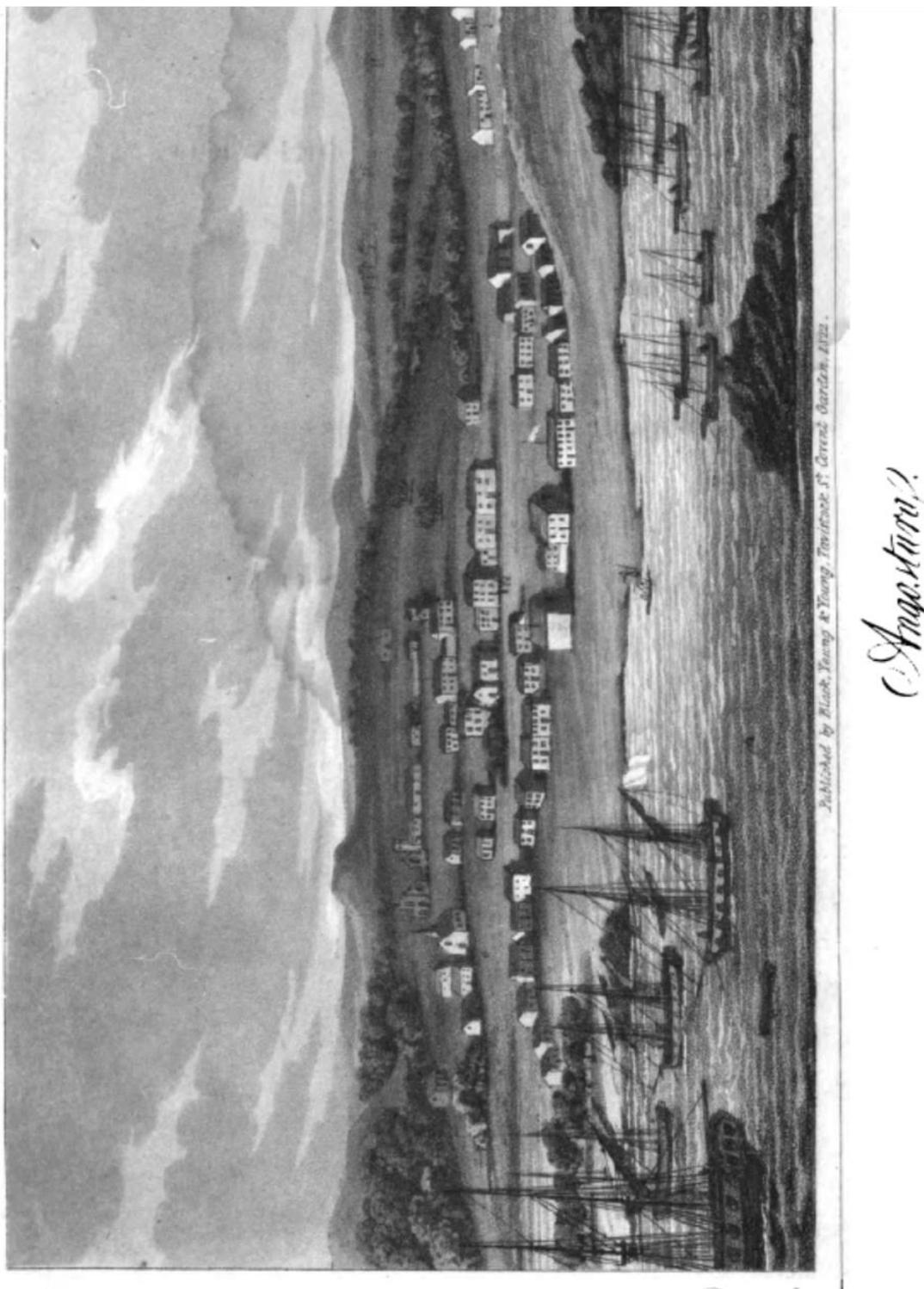


Fig. 1. Clark, Frontispiece, 'Angostura', in J.H. Robinson, *Journal of an Expedition 1400 miles up the Orinoco and 300 up the Arauca* (London, 1822).

impression that 'climate' offered some kind of threat to 'civilised' people visiting the city. These observations construct an impression of the interim capital of the republic as a rather shabby, neglected, peripheral and insalubrious place. Angostura was depicted as a small and poorly laid out place surrounded by wildly uncultivated territory where the potential of the republic may well have come to die. These descriptions demonstrate that the authors noted or recalled a specific set of valued elements of their encounters with Angostura. They reflected encultured expectations, priorities and National-Imperial judgements, encompassing the beautiful and the picturesque, functional and 'improved', as well as dysfunctional, neglected, or inadequately appointed. They reflected the same constructed preconceptions of an 'under-civilised' South America, brought about by the perfect storm of Spanish despotism and mismanagement, native indigence, and the makeshift condition of the nascent Creole state, inexperienced amateurs in the logistics of war and statehood, that Bolívar had invoked in his appeal to British interests.<sup>123</sup>

On the Gold Coast there was no 'city' to assess. The impression of Fante habitations beyond Cape Coast reflected the decentralised form of the network of communities that made up Fante society, while the impacts of waves of hostility and conflict from the Asante Empire to their north, along with the shifting rules of trade with the Europeans on their coast, meant that a large centralised state infrastructure, concentration of power and of population was not desirable. European control of resources and administration at substantial settlements including Elmina, Cape Coast and Accra might have prevented the concentration of Fante governance within an urban centre, although long involvement and experience at all of these

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<sup>123</sup> A. Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination: Studies in European and Spanish-American Social and Political Theory, 1513-1830* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 136-140.

places with the intricacies of Atlantic trade and commerce meant that their economic footprint was significant and there were periods when Fante military coalitions effectively blocked the flows of trade to, from and along the coast.<sup>124</sup> This meant that the diplomatic officers heading to the Asante imperial capital of Kumasi were anticipating the opportunity to observe and evaluate in detail a major West African settlement with no permanent European presence. Again, military and economic imperatives were to feature in this assessment, while the blended influences of intellectual trends from Romanticism, the Enlightenment, anti-Slavery, and the rhetoric of civilisation would all bear some influence on the accounts produced.

Both missions made the journey to the city over several days, being instructed by messengers to wait at a sequence of places along the route. The hints of ceremony and deliberate preparation were clear. Each party took the opportunity to don their dress uniforms – Dupuis had his hammock replaced with an elaborate palanquin for full effect. Bowdich noted the 40-yard ‘marsh that insulates the city’, suggesting a defensive position, before ‘passing under a fetish, or sacrifice of a dead sheep’ on entering the city.<sup>125</sup> Dupuis encountered the capital, ‘if such it may be called’, glimpsing hovels with plantations and ‘straggling walls’ through the pressing crowd that greeted their party.<sup>126</sup> He saw none of the grandeur that Bowdich had described, as he was quick to point out. Both of these authors then turned their attentions to the grand ceremonies of welcome and the events of the subsequent days, before focusing on their version of the negotiations they undertook with the Asantehene. Bowdich left the

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<sup>124</sup> R. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 58, 126-128.

<sup>125</sup> TE. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>126</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, p. 69.

detailed and measured descriptions of Kumasi in terms of its urban geography, infrastructure and architecture to the second part of his huge and expensive volume while Dupuis made little further comment on the appointment or amenities of Kumasi. William Hutton addressed it directly in Chapter X, immediately after describing their entry.<sup>127</sup> He shared his superior's disappointment, reflecting on the difference between what they found and what Bowdich had led them to expect with his drawings and descriptions, which were 'too highly coloured'; the city's residents did not recognise them when shown the plates in his copy.<sup>128</sup>

Those plates were certainly a striking, expensive addition to the publication of *Mission From Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, pushing it firmly into the most affluent of markets while also enhancing the authority of empirically observed useful knowledge that Bowdich was so keen to claim. Apparently developed and coloured from his own sketches, the plates gave readers the sense of a clean, ordered urban environment centred around the quiet and immaculately maintained squares and streets of the palace. They demonstrate, confirmed by Dupuis and Hutton, that parts of Kumasi were well constructed and the best architecture was distinctive, decorative, and fit for the environment. They also prove that Bowdich was working to construct a very complex image of Asante, its capital, and its ruler, that encompassed the tropes of enlightened despotism situated in a stereotype of Oriental order and luxury, embedded within and pulling the strings of a wider culture of superstition, subservience and savagery. His description of the Asantehene, and damning observations of the people of the city, would also work to this end which sat within an already established tradition of 'imaginative' human geographies that formed the basis of broadly 'Orientalist' justifications

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<sup>127</sup> See Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>128</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 236-237.

for European colonialism.<sup>129</sup> The architecture, manufactures, trade, markets, revenues and infrastructure of the city were described across two chapters of part II. The practice of the Enlightenment Orientalist is evident in the way he constructed these two essays. He made reference in the chapter on architecture to Sir James Hall's description of 'the Gothic order to an architectural imitation of wicker work', and then the 'many circumstances deciding their great superiority over the generality of Negroes' when describing construction methods. He then diverted to crafts and manufacture of arts with an antiquarian's affected attitude of attention to detail.<sup>130</sup> The next chapter aligns climate and population with revenue, trade and markets. The figures on population imply a highly militarised state, although contemporaries had to have experienced some doubts as to his method of extrapolating from an estimate of its potential military force at 204,000, that this was a fifth of the overall population, according to calculations done by MP Morton Pitt on the proportion of men of 'a country parish in Dorsetshire' being capable of 'bearing arms'. He then attempted to map the layout of the city, rendering it familiar in format to his readers.<sup>131</sup> Presuming a degree of accuracy, it could form rough basis for military plans against Kumasi; providing this detail publicly was an assumption of power as knowledge over his subject by Bowdich, while in light of his disputes with the African Company it may also have undermined their authority by publicising details they may have considered strategically theirs.

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<sup>129</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 8-13. F. Anjum, 'Travel Writing, History and Colonialism: An Analytical Study', *JRSP*, Vol. 51, No. 2, July-December, 2014, pp. 191-205.

<sup>130</sup> TE. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 304, 305-314.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, p. 316.

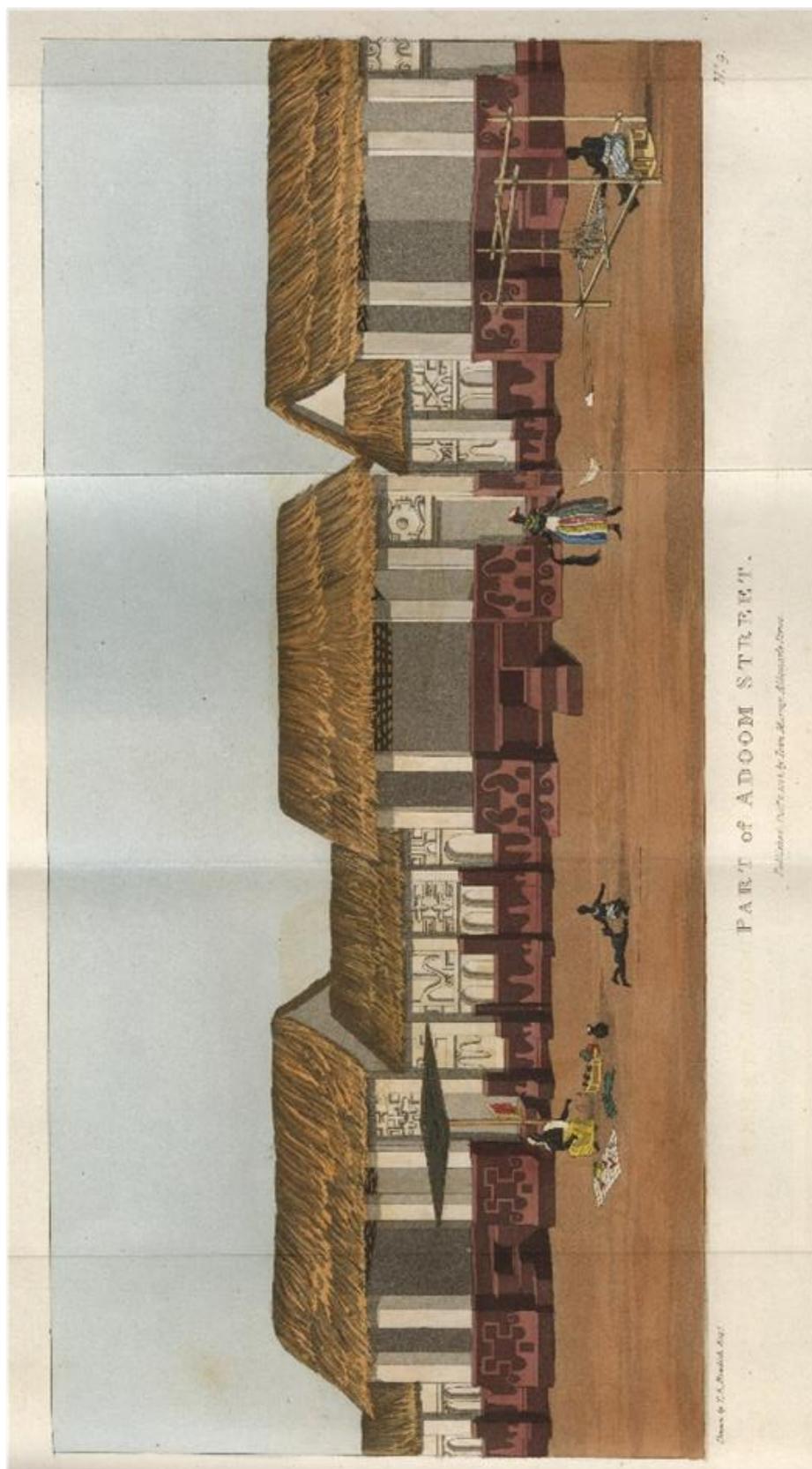
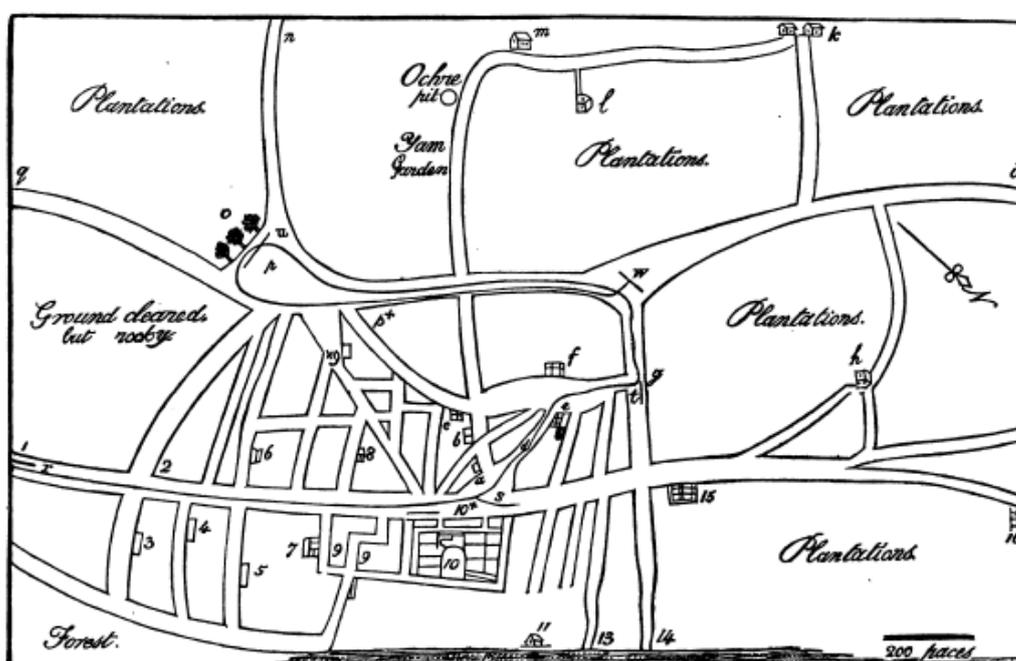


Fig. II: T.E Bowdich, 'Part of Adoom Street', in T.E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (London, 1819), p. 308.

*Ichnographical Sketch of COOMASSIE, with the principal Streets and the Situations of remarkable Houses.*



- |  |                                       |  |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Entrance from Fantee and Assin.               | 10. Palace.                           | q. Abidwee's house, the quarters of the Embassy. | p. Adooebim, the large market place.                  |
| 2. Agwabu or the small market.                   | 11. King's wives Croom.               | f. Adoo Quamina's (chief Captain) house.         | p*. Small Market.                                     |
| 3. King's oldest Sister's house.                 | 12. Marsh.                            | g. Osaransaidum Street.                          | q. High Street of Assafon.                            |
| 4. ——— Goldsmith's ditto.                        | 13. Entrance from Dwabin.             | h. King's Umbrella maker's Croom.                | Course of the procession of the Embassy on its entré. |
| 5. Appia Nana's ditto.                           | 14. ——— Baramang.                     | i. Entrance to the high street of Bantama.       | r. Halted to witness the war dance.                   |
| 6. Otee's (3d Linguist) ditto.                   | 15. King of Dwabin's temporary Court. | k. Croom.  | s. Halted to pass the baggage and presents.           |
| 7. Odumain's (1 of the 4) ditto.                 | 16. King's Blacksmith's Croom.        | l. Ditto.  | t. Halted to witness the human sacrifice.             |
| 8. King's youngest Sister's ditto.               | a. Himma or the King's fetish temple. | m. Ditto.  | u. Presented to the King and Chiefs.                  |
| 9. Adoom Street.                                 | b. Apokoo's (1 of the 4) house.       | n. Long irregular suburb, and road to Dankara.   | v. Seated to see them march home.                     |
| 9*. Baba's house and the Crambos (Moors) Street. | c. Adooete's (chief linguist.)        | o. Samtopeme or the Spirit Grove.                |   |
| 10*. Aboogaywa or place of execution.            | d. Apirvemoos Street.                 |  |   |

T. E. Bowdich, 1817.

Fig. III: T.E. Bowdich, 'Ichnographical Sketch of Coomassie', in T.E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (London, 1819), p. 323.

Reading through these slightly haphazard compendiums of ‘useful’ facts, figures, speculations, and assertions gives the impression that Bowdich had managed to make a little knowledge fill a lot of pages. This was certainly the strong opinion of Dupuis, and Hutton’s more forgiving disagreements with his predecessor also suggest that the speculation seemed to outweigh the precision of observation, to his fellow visitors. Nevertheless, the cumulative effect of the three accounts, even with their contradictions and disagreements, and varied interpretations of what constituted ‘useful’ knowledge, was that Kumasi had been ‘discovered’ as somewhere useful to know about. All three authors made cases for beneficial exchanges with Asante through trading goods that could improve infrastructure.<sup>132</sup> They also provided geographical details for military strategies that could become necessary in the future, with such an aggressive neighbour. The underlying assumption at work in each of these missions, the published accounts, and indeed in the reviews and comments that followed their publication, was that an imperial trade relationship or a military clash were not just possible, but likely, assuming that an expansionist strategy of some form would continue to be pursued in the region by remaining British operators on the coast.

Ricketts did not visit Kumasi at any point during his time on the Gold Coast, but his account mentions the Asante capital forty-five times, predominantly when referring to negotiations, demands and exchanges of information between the Asante court and the British command during the war.<sup>133</sup> It was known beforehand as a seat of power, and the frequent mentions in addition to the close attention paid by Bowdich, Dupuis and Hutton ensured that it was made recognisable as the centre of a powerful African state in British Imperial public discourse by

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<sup>132</sup> This priority was in Bowdich’s instructions from Smith, and later to Hutchinson. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 11-12, 141-144. J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 156-158. W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 332-334.

<sup>133</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 2-5, 21, 84, 132-134, 148-152.

the 1830s. Bowdich, Dupuis and Hutton all made points about the radial network of trading routes and connections spreading out from Kumasi, with a range of references and often highly prejudicial critiques of the information on these that they were able to gather from the various sources they spoke to when based in the capital. As with his extrapolations on population and revenues, Bowdich blended second and third-hand reports, little trusted, with speculation and the application of some very flawed methods of calculation, in order to try and describe in minute detail the distances, travel times, major intersections and directions of the routes and connections across the entire region. He was bound to make a number of mistakes.<sup>134</sup>

## Conclusion

Depictions of major settlements, as well as of infrastructure and agricultural activity, were repeatedly rendered untrustworthy by other sources competing for attention, or in Robinson's case by aspects of his own descriptions. The subjective differences between travellers' interpretations of what they witnessed were a powerful influence. Those involved in the editorial and book making process including engravers employed by the publisher also came to bear. The authority to survey the human geographies of urban areas and the networks of infrastructure and development that supported them was fragile and, as I have

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<sup>134</sup> I've tested some of his coordinates for places he names to the north in the Sahel region; there was nothing there. See various examples, in the chapter on Geography. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 193-201.

explored, reliant on the constant efforts of each author to construct it from their own experience. When claims to accuracy were accompanied by strong recommendations for the improving influence of British commerce, cultivation, civilisation, and related cultural practices – assumed or argued to be superior – it was necessary to define that authority both by the detail of observation that was expected to garner respect, and proper engagement with ideas about progress and improvement that were fully integrated with the British colonial worldview by the mid-Victorian period, but which were also evidently at work in these authors' evaluations of geographical potential and actuality of usage. Unreliability was inevitable whenever these conflicting priorities came to bear – accuracy of reportage for the ends of 'useful knowledge' was not always compatible with the elision of current legitimacy for the purpose of justifying imagined improvement.

The authors dealt with the human geographies of their travels and adventures because their readerships, contemporaries and predecessors also engaged with this kind of information on contact zone environments with a regular and competitive intellectual and emotional interest. Expectations from commercial interests – widespread in British middle-class society – were balanced with a fashion for information that was resulted from the British enculturation of Enlightenment intellectual principles. Also influential were Romantic imperatives to observe the beautiful and the picturesque in human or hybrid geographies, such as views from Angostura's hills, or the ridge overlooking the border with Asante. Confidence and condescension were at work in these observations, with the commanding gaze on the landscape of the British traveller interacting with the imperial attitudes of superiority in interactions with social and cultural systems and networks, or even the productive use of the

land itself.<sup>135</sup> To Pratt's relationship between the 'systemizing of nature' from the mid eighteenth century and the solidifying 'authority of print' and its controlling class, we can add a similar systemising of human interactions with place, space, and environment in contact zones by the early 1820s.<sup>136</sup> The social expectations for middle-class male travellers of self-proclaimed or bestowed authority (the officer, the diplomat, the doctor, the soldier) played a major part in this process. This was an important part of the culture of public discourse into which travel narratives were pitched, competing with the already anointed or self-styled exemplars and custodians of this mandate – the reviewers, literary figures, officials of state.<sup>137</sup> With all of the authors, their own authorities were closely connected to the encultured convictions they held about the reliability of knowledge they obtained from local sources on their travels, particularly when dealing with regions they could not visit but about which there was a great deal of interest and speculation in British public discourse at the time. These included Timbuktu, the source and course of the Niger river, and various other shadowy features of the imagined interior of West Africa that occupied the likes of Joseph Banks and John Barrow, and drew in explorers from Mungo Park to Laing, Lyons, Clapperton, then eventually the Lander brothers who solved the 'mystery of the great river'.<sup>138</sup>

It was also necessary to present the correct, culturally acceptable evaluation of the information other cultures apparently provided to the traveller. There are three main approaches in evidence here. A widespread method for the time, the disavowal of any

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<sup>135</sup> D. Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>136</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 30.

<sup>137</sup> C. Hall, S. Rose, *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Modern World* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 44-45.

<sup>138</sup> D. Lambert, "'Taken captive by the mystery of the Great River": towards an historical geography of British geography and Atlantic slavery', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 35:1 (2009), pp. 44-65.

indigenous sources, either not mentioning them at all or giving them no civilised identity, can be found across all of them to different degrees. Hippisley, for example, took the credit for local knowledge of the Orinoco river, the condition of the water, the geology and ecology of the basin, and more.<sup>139</sup> Where credit was acknowledged but disavowed using anonymity, the source was ‘an African’, ‘black’, ‘native’, ‘Indian’ or a variety of individual terms, but not identified by name, background or culture. The second approach, the hierarchical evaluation of the source, foregrounded relative trustworthiness, relating to the perceived civilisation of the informer. For the ‘native’, this would mean either being condemned as unreliable through a lack of intellect or civilised maturity (with cultural signifiers such as exotic and ‘primitive’ language or appearance), or entirely as a source of raw material; rough, unprocessed data that must be interpreted by the receiver in modern civilised terms. Rarest in these accounts are the handful of examples of full credit being given, respect for knowledge conferred, and a degree of humility towards the greater experience in the area under discussion on the part of the informant. Joseph Dupuis demonstrated this in his dealings with the Muslim traders and courtiers in Kumasi, whose culture and language he had an established respect for, although as he qualified in Part II, the ‘Moslems of Ashantee’ and sub-Saharan regions had acquired less in terms of intellect and civilisation, but they were, on balance, educated and reliable sources on the ‘land of their nativity’.<sup>140</sup> Thomas Bowdich, in contrast, had earlier condemned these ‘Moors’ for the ‘calumny’ and ‘poisonous jealousy’, while William Hutton viewed them as ‘jealous’ and duplicitous, but also a crucial influence on Asante.<sup>141</sup> In the next chapter I will discuss the interconnected issues the actor-authors faced in both theatres around their own

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<sup>139</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>140</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, Part II, pp. 10-12.

<sup>141</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 141, 151, 161. W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 226, 258.

authority and authenticity, those of the people they encountered, and the hierarchies of difference they worked within and developed in order to assimilate or reject the other in the form of 'useful' knowledge, level or potential of civilisation, and racialised characteristics adjudged to be inherent in specific groups, communities and distinctive population groups.



## Chapter 4

### People: Hierarchies of Civilisation and Race

Almost all the foreheads of these men are narrow and flat at the temples; yet, contrary to the doctrine of Gall and Spurzheim, they are the most cunning thieves alive; and no one among them will trust even his brother. The upper and back part of their head is extremely clumsy; the eyes are, in almost all, cunning, dark, and sharp; the cheek-bones are generally broad (often amazingly so) and high, in a great measure resembling the Scottish...

J.H. Robinson, *Journal of an Expedition 1400 miles up the Orinoco...* (London, 1822).

The first three decades of the nineteenth century saw many strands of social and scientific discourse begin to merge into a recognisable framework for modern racial thinking. Methodical examination of physical evidence became conventional alongside philosophical, social and proto-psychological considerations of human difference. However, beyond intellectual fields of inquiry, simple reactive assertions of difference already frequently overruled evidence, which was interpreted to fit with those preconceptions.<sup>1</sup> As Peter Kitson points out, 'a physical and biological concept begins to assume a new importance' from the first Enlightenment attempts to classify nature, but it was neither unified nor fixed by the early nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Out of this cultural discourse on the nature of human difference, with its ongoing experiential feedback of reports on other people around the world, travellers abroad inevitably wrote about their encounters within the confines of these debates, influenced by

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<sup>1</sup> T.M. Vial, *Modern Religion, Modern Race* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 25-27, 185-187. N. Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race* (London, 2002), pp. 20-21.

<sup>2</sup> P.J. Kitson, *Romantic Literature, Race, and Colonial Encounter* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 15-16.

shared and opposing prejudices. Multiple layers of encultured assumptions were made by the authors examined here, those who promoted or read them and those who engaged with them. They incorporated the first fully encultured aspects of what Balibar and Wallerstein call a 'biologism' of sexualised characteristics of difference, as well as a 'super-nationalism' of values and identity, to define the broad tools of categorisation and universalisation that allowed for a modern racist discourse of difference to develop along pseudo-scientific and imperialistic lines.<sup>3</sup> When I say modern here, I do not refer to the distinction made between overt and explicit racism before the era of Civil Rights from the 1950s, and the shifting lexicon of subversive and implicit racial prejudice that some sociologists argue succeeded it into the 1970s.<sup>4</sup> I mean modern in the sense of the consolidatory shift from natural philosophy to science, concurrent solidification of Enlightenment empiricism into disciplinary method, and movement of this into mainstream British culture. This was a process that occurred across the entire period of what we understand to be the Enlightenment, and although its legacy was still being worked into divisions we recognise well into the Victorian era, science as a 'modern' practice was of fashionable interest for a surprisingly long period beginning in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

The authors examined in this study often uncritically incorporated this 'biologism' and 'super-nationalism' because those strands of thought had already moved into the culture of British-

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<sup>3</sup> E. Balibar, I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, 1991), pp. 58-62.

<sup>4</sup> Described, variously, as 'symbolic racism', 'modern racism', and 'racial resentment'. For a discussion of these concepts and their critics, see C. Tarman and D.O. Sears, 'The Conceptualization and Measurement of Symbolic Racism', *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 67, No. 3 (Aug., 2005), pp. 731-761.

<sup>5</sup> For the literary context of this long process, see T. Chico, *The Experimental Imagination: Literary Knowledge and Science in the British Enlightenment* (Stanford, 2018), pp. 20-26, 53-9. The emergence of modern 'disciplines' reveals more when examined across the imagined divide between science and philosophy or humanities. See R. Valenza, *Literature, Language and the Rise of Intellectual Disciplines in Britain, 1680-1820* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 5-9.

Imperial identity. In David Hume's essay 'Of the Populousness of Ancient Peoples' (c. 1753), there was already what Naomi Zack calls an 'easy assumption' that races existed, conflated with unclear notions of 'species' and 'essence'.<sup>6</sup> It was normalised rapidly and taken for granted by subsequent generations of British travellers, agents and adventurers, who also recapitulated this view if they became authors. Descriptions of people, especially of individuals as archetypes, appealed as a sensational draw to readers of travel writing, and of periodicals where they were reviewed, extracted, and disseminated. Bill Schwarz notes that encounters at the frontier, 'separated from the polite cultures of capital city and metropole', shared 'an accumulation of strangeness' with a domestic audience, requiring negotiation between incessant danger, 'fantasies of racial terror', and tense negotiations of European self and other.<sup>7</sup> These were dramatically 'in flux' through encounters with a human cultural diversity, which Jeremy Smith examines in the Americas, but which I contend was applicable to the wider Atlantic periphery.<sup>8</sup>

This was evident in the extracting processes and comments of press and periodical when engaging with accounts. For example, the review of Bowdich's *Mission* in the *Edinburgh Review* tentatively (and a little tongue-in-cheek) put forth the suggestion that the Asante were a kind of (semi)civilising conqueror for the region, and therefore a viable ally – the serious reasoning for this was rooted in the opportunities an agreement presented for 'opening' interior regions to British trade. Nevertheless, the extracts included a description of the 'horrid

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<sup>6</sup> N. Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race* (London, 2002), pp. 15-18. 'Of the Populousness of Ancient Peoples' was written some time before his 1754 volume of *Essays*, in which it was printed. N. Zack, *Philosophy of Race: An Introduction* (London, 2018), p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> B. Schwarz, *The White Man's World* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 116-118.

<sup>8</sup> J. Smith, *Europe and the Americas: State Formation, Capitalism and Civilizations in Atlantic Modernity* (Leiden, 2006), p. 22.

and detestable' customs of 'human sacrifice' and torture to illustrate the intrinsic violent threat posed by this culture, a theme even more central to reviews and extracts in other publications from the London dailies to the literary miscellanies.<sup>9</sup> The original sources – the published books – were able to offer a counterpoint to the reductive tendency of philosophical and proto-scientific theorists of race, drawing on their more anxious, improvised and ambivalent observations of human difference which were obtained through the mediated gaze of their own experience, providing more alongside the sensationalism of 'horror' than the periodicals, and contradicting each other in places on the precise relations of difference and civilising potential while still entrenching the rhetoric of both.

As I have demonstrated in the previous two chapters, these actor-authors were strongly influenced by the components of a complex encultured worldview. It encompassed scientism and empiricism, along with ingrained tropes of Romantic culture, anti-slavery's humanistic attitudes to difference and the moral arguments of its religious culture, and values connected to British hegemony and cultural self-belief. At any moment this blend of factors varied between individuals, based on status, life experiences, and agenda. There is a generational effect at work too, a form of syncretism that helps to reconcile contested and oppositional elements so that they can be enculturated together without explicit conflict. This allowed travel writers after 1815 to combine the National-Imperial confidence of military victory and naval hegemony with the maxim of 'free trade', accept the religious and rational arguments against slavery together, and express a Romantic sense of wonder within a framework of

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<sup>9</sup> Anon, Article IV, review of T. Bowdich, *The Edinburgh Review*, October 1819, pp. 389-399. 'Bowdich's Account of the Mission to Ashantees', *Caledonian Mercury*, 12 April 1819. 'Immolation of Human Beings', *Newcastle Courant*, 13 May 1820.

categorical empiricism.<sup>10</sup> This syncretic gaze was applied to the human subject with more anxiety about difference and relative values of human cultures than it was to landscape and environment. Considering the formative corpus of eighteenth century European travel writing, Nigel Leask argues that Mary Louise Pratt's 'anti-conquest' of constructed innocence in the European gaze with its consequent reassertion of cultural hegemony does not, in reality, relieve the traveller as author of the anxiety they experience in asserting their authenticity (or indeed in surviving their experience).<sup>11</sup> I argue that, at least given the renewed confidence of the post-Napoleonic experience of travel-authorship, the possibly unfeigned 'rhetoric of vulnerability' belonging to the earlier 'age of sensibility' had, after a generation or three, become reconciled by the necessity of societal expectation with a discourse of national-imperial cultural pre-eminence.<sup>12</sup> Some authors were involved, with their publishers, in carefully selecting what they presented as authentic, as William Martin Leake did in order to avoid challenging his audience's existing view of the 'degraded and semi-barbarous' people from which most of his geographical information came from. This was, as Withers et al. point out in the case of the publisher John Murray, a negotiation between intended readerships, author personae, and authorial credibility, carried out on a case-by-case basis.<sup>13</sup> By the late 1810s it was a firmly established culture, influencing even the authors who were not mediated by their publishers, such as most of those I examine here. Telling what was *perceived* to be the truth was of equal and complementary importance to the assertion of an objective cultural

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<sup>10</sup> F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, 2005), pp. 179-181. P. O'Brien, 'Hegemony as an Anglo-American Succession, 1815-2004', *Sens public*, 2005. <http://sens-public.org/articles/115/> Accessed 3 December 2020.

<sup>11</sup> N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 17-19. M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>13</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 86, 99.

superiority. It was another syncretic component of a generational world-view and, rather than a prevalent 'rhetoric of vulnerability', its overriding character was now of confident authority.

In this chapter I will discuss the authors' establishment and reinforcement hierarchies of race and civilisation to explain and familiarise the people and cultures they encountered. The material, cultural and behavioural observations made using narrative, ethnography, physiognomy, and history were indicative of an encultured set of values concerning racial groups and their hierarchisation, while also subordinated to the personal prejudices and agendas of each author. The outcomes of this were imperial in their assignment of hierarchical values. Blending the cultural with the physical was common in these accounts. In this manner, essential characteristics were frequently, if sometimes uncertainly, assigned to racialised categories using cultural judgements – a culturally dictated 'biologism' of race.<sup>14</sup> I will examine appraisals of daily life and behaviours, encompassing the proto-ethnographies that had already become an established convention of travel writing, with its modern anthropological roots in the sixteenth century and a long process of development that involved the adaptation of alien cultures to make them exotic and comprehensible to European readers.<sup>15</sup> The analysis will then shift to exceptional cultural markers including superstition, subjugation violence, and human sacrifice to demonstrate how they were accepted as exclusionary characteristics of difference, and stereotyped or justified depending on acknowledgement of essentialised causation. The following chapter will continue this discussion, focusing on the construction of the masculine gaze through gendered representations of other people. I will explore the idea

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<sup>14</sup> E. Balibar, I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, pp. 58-62.

<sup>15</sup> On early anthropology, travel writing and the appeal of ethnography, see M.T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1971), pp. 478-511. For the contribution of artists through maps, and the conventions they helped establish, see S. Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human: New Worlds, Maps and Monsters* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 2-7, 217-224, 297-301.

that martial or un-martial races were perceived, based on military signifiers of civilised capacity including organisation, effectiveness, bravery, savagery and cruelty, before a closer focus on masculinity, individual protagonists, and the male personae of the authors in relation to the other characters in their accounts.

### **Hierarchies of Authenticity**

As I began to discuss in Chapter 3, each of the travellers in their subsequent roles as authors considered the relative trustworthiness and authority of sources of information they received, based on hierarchies of civilisation as markers of authenticity. It was necessary to acknowledge the providers of information, figures of evaluation as well as participants of exchange, through the combined lenses of their National-Imperial gaze and the expectations of current public discourse. Reliability, as perceived by actor-author and as an imagined expectation of the audience, was a key component in the consideration of people they met. It related directly to characterisations of race, intellect, temperament, and level of civilisation. Acknowledging the practical value of knowledge did not, however, preclude 'demonisation' or disregard of indigenous cultures, social practices, or characteristics. Already established colonial traditions of negotiation between credibility and practical application of 'raw' information were part of the encultured approach of travel writers at this time and were

dependent on accepted beliefs of civilisational hierarchy.<sup>16</sup> Henry Staten warns of the risk of reintroducing a ‘precritical valorization of “civilisation”’ in postcolonial attempts to ‘criticize Eurocentric thinking’. The ‘*civilisational* prejudice’ he outlines is present in these travel writings where they characterised and valorised their ‘informants’ through racialised hierarchies of cultural authority. In distinguishing ‘primitive’ from ‘civilised’ without recapitulating Eurocentric characterisations of the latter, we need to remain constantly aware of the long intellectual and literary history of Western civilisationist thinking.<sup>17</sup> Direct experience and individual prejudice also pushed these authors to adapt and mould new and established conventions of racial or civilisational hierarchy to fit their versions of each encounter, but an ‘enlightened’ understanding of ‘civilisation’ was always accepted to be inherently true.

In travel writing, broad use of synecdoche to carry out the familiarisation of ‘exotic’ people or ‘different’ races was applied, taking the part ‘as emblematic of a greater whole, since no traveller’ can become familiar with every person or every cultural nuance encountered.<sup>18</sup> This allowed them to construct moveable boundaries of race and civilisation around their own preferences (or prejudices) regarding different people or cultures they encountered, while also making sense when faced with counterintuitive complexities. For the purpose of determining authenticity of information, then, within a recognisable racialised framework of relative civilisation, Thomas Bowdich and Joseph Dupuis made contrasting characterisations

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<sup>16</sup> For an account of Enlightenment epistolary networks and the anxieties around reliance on indigenous and African slave knowledge in the North American and Caribbean colonies, see S.S. Parish, ‘Diasporic African Sources of Enlightenment Knowledge’, in J. Delburgo, N. Dew, Eds. *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World* (New York, 2008), pp. 281-310.

<sup>17</sup> H. Staten, ‘Tracking the “Native Informant”’, in S. Bermann, M. Wood, Eds. *Nation, Language and the Ethics of Translation* (Princeton, 2005), p. 118.

<sup>18</sup> C. Thompson, *Travel Writing, The new critical idiom* (London, 2011), p. 71.

of the Muslim traders and courtiers they met in Kumasi.<sup>19</sup> Bowdich made them into jealous, calumnious, untrustworthy influences on the Asantehene, working against the Company delegation. The Arabic-speaking Dupuis depicted them as culturally inferior to the North African Arab cultures he had experienced at Mogador, yet intellectually superior and more reliable than their hosts. Hutton found them duplicitous but crucially influential.<sup>20</sup> They each differed, and the last two were certainly referring to exactly the same people, but they all bestowed those 'Oriental' characteristics ascribed to Islamic culture in British writings of the time.<sup>21</sup> Circumstances forced them to acknowledge their sophisticated political influence, or their report would be useless to the debates at home, but they all positioned themselves in relation to it quite differently based on their personal understandings of racial hierarchy. Crucially, although Dupuis inserted an internal hierarchy of cultural sophistication into his view of Islamic culture, they all extrapolated a broad categorisation of the 'Mohammedan' in sub-Saharan African societies from limited encounters with only a few individuals in very particular circumstances.

The negotiation of authenticity within existing understandings of civilisation was extended to uncivilised or inferior races in the West African and Venezuelan cases. It is more deliberate in the former, where the official positions of the observers were prominent. Muslim individuals, at least from Dupuis, were granted their names, as were Asante elites and Patriot officers of mixed heritage in South America, but in keeping with those processes of building credibility as travel writers, indigenous informants or facilitators were not generally named as individuals.

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<sup>19</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, Part II, pp. 10-12. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 141, 151, 161.

<sup>20</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 226, 258.

<sup>21</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 119-121, 157-159.

Withers, Keighren and Bell see recognition of these sources' intelligence and agency as representations of 'a relationship between geographical region, genre of writing, and intended audience', with qualified and limited acknowledgement granted to ranking figures or guides in North Africa and regions of Asia.<sup>22</sup> The evidence here suggests that, with greater ambivalence towards indigenous credibility if it was not crucial to survival or progress on the ground, the tendency to actively denigrate the reliability of 'uncivilised' sources was far more apparent in these theatres. In West Africa this encompassed status distinctively. The nameless unreliaables were all dismissively seen as locally bound and operating within systems of knowledge that were primitive and unrelatable, without measurements and categories in common with British culture. Traders, farmers, porters and even leaders of small and remote settlements were characterised as purveyors of a raw material of information, tinged by a lack of civilised imagination or the tools to make sense of what they knew. For Bowdich, the details of journey times and directions were inherently unreliable when coming from these unacknowledged figures, regardless of their regular experience of travelling through regions that the British delegations would get nowhere near.<sup>23</sup> Dupuis was equally careful to position anonymised indigenous informants far below the Muslims he admired, and he used the information garnered from the latter to legitimise – to civilise – the 'raw data' of the unmediated 'native gossip'.<sup>24</sup> Suspicion of superstition or pure fabrication underpinned similar evaluations made of indigenous Venezuelans' cultures of knowledge, and the consistent denaming of the 'Indian' informant was extended to the slave of obvious African origin, regardless of their freedom or rank. From the South American perspective, simplicity and

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<sup>22</sup> C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, p. 83.

<sup>23</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 228.

<sup>24</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, Part II, pp. i-iii, xii, xv-xvi.

duplicity were both attributed to 'natives', whether the author had met the individuals in question or not. Charles Brown's account of Colonel McDonald's demise was entirely about distrust and the duplicity of the unreliable 'savage'.<sup>25</sup> The 'Indians' were also always nameless and homogenised, but they were unknowably different and consequently dangerous in a way that the West African 'raw' informant was not seen to be.

### **Hierarchies of people: Race and civilisation**

A cultural model of superiority was extant within British National-Imperial beliefs about their place at the top of a hierarchy of civilisation. It was firmly encultured in the worldview of these traveller-authors. In its existing forms, and historically, British Imperialism was already firmly ethnocentric – as European imperialisms tend to be – when these individuals became agents of a British worldview. This is despite sliding definitions of 'Britishness' which could encompass, at times, a core Englishness or a self-conscious but distinctly lowland and urban Scottishness, a broader coalition of sometimes conflicting cultural identities, or an absencing of, for example, Irish aspects of personal identity.<sup>26</sup> Robinson often highlighted that specific Edinburgh Scottishness while Hippisley was conscious of his Englishness, maybe more so following his residence in the Channel Islands, and certainly through the performative

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<sup>25</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>26</sup> C. Kidd, 'North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth-Century British Patriotisms', *The Historical Journal*, 39, 2 (1996), pp. 361-382.

identities of army and then militia officer.<sup>27</sup> None of the Gold Coast sources interrogated Governor MacCarthy's Irish roots or French upbringing when praising his British moral character.<sup>28</sup> Colonial slavery and campaigns for its abolition had come to define a clearly understood if not discussed whiteness that underpinned these composites of Britishness wherever they encountered people of obvious difference. Philosophical and pseudo-scientific conceptions of race, white supremacy and biological determinism were old enough in the 1810s to be encultured in this ever-evolving Britishness through exchanges between north European Enlightenment theoretics and categorical systems from Hume to Kant, Linnaeus to Cuvier. A superior-inferior binary was well understood, fusing literary understandings of civilisation and biological difference.<sup>29</sup>

In keeping with the hybridity of newer nationalisms, and supra-national intellectual cultures, contributions of the part passed into and out of the whole. The Scottish influence of Hume on Kant, then the impact of Linnaeus, Blumenbach and others on the work of influential abolitionist physician James Pritchard, trained in Edinburgh, demonstrates how a range of thinkers, theories, and studies across northern Europe could establish the categorising principle of assessing difference as a cultural habit, even when in critical debate with each other.<sup>30</sup> Essentialising of skin colour, formalised by Kant, was key to shaping the debate, along with the absenting of a history of civilisation for non-white cultures, and ascription of an

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<sup>27</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. x, 28-29, 40, 48, 108, 264. G. Hippiusley, *Narrative*, pp. 52-53, 263.

<sup>28</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 209-212. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 1-18, 26-30, 34-67.

<sup>29</sup> P. Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the extinction of primitive races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca, 2003), pp. 17-21.

<sup>30</sup> S. Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 12-15.

intrinsic superiority to white Europeans due to superior 'talent'.<sup>31</sup> This was then translated into British National-Imperial discourse by Romanticising intellectual processes that incorporated the issues of the day, including slavery.<sup>32</sup> The characteristics were therefore normalised, while intellectual flexibilities in their application, even to their fundamentals such as heredity versus climate, were freed up for ongoing debate.

This contrasts with the complex, nuanced and not fully fixed hierarchies of difference at work in Spanish colonial administration. There are, however, key parallels in the development of a colonial hierarchy – under conditions of rule – out of an imperial precursor. Irene Silverblatt points out that notions of 'Spanishness' were emerging as Spain's colonial project was established in the Americas, based on the roots of an imperial system that forced Africans as slaves into their models of identity; antagonistic, racialised relationships were 'at its core', and labelling the self as 'Spaniard' allowed the colonisers to set themselves above the colonised.<sup>33</sup> The imperial was useful for constructing the national in its relative newness as a social reality, comparable to how National-Imperial Britishness developed in the eighteenth century through shifting colonial narratives from North America, India and the Caribbean.<sup>34</sup> Ruth Hill argues that applying the concepts of race to these Iberian-imperial social hierarchies reveals 'a great deal about the triumph of polygenetic thinking in the nineteenth century and its significance to our own times but very little about social hierarchy in viceregal Spanish

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<sup>31</sup> N. Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race* (London, 2002), p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> P.J. Kitson, "'Bales of Living Anguish": Representations of Race and the Slave in Romantic Writing', *ELH*, Vol. 67, No. 2, Summer 2000, pp. 515-537.

<sup>33</sup> I. Silverblatt, Foreword, in A.B. Fisher and M.D. O'Hara, Eds. *Imperial Subjects: Race and identity in Colonial Latin America* (Durham, 2009), pp. x-xi.

<sup>34</sup> C. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: the British Empire and the world 1780--1830* (London, 1989), pp. 75-77. H.V. Bowen, 'British conceptions of global empire, 1756-83', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 26:3, 1998, pp. 1-27.

America'.<sup>35</sup> Conflating the *casta* of Spanish Imperial hierarchies with race misunderstands the cultural identities in play; '*casta* was not biology: it was a cluster of somatic, economic, linguistic, geographical' and other signifiers, with minute local variations and extraordinary mutability.<sup>36</sup> However, considering the complexity of *casta* within colonial rule (between, for example, Cuba, Hispaniola, New Spain or Peru), it seems certain that experiences of these structures were inevitably, if variably, analogous to racialised forms of prejudice, discrimination and oppression. Silverblatt borrows the term 'race thinking' from Hannah Arendt to describe how, from the early colonial era in Peru to the nineteenth century, caste and race became 'interpenetrating' systems, 'tied to other expressions of power' and social tensions, and 'best interpreted in dialectic with those relations'.<sup>37</sup> Entering the cultural environment of Spanish colonial rule in the 1810s, British observers including Hippisley and Robinson saw the hierarchy of Venezuelan society from a Eurocentric perspective now influenced by vague but pervasive scientific and philosophical principles that brought the 'race-thinking' dialectic into the realm of contemporary British public discourse on human difference.<sup>38</sup> Degrees of determinism *were* applied very frequently across three centuries of colonialism in the Spanish Empire, as in the first British Empire in North America, with benefits accruing to the colonisers culturally, materially, executively and legally. Likewise, the entrenched social and legal positions of the lower orders of this system, social or biological, were held in place by systematic disadvantage due to what would later be called race, even

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<sup>35</sup> R. Hill, *Hierarchy, Commerce and Fraud in Bourbon Spanish America: A postal inspector's expose* (Nashville, 2005), p. 199.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 198-200.

<sup>37</sup> I. Silverblatt, *Modern Inquisitions: Peru and the Colonial Origins of the Civilized World* (Durham, 2004), pp. 17-18.

<sup>38</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 91-93, 470-473. . J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 127-145, 160-165.

as individuals and sub-groups were able to move frequently within this hierarchy, which itself shifted substantially.<sup>39</sup>

The development of a scientific rhetoric for these debates and the long standing yet continually evolving practical structures of hierarchy in colonial settings or imperial exchanges were, therefore, part of the worldview of European travellers penetrating African and American Atlantic peripheries. Travellers as authors could be conscious of these intellectual legacies or not, engage with them as contributors or avoid them, and even explicitly manipulate them or set them aside in favour of their own imagined hierarchy of difference. All of these positions would still require them to accept the underlying notion that there *were* reasons for difference related to place, climate, culture or biology, and that there was an inherent hierarchy that placed, from a British perspective, anything to the south of Plymouth (or indeed in the Scottish Highlands, Wales, or Ireland) lower down the imagined ladder of civilisation. This led to imprecise ideas about the hierarchical positions of those with Spanish, Creole, Islamic and other 'lower' civilised identities. All four Gold Coast writers saw cultures of relative superiority in the Dutch at Elmina and the Danish at Accra, even if they did not trust the former in particular.<sup>40</sup> The three visitors to Kumasi made judgements of the Muslim trans-Saharan traders based on stereotypical assumptions about their relative intellect and tendency to political manipulation.<sup>41</sup> Analogous to this orientalised judgement of Islamic figures were the varying judgements of Spanish Royalists and Creole Patriots in the

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<sup>39</sup> D. Tavaréz, 'Legally Indian: Inquisitorial readings of indigenous identity in New Spain', in A.B. Fisher and M.D. O'Hara, Eds. *Imperial Subjects*, pp. 81-100.

<sup>40</sup> Bowdich primarily referred to the Dutch when 'recording' the words of the Asantehene, whose opinion of their conduct as it was represented here tended to vary at various stages of their negotiations. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 67. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 51-56. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 205-208. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 79-81, 175-176.

<sup>41</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, Part II, pp. x-xii. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 141, 151, 161. W. Hutton, *A Voyage*, pp. 226, 258.

Venezuelan accounts. The ‘Spaniards’ were, though inferior due to their ‘inherent’ cruelty and Catholic idolatry, accepted as part of Europe’s old order, and were therefore ‘civilised’ and white in this context. Crucially, they had history that could be understood on European terms. They were, however, situated lower in their civilised status by Robinson, Brown and Vowell due to that cruelty, and to related stereotypes of English anti-Catholicism or the southern European more broadly. John Robinson saw restrictive superstition in the baffling ceremony of the ‘conduct of the *Padre* to a dying person’ – he would not have believed it if he had not seen it.<sup>42</sup> Gustavus Hippiusley, uncharacteristically, showed a little self-deprecating self-awareness in describing his mild discomfort at ‘being made a Catholic’ during a Mass to celebrate the ‘eighth anniversary of the Republic’. Although this was conducted for the Patriots and full of exhortations to victory over the ‘tyrant Spaniards’, its pomp was still portrayed as ridiculous.<sup>43</sup> Elsewhere, however, Hippiusley’s confusion of opinions on the cause of independence and the credentials to liberty of the Creole society included comments disparaging their manners, civility and organisational competence, and qualified respect for these things in the Royalist ‘Spaniard’, even while condemning them as ‘tyrant’ oppressors and typically superstitious servants to despotic authorities such as (Catholic) Crown and Pope.<sup>44</sup> Such judgements appear cultural rather than racial, in modern terms, but they played into the preconception of North European superiority over other undeniably civilised cultures. Taken at face value, they were predictably partisan, favouring ingrained prejudices, but without conscious awareness of the theoretical development of North European racial supremacies. Where they were discussed more deliberately though, the graded judgements

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<sup>42</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>43</sup> G. Hippiusley, *Narrative*, pp. 304-309.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 304-309.

of these debates do emerge. For example, though generally favourable toward them, Dupuis adjudged the sub-Saharan (and Black African) Islamic culture to be intellectually and materially inferior to that of North Africa.<sup>45</sup>

These relatively mild discriminatory remarks concerning the civilised orders the travellers encountered are recontextualised if we take a close look at the minute derogatory judgements imposed on indigenous Africans or South Americans. Here the habit of stereotyping was made, using detailed descriptions filled with already common tropes concerning the 'Negro' or 'Indian' other. For Stuart Hall, racial stereotyping 'reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes "difference"'. It then involves 'a strategy of "splitting"' the normal/acceptable from the abnormal/unacceptable, excluding 'everything which does not belong' or ignoring practices or behaviours which cannot be normalised.<sup>46</sup> Exceptions were observed in these narratives, discussed in detail even, but they were excused *as* exceptions. In this way, Dupuis and Bowdich could both speak in positive terms of the Asantehene's intellect, and even form limited positive judgements of the Asante more broadly, particularly among the elite they had close contact with, yet still characterise them as a 'half-savage' people at best, and essentialise that with the link between their perceived black African nature and their environment. In Part II of his *Journal*, Dupuis described at length the 'ignorance of the Pagan Negroes', saying that 'the unlettered heathen is so decidedly ignorant and disinterested about researches into past ages, that I will venture to affirm, if he should pretend to describe anything remote, it will only be with a view to impose upon the credulity of the enquirer'. The generic individual (male by default) would know 'only that he exists, and that he must one day die', would 'put the

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<sup>45</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, Part II, pp. i-xii.

<sup>46</sup> S. Hall, 'The Spectacle of the "Other"', in S. Hall, Ed. *Representation* (London, 1997), pp. 257-261.

muscles of his face in motion' if asked about creation, politics or history, and refer the inquirer to 'the Moslems'. Dupuis was able to declare this from his 'practical knowledge of the habits of indolence, ignorance, and superstition by which their faculties are obscured, and their understandings bewildered'.<sup>47</sup> Here, he practised the de-naming of the generic savage, racial stereotyping and the positioning of the 'pagan negro' in relation to the 'the Moslems', who were not described by ocular racial characteristics. As with similar dissonant stereotypes proposed with authority by Bowdich and Hutton, there was ample evidence of the extensive regional, historical, and cultural knowledge of the Asantehene, key 'pagans' at court, senior Caboceers and other Asante individuals that dilute this characterisation. That is before we even consider the lengths to which Bowdich and Dupuis went to furnish Asante with a recognisable history, setting them further apart from supposedly less civilised neighbours, particularly their imperial subjects or victims.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the ranking judgement was delivered confidently in this deterministic way and with that detectable tone of disdain. Just enough malleable anecdotal evidence was fed into the existing stereotype of the black African pagan.

The stereotyping of the 'Indian', and the confused, illogical approach to defining and describing the various hybrid racial types identified in the South American accounts, was also approached in a reductive way, while downplaying contradictory examples and using personal anecdote or rumour as sources for universalised characteristics of racial difference. Again, varying levels of awareness towards, and engagement with, scientised debates about difference are apparent across the selection, based on the authors' personal awareness of the

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<sup>47</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, Part II, p. LXXXIII.

<sup>48</sup> T.E Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 228-251 . J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 116-118, I-LXXV.

intellectual discourse. Long-established stereotypes were, again, reproduced uncritically, such as those of habitual lying, physical ubiquities, or vulnerability to colonial exploitation.<sup>49</sup> Romanticised characterisations were also involved. Richard Vowell invoked what has come to be called the trope of the 'noble savage' in his early encounter with the 'river Indians'. This encompasses, more accurately, the traits of a Romantic soft and positive primitivism. They were 'wild or uncivilised' yet 'behaved with the greatest propriety', despite simple wonder at 'every article' in the Europeans' possession.<sup>50</sup> As Ter Ellingson has discussed, the 'noble savage' type had no clear meaning as a concept throughout this period – attribution to Rousseau fails to account for the difference in translation and meaning between 'noble' and 'good' – and so can be considered anachronistic, but there was certainly a developed notion of the positively perceived primitive in some Romantic representations of indigenous people, as we have found here with Vowell.<sup>51</sup> Childlike wonder was assumed in these people who allegedly lived near-permanently on the water and were apparently culturally unaffected by contact with Spanish colonial.<sup>52</sup> This primitive status, positive to Vowell, carried different meanings for other observers. For Brown, their abjection on St Bartholomew was complete and naïve loyalty to colonial rule was the cause. The aforementioned 'river Indians' were this time 'wild and savage' despite the mounted guns on their sizeable craft and their substantial preparations for trade.<sup>53</sup> Vowell's first primitive people were uncorrupted by Spanish despotism, mannered and subservient, and open to civilising influence. Brown's were in thrall to their Spanish rulers, an animalistic threat to the safety of European passengers on board

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<sup>49</sup> N. Safier, *Measuring the New World*, pp. 70-71, 194-198.

<sup>50</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>51</sup> T. Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley, 2001), pp. 4, 153-168, 185.

<sup>52</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>53</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 42, 48, 55.

the *Spartan*, and disturbingly different in their 'wildness'. Both saw indigenous people through Romantic cultural lenses but produced starkly contrasting images.

### **The Scientific Author: J.H. Robinson, phrenology, and authenticities of public debate**

Existing scientific and philosophical debates were engaged with directly by Dr John Robinson. In describing the 'squalid' and 'motley' force of Indian soldiers under General Monagas' command, he referenced the 'doctrine of Gall and Spurzheim', contradicting the famous phrenologists' racial typing of primitive 'natives', who 'are the most cunning thieves alive' and not of the docile character suggested by the phrenologists.<sup>54</sup> Franz Joseph Gall, considered the founder of phrenology, and Johann Spurzheim, his assistant and intended successor, had caused an intellectual stir in Edinburgh and a typically caustic public discourse in the leading British periodicals by the time Robinson wrote his account.<sup>55</sup> Robinson's objective was not to dismiss their theories out of hand, but to engage in the conversation by offering an example that did not fit precisely with their model, but instead suggested a separate group with its own inherent characteristics and behaviour. His performance of objectivity included the affectedly disinterested comparison of the Indians' 'amazingly' high cheek bones to Scottish peoples'; he

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<sup>54</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>55</sup> A.M., 'The Craniological Controversy', April, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Volume I, April to September 1817 (Edinburgh, 1817), pp. 35-38. S.R., 'Observations on the Remarks of A.M. on the Doctrines of Gall and Spurzheim', June, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Volume I, April to September 1817 (Edinburgh, 1817), pp. 365-367. Anon, 'Gall and Spurzheim's Physiognomical System', *Quarterly Review*, Volume 13, Number 25, (April 1815), pp. 159-178.

did not specify the range of that Scottish population he saw similarities with, although whether it reflected on his identity as middle-class Scottish urban professional was doubtful. The strange blend of kinship and otherness felt by the lowland Enlightenment Scot towards primitive but culturally desirable Highlanders may be reflected here in the doctor's position.<sup>56</sup> Certainly, Robinson claimed no affinity with 'Creoles and natives' by comparing Scottish cheek-bones, having already noted the 'clumsy' head shape and narrow forehead with flat temples, already associated with 'negro' physiology and primitive human form. This line of thinking had a flavour of both natural determinism in type and capacities of brain function, and moral distinction between culture and behaviour.<sup>57</sup> Spurzheim accredited a narrow forehead as a physical characteristic to 'negroes' in general and, even though he contended that head shape comparisons by other anatomists and physiologists were 'very defective, they are yet rather for than against the physiology of the brain', essentialising correlations between head shapes, brains, and characteristics of 'nations'. He declared that 'the foreheads of negroes', being 'very narrow, their talents of music and mathematics are also in general very limited'. He contended later that they could not generally count to higher than five 'in simple terms' while Europeans 'proceed as far as ten' before their numbers 'proceed as compound'.<sup>58</sup> Robinson sought to contribute to this debate, signalling that he had been able to make empirical observations and add a distinct example to the phrenological catalogue. The scientised intent is clear, while empirical experience added complexity that challenged those leading theorists' work. The characteristics and behaviours described by Robinson, using

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<sup>56</sup> K. McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire: Writing the Highlands, 1760-1860* (Columbus, 2007), p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> J. Wyhe, *Phrenology and the Origins of Victorian Scientific Naturalism* (Abingdon, 2004), p. 34.

<sup>58</sup> J. Spurzheim, *The Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim, Founded on an Anatomical and Physiological Examination of the Nervous System in general and the Brain in Particular, and indicating the dispositions and manifestations of the mind* (London, 1815), pp. 287-288, 442.

direct reference to a fashionable, controversial epistemology of human difference, were racial in the modern scientifically derived sense.

Robinson probably had engaged with Spurzheim's work, enshrining as it did the notion of racial hierarchy in the physiognomic interpretations of Gall's earlier theories. He would certainly have been able to access published works on this contentious subject, including 1815's *The Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim*, excoriating critiques such as the *Quarterly Review's* that year, and his Edinburgh contemporary Dr John Gordon's rebuttal, 'The Doctrines of Gall and Spurzheim', in *The Edinburgh Review*.<sup>59</sup> Gordon condemned Spurzheim's 'opinions' in *The Physiological System*, being 'the more minute in our sketch of them, that their absurdity might be the more apparent'. Spurzheim's 'System of Morals' was 'perfectly unintelligible'. This article also, however, detailed a breakdown of some of the categories of Gall and Spurzheim's system of analysis, listed over thirty 'Propensities' from their 'Order of Feelings', and unintentionally made the theories that he dismissed far more accessible and popular in his thoroughness to engage with and refute their system.<sup>60</sup> Spurzheim responded to the criticism, first with a visit to Edinburgh in 1816, and then in print in 1817, playing successfully on the ongoing controversy.<sup>61</sup> Robinson could not have avoided the developing and contentious public discourse around phrenology and the contributions it made to conceptions of human difference, or implications for the scientifically minded traveller-observer. His description and its underlying assumptions relied on a hierarchical

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<sup>59</sup> J. Wyhe, *Phrenology and the Origins of Victorian Scientific Naturalism* (Abingdon, 2004), p. 43.

<sup>60</sup> Anon (Dr. John Gordon), 'The Doctrines of Gall and Spurzheim,' *Edinburgh Review*, 25, (June, 1815), pp. 227-268.

<sup>61</sup> J. Spurzheim, *Examination of the objections made in Britain against the doctrines of Gall and Spurzheim* (Edinburgh, 1817). J. Wyhe, *Phrenology and the Origins of Victorian Scientific Naturalism* (Abingdon, 2004), pp. 45-49.

relationship of human types, a concomitant reflection of this in the cultures and behaviours of subjects under scrutiny, and the imperial nature of their observers' socio-cultural relationships.

Robinson also had to deal with the contradiction that variation presented to him. He concluded by acknowledging the 'Indian soldiers' variation in appearance but pointed out that no two of the 400 men looked or dressed the same. He intended to make further judgements on their irregularity and lack of tangible civilised culture. He was clear where the strict demarcation of physiognomic difference lay, noting that 'the European Spaniards, and their immediate descendants, differ from the Creoles and natives in being high in the forehead'.<sup>62</sup> By this pattern, any subsequent traveller might discern between any of the population in this region by the shape of foreheads, avoiding the trouble of deciding for themselves. This was a dividing line in the author's imagination. It was supported by examples from his own experience between 'European Spaniards' by origin and breeding, and 'others' in their entirety, notwithstanding three centuries of intermingling between colonial Spanish settlers, their offspring, the indigenous people, and all of those descended by varying degrees from both. When he turned his focus to an ethnographic description of Creole society, however, the apparent influence of New World primitivism and the peripheral environment on this 'mixed' and 'part-civilised' population was fixated on.

Whether engaging with new scientific philosophies of difference extant in contemporary British discourse, or extending stereotypes based on established ethnocentric, Eurocentric, and predominantly Anglocentric cultural beliefs, travellers as authors of experiences on either

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<sup>62</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 138-139.

side of the Atlantic firmly othered the people they encountered. They utilised an established hierarchy of civilisation with their own at the top and confused the differences between nature and culture in order to justify the evidence of their experiences regarding various gradations of civilisation. These included apparently more civilised groups within races such as the Asante elite, but also the civilised but degraded or stagnant Spanish, Creole, or Islamic figures. Below those were the fundamentally and permanently inferior primitive people – indigenous South Americans, slaves or former slaves, the general Asante populace or colonial subjects, or their ethnically distinct and less powerful neighbours.

### **‘Manners and Customs’: Imperial ethnographies, ascribed ethnicities**

Robinson, like Bowdich and Dupuis with the stereotyped ‘negro’, laid out his perceptions of the characters of ‘Indians’ and ‘Creoles’, through their observable ‘manners’. I will return to Robinson’s description of the ‘Indian Soldier’ in the following chapter when I discuss representations of ‘martial races’. His approach to describing Creole society is most strikingly comparable with William Hutton’s description of the Fante. Both dedicate a chapter to wide ranging, if not logically sequenced, ethnographic descriptions. There are differences in the hierarchical perception of Hutton’s Cape Coast Fante and Robinson’s ‘Creole’ society, but the racialised undertones of both are stark.<sup>63</sup> Brief proto-ethnographic descriptions appear throughout the other South American sources, while Bowdich and Dupuis both attempted

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<sup>63</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 101-126. W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 82-102.

more detailed examinations of specific aspects of Asante culture covering language, architecture, history, and geography, inserting people-as-culture-in-practice anecdotes within these areas of focus.<sup>64</sup> Dupuis also interrupted his own narrative of events with brief cultural descriptions, the conventional approach of the travel writer at the time and emblematic of ethnography as narrative of culture.

Ethnography, at its Latin root, means ‘life-writing’. As a mode of travel-writing, ethnography can be traced to concepts of “moral” history (moral as involving human rational capacities)’ from the late sixteenth century Spanish colonial context. From there, Joan Pau Rubiés tracks the growth of a ‘European ethnographic impulse’ which combined ‘colonial expansion and intellectual transformation’, situating the establishment of the practice of ethnographic description in eighteenth century intellectual ‘primary forms’ of history, cosmography, and travel writing, before the advent of disciplinary anthropology in the nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup> A certain comprehensiveness came to be expected in travel writing as representation of empirical encounters. It stemmed from the other two ‘primary forms’; while we can take ‘history’ to mean various things around narratives of the past (‘moral’ or human, and natural), cosmography could encompass most of everything else. Educational writer Richard Turner’s definition in 1783’s *An Easy Introduction to the Arts and Sciences, etc.*, called cosmography a ‘description of the world’ encompassing ‘the heavens and the earth’, divided into ‘astronomy and geography’.<sup>66</sup> History and cosmography were often interdependent, so travel writing’s

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<sup>64</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, Part II. J. Dupuis, *Journal*, Part II.

<sup>65</sup> J.P. Rubiés, ‘Travel writing and ethnography’, in P. Hulme, T. Youngs, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, pp. 241-242.

<sup>66</sup> Richard Turner the Younger’s text reached sixteen editions by 1814, 26 years after his death. R. Turner, *An Easy Introduction to the Arts and Sciences – Being but a short, but comprehensive system of useful and polite learning. – divided into lessons*, First Edition (Dublin, 1783); Sixteenth Edition (London, 1814), pp. 100-101.

challenge was to combine them holistically. From these broad intellectual conventions, presented in elementary forms and widely disseminated in British society from the 1780s, an encultured worldview by the 1810s incorporated the tendency to historicise (or de-historicise) a perceived ethnic group, fit its characteristics into a cosmographical frame, and present the subject group as a distinct hierarchised object example of other cultures in an engaging and 'useful' way.

Academic Anthropology has spent a great deal of postcolonial energy negotiating the ongoing development of meanings of its core practices, as its practitioners and scholars in other fields have interrogated its agenda and impact during the peak of European colonial power. Ethnography as a tool for codifying other cultures was a particular source of soul-searching anxiety (while the point of 'crisis' has been subject to debate of its own).<sup>67</sup> The 'Anthropology of Colonialism', Peter Pels argues, is also an 'anthropology of anthropology'; while the discipline emerged as a way of scientifically classifying groups of human beings as different and separate, the classifications 'both indicate and obscure practical historical relationships'. 'Culture', 'development', fieldwork and 'cross cultural respect' are all historical relationships first and foremost, and 'the savage and the civilised never existed in separation'.<sup>68</sup> According to Jean and John Comaroff, an underlying epistemology of difference, ethnicity, 'has its genesis in specific historical forces', but this would not prevent the assignment of ethnic status from essentialising its ascribed properties. They describe the following two generally recognised properties of ethnicity; first, subjective classification of the world 'into social

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<sup>67</sup> D. Lewis, 'Anthropology and Colonialism', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 14, No. 5, December 1973, pp. 581-602. JW. Burton, 'Representing Africa: Colonial Anthropology Revisited', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 27:3-4 (1992).

<sup>68</sup> P. Pels, 'What has anthropology learned from the anthropology of colonialism?', *Social Anthropology*, 16:3 (October 2008), pp. 280-299.

entities according to cultural differences', and second, 'stereotypic assignment of these groupings - often hierarchically - to niches within the social division of labour'. The fusion of these two properties (also present in other cultural practices) are what forms ethnicity.<sup>69</sup> It follows that both the historical forces predating the assignment of ethnic status, and the cultural production of ethnicities, were carried out by ethnographic practices of observing and describing daily life, infrastructures, and behaviours. In the case of travel writers describing people and their cultures in the post-Napoleonic period, at a distinctive cultural moment for British public discourse, the practice was already shaped by the ongoing emergence of racial thinking on one hand, and imperial hierarchisation on the other. The British preference for the term 'anthropography' at the time, which is now taken to mean the geographically oriented counterpoint to the 'historical' ethnography, might be attributed to a certain degree of intellectual ethno-nationalism between post-Enlightenment Europeans; the *Penny Cyclopaedia*, in 1834, called ethnography a 'more limited' Germanic term, compared to 'the sense we have given to anthropography'.<sup>70</sup> As the extensive efforts of Bowdich and Dupuis to historicise Asante attest, this did not stand for the difference of approach the modern definitions imply.

William Hutton's deliberately, consciously ethnographic approach was bound both by historically produced understandings of the culture of his subjects, and geographical definitions of their ethnic distinctiveness. It was a version of ethnographic study which sought to blend history and cosmography within the conventions of a traveller's account.<sup>71</sup> He took

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<sup>69</sup> J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, 1992), pp. 51-52.

<sup>70</sup> G. Long, Ed., *The Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, Volume II- Andocides to Athanagilde* (London, 1834), p. 97.

<sup>71</sup> J.P. Rubiés, 'Travel writing and ethnography', in P. Hulme, T. Youngs, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, pp. 241-242.

the descriptive approach to the cultures he encountered in order to incorporate all of the elements that make up the ethnic group that he considered important and of interest to readers. A man of opportunity more than method, his observations were also often of limited depth, and extrapolations of characteristics into stereotypes was common. He introduced his chapter on Fante 'manners and customs' at Cape Coast by saying that he would offer only 'brief remarks' on the population of the settlement and their way of life.<sup>72</sup> They would extend to nineteen pages and cover religion, material and human sacrifices (with a digression into a comparison of those in other parts of the region), funeral practices, civil disputes, criminal proceedings, punishments, property, inheritance, marriage and polygamy (with a sense of disgust at miscegenation and 'going native'), their 'general character' of thievery, work ethic, fishing, modes of dress, women's status, women's dress in relation to class and race (in much more detail than the men), pregnancy and birth, menstruation, the Yam Custom (at Accra, conflating the cultural practices of a group of people he otherwise acknowledged as different), law, farming, diets, alcohol consumption, and a final disparaging word on their 'general character'.<sup>73</sup> In demonstrating his breadth of observations in what can be read as a meandering account of whatever took his fancy, he deliberately constructed an ethnic stereotype of the Fante from his own anecdotal experiences, incorporating class distinctions on racial terms. Coming as it does after his judgements on the condition of the forts and enclaves in European hands along the Gold Coast, including Cape Coast Castle, and before he continued with his assessment of human geographies and potential on his journey to Kumasi, this catalogue of traits might have seemed a useful reference for the prospective trader, or

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<sup>72</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 82.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 82-102.

the armchair proto-anthropologist.<sup>74</sup> Cape Coast was a destination that British readers were aware of. It was a part of the network of regular routes, exchanges and correspondence in the British post-Napoleonic Atlantic which had incorporated Fante people for generations, but which saw severe upheaval due to the Asante invasion of the coastal regions in 1816, and which fundamentally disrupted the human geography and political culture of Fante immediately before the British missions to Kumasi.<sup>75</sup>

Personal observations and second-hand reports were used by Hutton to flesh out this proto-ethnographic sketch, focusing in particular on religion, superstition and ritual. The Fante were 'Pagan'. Their religious figures were vaguely priest-like, but 'ignorant' and harmful in their promotion of 'superstition', as well as exploitative. Much of the population were victimised and trivialised, being 'silly enough' to believe the priests. Describing their 'usual method of offering sacrifices' by breaking eggs on the ground, tying string around stones on the path, or fastening wooden images to their doors for worship, he recounted his confrontation with the latter, refusing to compensate with rum the damage he caused by kicking over the 'idols'. He sneered at the religious traditions of a people he looked down upon, although he saw some potential in their recognition of a 'supreme being'.<sup>76</sup> Rebecca Shumway notes that this was itself a relatively recent phenomenon in the records and oral traditions of Fante.<sup>77</sup> Rather than absent himself from the ethnography, he confronted the shortcomings of Fante religious culture directly, as noble reformer. He noted no 'regular mosques', meaning a proxy for Christian buildings separate from fully civilised religion. Sounds of expression, celebration, or

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, pp. 26-60, 139-166, 168-208.

<sup>75</sup> R. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Rochester, 2011), pp. 9-11.

<sup>76</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 83-85.

<sup>77</sup> R. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p. 138.

worship, were 'a most dismal noise,' offensive to refined hearing. Anecdotes of human sacrifice followed, expanding the discussion of idols and animal worship, including a brief mention of an incident involving William Hutchison at Dixcove in 1816, before his journey to Kumasi. The extent of such practices in Fante country was illustrated by an incident he had witnessed at Commenda in 1809, described as 'humane, in comparison with the method which is sometimes practiced in torturing the victim'. Dahomey and neighbouring Asante pursued human sacrifice with 'even more savage barbarity'.<sup>78</sup> He described death and funeral practices in general, bemoaning the jarring spectacle of family and friends gathered by the dressed corpse, 'some of them howling for days and nights in the most dismal manner', with 'firing of guns and drinking' which seem more 'like a day of rejoicing than that of mourning'.<sup>79</sup> Several social practices were presented to further the sense of difference and ingrained superstition. Majority decisions on a palaver were mentioned briefly, but more attention was given to the taking of 'doom' ('a poisonous bark') by a suspected thief, for determining their guilt or innocence, a process Hutton delighted in describing here for the rising discomfort of his readers. If the accused vomited after consuming the bark and the water, they were innocent, although probably rather unwell. If they kept it down, they were guilty and had dung stuffed in their mouth to make them sick. The authorities then decided on punishment. This trial by ordeal was recognisable to a European audience, and redolent of a distinctly pre-Enlightenment period of religious fanaticism.

Hutton then outlined maternal-paternal property inheritance customs, hinting at Akan family authority structures and pointing out the 'singular' nature of such hereditary practice, before

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<sup>78</sup> I will return to this later in the chapter. W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 85-87.

<sup>79</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 87.

moving on to another sensational exoticism, polygamy. He noted that ‘even Europeans shamefully degrade themselves by keeping two or three women at a time’, a characteristic degeneration caused by intermarriage and miscegenation. He was more interested in the economics of the social practice though, rather than the moral equivalency he paid lip-service to. ‘Poor girls’ were obtained ‘from their mothers’ with about fifteen to twenty pounds’ worth of ‘cloth, liquor, tobacco, and pipes’ at the marriage.<sup>80</sup> The marriages involved no religious ceremony, according to the author, although his conception of what might constitute a religious ceremony and his generalisation of the cultural practice of marriage ceremonies across such a diverse network of communities belied the likely regional variations in practice. The affair was described as celebratory. Adultery was dealt with in the same paragraph as marriage, ‘punished with slavery’ or the payment of slaves in kind to the ‘injured husband’. The wanton, unfaithful, soliciting practices of the wilful adulterer were an entirely female trait in Hutton’s representation of Fante relationships.<sup>81</sup> The late eighteenth century ‘backlash’ against British adultery fiction, which ‘questioned the double standard of sexual morality’, and the ‘anti-adultery campaign’ that began in the 1790s, would have influenced the encultured assumption either of adultery as a feminine moral corruption, or the adulteress as a victim of ‘female weakness’, that Hutton unthinkingly assumed here.<sup>82</sup>

Hutton was very clear that the Fante were ‘the greatest thieves I ever met with.’ This was ‘their general character’, but personal experience was given as proof, his servants frequently

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<sup>80</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>81</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 90.

<sup>82</sup> B. Overton, *Fictions of Female Adultery 1684-1890: Theories and Circumtexts* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 17-18. LL. Runge, ‘Mary Robinson’s Memoirs and the Anti-Adultery Campaign of the Late Eighteenth Century’, *Modern Philology*, Vol. 101, No. 4, May 2004, pp. 563-586. DT. Andrew, ‘“Adultery à-la-Mode”: Privilege, the Law and Attitudes to Adultery 1770–1809’, *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*, 82:265 (January 1997), pp. 5-23.

taking and misusing 'linen and other articles, and particularly of dessert knives, which they make use of to shave their heads'. There are clues here as to the differences in conceptions of individual property on the one hand, and on the likely character of the servants he had hired on the other, that Hutton refused to engage with. The conclusion is simple; these 'thefts' happened to me; therefore, they are a universal characteristic of these particular 'natives', then of all 'native' people in this region.<sup>83</sup> A big part of the problem was the limit of colonial authority around Cape Coast. Perpetrators of theft were 'liberated' after a 'short imprisonment' with 'the governor and council at Cape Coast not having the power of life and death, which, for the good of Europeans in this country, ought certainly to be vested in them'. These judgements constructed the Fante, familiar at bridgeheads of colonial jurisdiction for British interests, not as entirely lazy and unmotivated 'natives' but rather as an established workforce simply in need of a prescribed purpose and the discipline of real authority. In keeping with his agenda of 'cultivation, civilisation, and commerce' he was confident about the strong industrious base the Fante could be encouraged to grow from, including their own 'fishing, trade and agriculture', and their employed roles as 'gold-takers, hammock-men, canoe-men, messengers, &c.'<sup>84</sup> They needed the guiding hand of British colonial rule on the evidence of their superstitious and illogical culture and due to their universal shortcomings. Hutton had acknowledged the disruption and violent change forced on the Fante and the recent refugee status of much of the population near Cape Coast, but the cultural practices and behaviours of the Fante he observed at Cape Coast were characterised here as fixed, 'traditional', and universal.

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<sup>83</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p. 91.

The usefulness of a broadly encompassing portrait of a community might be expected to influence the amount of attention any given population might get in the pages of a travel narrative. The influencing factor for this, though, was the level of contact and access, and therefore the opportunity to observe. Such exercises had to be carried out on cultural or racial categories they could see enough evidence of with their own eyes or appropriate from the raw material of 'de-named' native sources. For Hutton's Fante, primarily focused on Cape Coast and the surrounding settlements, accessibility and usefulness of knowledge went hand in hand. For John Robinson, it was the mixed colonial society at Angostura that presented him with the opportunity, the grounds for implicit comparison, and the anticipated usefulness to his readership. This focus on a major settlement also allowed for reductive generalisations based on differences of class interacting with race, the historical context of which could be easily absented. This contrasts with his treatment of the 'Native Soldier', not considered in the ethnographic sense but essentialised through physical features and near-nakedness.<sup>85</sup> Brown, on the other hand, did attempt ethnographic sketches of the communities he encountered on the river journey to Angostura, including the Indians of Sanchapa. Their 'savage and fantastic appearance' was addressed in relation to culture and custom; men and women were both naked, bodies and hair covered in red ochre, cocoa-tree fibres bound and plaited around their limbs. He claimed this was done 'in their infancy' causing swellings 'above the bandage'. He described their village, the construction of their homes, and the ubiquity of the red ochre covering among the 200 inhabitants. These 'timid and cowardly people' lived mainly on wild plains cattle and fish, hunted the 'tiger' to trade its skin, and were skilled with the bow.<sup>86</sup> This representation lends a sense of authoritative detachment to Brown's

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<sup>85</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 101-126, 138-139.

<sup>86</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 67-68.

narrative, inserting 'useful' evaluations of the indigenous people situated within their 'traditional' culture and providing a neatly extractable description – the chapter was printed in full, with all its ethnographical sketches of the settlements on the Orinoco and evocations of the exotic environment in *The Parlour Portfolio, or Post-chaise Companion*, and *The New Annual Register* in 1820.<sup>87</sup> This kind of uncritical dissemination of extracts reached a much wider audience than many books themselves, which allowed the National-Imperial gaze of the author to be re-enculturated.

Happily, Robinson's chapters were printed with their contents listed. Chapter 6 is titled 'Manners of the People' and covers, amongst other details, the 'extreme laziness of the people', marriage, smoking, butchery, food shortages (due to laziness), insects in the food, hair, 'mule equipage', trade, law, death, and diseases. He also addressed 'Creole notions of the English and of England', and observed the 'effects of freedom on the slaves', situating 'Creole' culture within a history and extant network of exchange around the Atlantic World.<sup>88</sup> The qualified acceptance of Creole culture as a higher level in the assumed hierarchy of civilisation was credited. However, the very attribution of the term 'Creole' also stood for a hybridity of racial and ethnic identity, a mixed, miscegenated culture, to which the author repeatedly applied the trope of degeneration and inadequacy. An ambiguity of 'Creole' racial/ethnic status and reciprocal perspective was perpetuated by Robinson. Through the account of a 'gentleman' from General Monagas' army (not a direct exchange with the lower classes), he described in bizarrely disparaging terms the 'knowledge of the Creoles' as 'curious', comprising an extremely limited cosmography in which they 'know nothing beyond

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<sup>87</sup> Anon. Ed. *The Parlour Portfolio, Or, Post-chaise Companion...volume 2* (London, 1820), pp. 11-21. T. Morgan, ed. *The New Annual Register...for 1819* (London, 1820), pp. 72-82.

<sup>88</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 101-126.

the spot on which they are placed' and the parts of their country they had been to personally. They allegedly hated all kings, except possibly the 'King of England', whom they thought personally responsible for providing much needed armament and equipment, and would welcome subserviently if he were to 'send an army to take possession of our country'.<sup>89</sup> They could not understand where England was, were preoccupied with whether British visitors were 'royalist' or 'patriot', and did not 'prefer their own language' because Spanish 'was spoken in South America long before the country was taken by the Spaniards'. This is the revealing point in Robinson's relaying of the 'gentleman's' description, punctuated with his own comments on their unrelenting ignorance.<sup>90</sup> Here it becomes clear that Robinson, and the higher status individuals whose knowledge he actually respected, were inclined to racialize the 'Creoles' as less than white, less than European, and at least part-native, regardless of the societal status of the *Criollo* group in the Spanish colonial setting or the perceived racial category of any individual. The *Criollo* generally were the American-born elites, especially during the era of revolution.<sup>91</sup>

This was also consistently ambiguous across the accounts of Brown and Gustavus Hippisley. Brown alluded to an indeterminate level of mixed status probably judged only on skin colour when labelling anyone as 'Creole', mainly by association with the Indians they lived alongside, but without the 'degradation' that Robinson consistently accounted for in this indeterminate mixing of race/ethnicity/culture.<sup>92</sup> He did make a point of mentioning this 'Creole' status in

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, pp. 122-123.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, pp. 123-124.

<sup>91</sup> S. Nuccetelli, 'Rights and Identity in Latin American Philosophy', in N. Zack, Ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 119- 123. J.K. Thornton, *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World, 1250-1820* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 500-522.

<sup>92</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 69-71 . J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 184-187.

relation to individuals though, signifying their difference.<sup>93</sup> This definition of ‘Creole’ as a ‘mixed race’ colonial population was recognisable in the British context as a direct reference to the ex-slave, freed slave, and repatriated ‘Krio’ population of Sierra Leone, as well as the Atlantic Creole, a hybrid category emerging as a self-ascribed identity that encompassed those who were caught up in early slave trading across the Atlantic, West Africans in indentured servitude, and the descendants of traders, company staff, intermediaries and working populations in and around slave factories.<sup>94</sup> In Jamaica and other Caribbean colonial societies, what Kathleen Wilson calls the ‘transcultured customs of the white inhabitants’ and consequences such as ‘white Creoles’ “yellowish” complexions’, further broadened the term to include people with two white parents.<sup>95</sup> From the British perspective, then, ‘Creole’ referred to an intermediate and intermediary ‘mixed-race’ or mixed-culture population, with the risks of miscegenation implied. Difference was maintained through physical distinctions – race – but efficacy of disseminated British civilisation was evident in their Christianity, manners, behaviour, and the further spread of British influence.<sup>96</sup> It was therefore with a hierarchy of hybridity that Robinson evaluated ‘Creole’ society at Angostura, and Hutton adjudged the perceived ‘mixed race’ women of Cape Coast.<sup>97</sup> However, publications on Spanish colonial society and its people in the years between von Humboldt’s journey and the events of these narratives frequently made it clear that the ‘creole’ in South America was considered to be a colonial-born person of European origin, the *criollo* of the Spanish caste

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<sup>93</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 66, 126.

<sup>94</sup> I. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The first two centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 17-20.

<sup>95</sup> K. Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003), pp. 147-149.

<sup>96</sup> M. Osborne, S. Kingsley Kent, *Africa and Britons in the Age of Empires* (London, 2015), pp. 44-46.

<sup>97</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 101-126. I will discuss Hutton’s ‘Mulatto Woman of the Gold Coast’ and the accompanying engraving in Chapter 5. W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 93-95.

system, and not the *mestizo* of that hierarchy or the mulatto of British Caribbean ethnic codification. They were described as *criollo* clearly enough by von Humboldt to be discussed without implications of racial degeneration, as Europeans deprived of their full cultural right by Peninsular-born Spanish tyranny, in *The Annual Register* in 1811, while William Walton's case in favour of South American independence from Spain in 1814 was insistent on their credentials for self-governance, and the cruelty they suffered at the hands of the Spanish Royal oppressors.<sup>98</sup>

Further ambiguities are raised by considering the application of the terms 'creole' and *criollo* to specific migrant and descendant populations under Spanish rule in the Americas. Herman Bennett finds the terms widely attributed to colonially born black people of African origin as early as the sixteenth century, accruing certain advantages to their ongoing and frequently challenged social status as the slave trade continued to feed an enslaved population of African origin that could undermine their subjectively free position.<sup>99</sup> Peter Wade points to the significance of *mestizaje*, or mixture, both sexually and spatially, as a process that undermined separation between projected categories and made the labels and their concomitant identities contingent on economic and social connections and status.<sup>100</sup> The social construction of the commonly used terms, and often the political affiliation ascribed to them, furthered this mutability of belonging and difference especially in the late colonial period, as

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<sup>98</sup> Anon, Review of *Humboldt's Political Essay on the Affairs of New Spain, &c.*, 'Account of Books', *The Annual Register* (London, 1811), pp. 8, 637-639. W. Walton, *An Expose on the Dissentions of Spanish America* (London, 1814), pp. iv, 182-183, 370.

<sup>99</sup> H.L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640* (Bloomington, 2003), pp. 27-28, 78.

<sup>100</sup> P. Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London, 2010), p. 27.

Sergei Serulnikov notes of late eighteenth century Charcas, Bolivia.<sup>101</sup> In the accounts examined here, each of the authors chose to equate 'Creole' with an admixture of limiting or degenerate 'Indian' features to the colonial society, despite the clear contextual usage of *criollo* in Revolutionary Venezuela (and the other regions of New Spain) as a marker of Spanish ancestry among the American born elite.<sup>102</sup> Association between Creole and Indian habits and behaviours, anecdotally supported, either negatively by association or indifferently with subjection, reduced the credibility of their 'intelligence', the value of their culture, and therefore the validity of their understandings of their British observers, who could be positive figures of salvation and freedom even while their own way of life was disparaged. Providing a window, albeit with a restricted view, on the subjects' perspective regarding the observing culture, was an effective way of enclosing the observed culture within a framework of biological, ethnic, and civilisational hierarchy. They were, at their most positively represented, different and unrefined, or at their most negatively characterised, spiritually and intellectually degraded by the mixing of biology and culture. The question remains of why they 'creolized' them in these Atlantic rather than Spanish-American terms; the answer, in the muddled light of day of the authors' encounters, is that the general population of Angostura appeared extremely poor, idle, with shockingly alien manners, and apparently darker skin than even someone of genuine south-European origin might be expected to have. They were generally closer to their conception of 'Indians' in civilisational terms, than to the Spanish, in the case of those authors who had resoundingly negative experiences of service in the Venezuelan forces. This actually corresponded substantively, in the complex and mutable racial

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<sup>101</sup> S. Serulnikov, 'Patricians and Plebeians in Late Colonial Charcas', in M.D. O'Hara, A.B. Fisher, Eds. *Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America* (Durham, 2009), pp. 181-182.

<sup>102</sup> J.E. Rodriguez, *The Independence of Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 2, 11, 13-24.

hierarchies of Spanish American colonies, with the *criollo* viewpoint on what they considered to be the hybridised and degraded sub-civilised races of their own society.<sup>103</sup>

So, Robinson's 'Indian Soldier' was beneath the cultural sophistication of an ethnographic description, the Fante were a subordinate subjective ethnic group who were unable to reciprocate the imperial gaze, but the imagined 'Creole' population of Angostura in their native/European hybrid state were granted the voice to demonstrate some awareness of their observers' culture. Hutton had not incorporated this reciprocal aspect in the case of the Fante, in keeping with British imperial perceptions of them as a subordinate group that were entrenched by their use as intermediary traders in slaves for over a century. However, the less familiar, more aggressive, expansionist and centralised Asante state was allowed some space for 'looking back' at their British guests, and later antagonists. Hutton, Bowdich and Dupuis all credited the Asantehene with favourable and highly courtly opinions of the English, and a desire for the accoutrements of their military culture was acknowledged.<sup>104</sup> The reflection was of course limited; at Kumasi, it was in terms of approbation from the Asantehene and the Caboceers they met, or some mild suspicion and incredulity apparently displayed at some of the more complex gifts. It was only the elites with whom they spent time that the authors credited any reciprocal knowledge.

Significantly, the authors did not attribute the likely difficulties in translation that may have confused any of their exchanges, even after the reliability of the linguist as an individual rather than an interpreter had been called into question by the Asantehene himself.<sup>105</sup> If the

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<sup>103</sup> P. Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, pp. 26-30, 97-99.

<sup>104</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 59-65. W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 258-260. J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 89-91.

<sup>105</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, p. 117.

possibility of cultural misalignment in translation is considered, the Asantehene's understanding of the "land of the white men" as a place with several 'tribes or families, of which the English was the most warlike, and powerful, of the day', and to whom many of the others paid tribute, does not seem as 'extremely limited' as Dupuis stated.<sup>106</sup> Transculturation is at work here in dysfunctional form, across twin barriers of language and culture. The Asante efforts at asserting their worldview in exchange with the British agents were compromised fundamentally by translation but the process of translation also allowed the Asante some scope for shaping their own image using the terms of their British observers. Bowdich represented this more directly by reproducing Mission correspondence, while Dupuis mediated it very heavily by subordinating the Asantehene's diplomacy to his own in narrative form.<sup>107</sup> In avoiding the issue of language in translation, Dupuis could undermine the authority of the Asantehene to speak directly of the culture he represented. The behaviour of the Asante elite they spent time with was subjected to a one-sided ethnographic gaze, rather than being rationalised as a calculated effort, a level of awareness that may have helped the successful negotiation of agreed terms. 'Manners' were viewed by Dupuis as habitual behaviours, as ethnic traits, and little or no awareness of courtly or diplomatic protocol or strategy was acknowledged.<sup>108</sup> Multiple layers of interpretation between languages existed in these exchanges and the process of translation into the final published account in English completed a process of acculturation of the foreign speaker's words, 'erasing difference and effectively colonising' the message.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 100.

<sup>107</sup> ML. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 8-9, 135-136. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 59-65.

<sup>108</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 85-95.

<sup>109</sup> S. Bassnett, 'Travelling and translating', *World Literature Written in English*, 40: 2 (2004), pp. 66-76.

There is a striking similarity here with the observations Robinson drew from the 'gentleman' on the 'Creole' society's cosmological limitations. This is no coincidence; both authors presented translated, mediated and class or race distorted caricatures of their subjects, with the racialised imaginaries of mixed Creole and African pagan allowing them to disregard class, relative wealth and education. Radhika Mohanram's assertion that 'whiteness was not just about racial differences, but also the covering over of class differences' in the colonial setting rings true when we consider the contemporary generalising of *criollo* society as a result of miscegenation and the undermining effect of close contact with examples that challenged the stereotype, but in both theatres here we have a national-imperial third party observing recognisably imperial social hierarchies.<sup>110</sup> The broad category of the civilised 'us' representing that whiteness was not so easily applied to the semi-other of Spanish colonial *criollo* ethnicity when wealth and class were added to the mix, while the distinction between the stereotype of uncivilised ignorance applied to the 'African' on the coast or at Kumasi and qualified admiration for their rulers had to reassert something of that elided class dynamic to make any sense.

### **Violence, Subjugation and Superstition**

Superstition was closely associated by these authors with a limited cosmography ascribed to the observed ethnic groups. Hippisley's superficial disdain for Catholic ceremony was a limited

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<sup>110</sup> R. Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis, 2007), pp. 44-45.

manifestation of this, but Robinson, Brown, Dupuis and Hutton all made this connection, covering 'Indians', the Fante population of Cape Coast, and the imagined Creole society of Angostura with its culturally inconsistent labelling of hybridisation. Violence was also a related factor in all the accounts. It took varying forms, and there had to be a delineation between acceptable violence and unacceptable, between civilised and savage. In some instances, superstition was perceived as the driving force for ingrained violent practices in the societies they observed, while in many cases violence appeared to enable subjugation and control (or intent to). Completing the cycle, the subjugated people of these cultures were portrayed as more prone to and accepting of normalised violence. Viewed from a culture that valued its norms and restraints as preeminent among the civilisations of the world, the high visibility of the wrong kinds of violence and control were evidence of, in the Spanish colonial setting, degeneration and cruelty, with blame notably apportioned to the 'mother' culture of Spain even when that cruelty was perpetrated by the Patriot side.<sup>111</sup> In the states and communities of the Gold Coast and Asante, it proved either a limitation of self-civilising culture or the brutal social control of the barbaric half-civilised dominant party, Asante – enough to draw their oppressed neighbours to the guiding light of British leadership, according to Dupuis.<sup>112</sup> Phillip Dwyer and Amanda Nettlebeck describe imperial and colonial violence as 'diffuse, multi-layered', and always 'embedded in the social, legal, economic and gendered foundations on which colonial relations were built'.<sup>113</sup> So too, then, was the condemnatory perception of the

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<sup>111</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 129-130. C. Brown, *Narrative*, p. 169.

<sup>112</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>113</sup> P. Dwyer, A. Nettlebeck, "'Savage Wars of Peace': Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World", in P. Dwyer, A. Nettlebeck, eds. *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World* (London, 2018), p. 2.

violence of other empires, states, and any ethnically delineated cultures that could be picked out, until racial, ethnic, or 'tribal' underpinnings were turned into logical explanations.<sup>114</sup>

To enact physical or cultural violence on a colonised (or to-be-colonised) people was an accepted moral, legal and social strategy of the agents of a European imperial power, whether they acted from a position of strength or political and strategic weakness. However, debate about the moral authority, means of subjugation and right of resistance was highly contingent on the pragmatics of geopolitics and economy. This was in fact long the case within the 'cosmopolitan conglomerate' of the Spanish Empire, as Frederick Cooper argues; by the era of its weakening during which our authors observed its violent actions of colonial control, external criticism by potentially equally violent European competitors was a matter of course.<sup>115</sup> What Cooper calls 'the inability or disinterest of regimes in establishing an apparatus of colonial control', that is the absence of systematic domination in the low-investment colonies of the late nineteenth century, can be seen behind many of the most violent practices of that period.<sup>116</sup> The judgement of that same approach seen in the weakening grasp of the Spanish Empire on its rebellious colonies at the beginning of the century was made as an argument for the superiority of some imperial cultures over others. In the case of Asante, the moral authority and the execution of control by the 'African pagan' was enough to racialize the 'savagery' and 'despotism' of that imperial state in the British

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<sup>114</sup> For a general overview of these intersecting factors, and the development of scholarly understandings, see A. Lawrence and E. Chenoweth, 'Introduction', in E. Chenoweth, A. Lawrence, eds. *Rethinking Violence: States and Non-State Actors In Conflict* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 8-13.

<sup>115</sup> F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, knowledge, history* (London, 2005), pp. 157, 163-164, 232-239.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, p. 144.

view, although that outcome was not certain until news of the defeat at Nsamakow reached England, when racialised descriptors of Asante's inherent violence became ubiquitous.<sup>117</sup>

The normalisation of violence in British National-Imperial culture during the early nineteenth century has some inherent complexities and contradictions. It underwent an anxious assimilation with the broader imperialising project alongside the emerging rhetoric of humanist and humanitarian debates, while it also featured what Richard Price calls a disciplining and purging 'salutary terror' as part of a 'pacifying, civilizing process'.<sup>118</sup> The discouraging benefits of physically or otherwise violent actions that induced 'salutary terror' appeared in political and philosophical justifications from Robespierre (on tyrants), and Napoleon (on the 'Italian populace'), to Sir Henry Brougham (presenting a petition to the Commons against abuse of prison rules by debtors), and Lord Castlereagh (on capital punishment).<sup>119</sup> It was conceptually ingrained in the political discourse of the period as justification for various processes of social control, so the application of this principle to interactions with others in contact zone environments was easily incorporated. However, this did not preclude criticism of its uses on the hierarchical grounds of moral, cultural, or racial inferiority – the salutary effect of the Terror of the French Revolution had the opposite effect on British public discourse concerning reform to that which Robespierre had declared,

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<sup>117</sup> 'Defeat Of Sir Charles M'Carthy And The British Troops', *The Times*, 5 May 1824. 'British Troops...', *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 May 1824. 'London, Saturday evening, May 1... We regret to state...', *The Hampshire Telegraph*, 3 May 1824. 'Defeat Of Sir Charles M'Carthy And The British Troops', *The Times*, 5 May 1824. 'Two arrivals were yesterday announced...', *The Times*, 16 June 1824.

<sup>118</sup> R.N. Price, 'The Psychology of Colonial Violence', in P. Dwyer, A. Nettlebeck, eds. *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World* (London, 2018), pp. 30-31, 37-38.

<sup>119</sup> M. Robespierre, quoted in M. Thorup, *An Intellectual History of Terror: War, Violence and the State* (London, 2010), p. 89. N. Bonaparte to J. Bonaparte, quoted in DP. Jordan, *Napoleon and the Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2012), p. 91. House of Commons, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1816, in TC. Hansard, ed. *The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time, Volume 33* (London, 1816), pp. 1160-1162. T. Morgan, ed. *The New Annual Register...for 1819* (London, 1820), pp. 50-52.

precisely because the violence was internecine *and* French.<sup>120</sup> In the four examples I have given here, two were French ‘tyrants’ themselves, acting without the established law (and remaking it in retrospect), and two were put forward by British MPs, in Parliament, in relation to crime, punishment and social control. This is where the contradictions required a blindness or silence towards British state or Imperial violence on the part of its agents, or alternatively a moral distinction between forms of violence revealed through cultural exchanges contained in travel narratives such as these. The position of Castlereagh – who had once declared ‘the system by which Robespierre attained power, and by which he governed, was founded upon cruelty’ – on the preservation of order and protection of property, was a long declared one which had grown in part from his disgust at the revolutionary violence of the Terror, but which had also been used as a justification for his support in violently suppressing the Irish Rebellion, and then refusing British support for Spanish Imperial counter-revolution.<sup>121</sup> The hypocrisy at work in British ideas about justified and unjustified violence was deep-seated; Penelope Edmonds and Anna Johnston have traced the blending of settler colonial violence (physical, material and epistemic) and the rhetoric of humanitarianism from the 1830s, noting India, South Africa and Australia as some of the key battlegrounds for this contradictory form of expansionism.<sup>122</sup> The evidence of British agents’ representations of colonial violence by *other* empires suggests that this began to be applied in an encultured, accepted form, quite distinctively in the earlier decades of the century.

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<sup>120</sup> The impact can be seen in English Gothic and Romantic drama’s explorations of the ‘terror and excitement’ of revolution. See G. Russell, ‘Revolutionary Drama’, in P. Clemit, *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 175-189.

<sup>121</sup> For a detailed account of Castlereagh’s relationship to the French Revolution and the United Irishmen’s Rebellion, see J. Bew, *Castlereagh: A Life* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 86-87, 115-116, 451.

<sup>122</sup> P. Edmonds, A. Johnston, ‘Empire, Humanitarianism and Violence in the Colonies’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 17:1 (Spring 2016).

The relevance of this to these travel narratives becomes clear when we consider relations of violence and judgement as represented by the authors. It manifested through established ethno-racial tropes including the cruel Spaniard, the brutal bloodthirsty savage, and the tyrannical barbarian. It was represented as 'bad' imperialism through condemnations of Spanish and Asante colonial control. It was also constructed and essentialised as the inherent characteristics of ethnic groups *as* races under examination. Violence rooted in superstition was depicted as part of the character of Spanish and Asante tyrants, as flaws in their imperial cultures. For the Spanish, this could be a result of two things: their Catholicism as an inferior and idolatrous Christian culture, and their own imperial arrogance stemming from the false belief in Spanish pre-eminence.<sup>123</sup> In the latter, there is something of the tendency of 'young' or composite nationalisms (which are inherently artificial) to make the constructs of their identity invisible, to legitimise the superiority of their civilisation. This is evident in the composite, outward-facing British National-Imperial identity of the early nineteenth century which was being exercised by these authors, where hierarchies of class and race were already in effective use.<sup>124</sup> In practice, in an encultured, discursive form, British agents could make encounters with other imperial cultures all about the constructed national-imperial characters of these others, and criticise them on the basis of their moral and philosophical inadequacies, manifested by their uses of violence.

A vital relationship of superstition with state violence in British views of West Africa is that of 'human sacrifice'. Asante and wider Akan cultures, including Fante, had what European agents

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<sup>123</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 56, 309. J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 115-117, 186. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 74, 219, 329-331, 444.

<sup>124</sup> For an exploration of nationalistic cultural roots, with related ongoing processes of justification and legitimation, see B.R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London, 2006), pp. 9-36, 113-114, 149-151.

and observers described as a widespread culture of human sacrifice to the ‘Fetish’, carried out in bloodthirsty, primitive, salacious celebration by leaders at all levels, and in horrifically graphic ways on absurd numbers of people by imperial elites.<sup>125</sup> The ‘Fetish’ referred to by the British Agents as authors was an entirely exotic, racialised imaginary of ‘primitive superstition’ in action, while the ‘human sacrifice’ rumours were well established by the time Bowdich and his party reached Kumasi.<sup>126</sup> It was therefore appealing for him to incorporate a sensationalised account of this practice, in precisely those sub-civilised terms, for publication. It is no surprise that those passages were most widely reprinted in the periodicals and newspapers, although it is notable that they were more extensively reproduced in the regional weeklies than they were in the London dailies.<sup>127</sup> So, both Imperial others in each of the two theatres had aspects of their cultures of power and control which were violent and which were superstitious. Despite being complex and sophisticated imperial cultures, the Spanish Empire and the Asante Empire were reducible through easily recognisable tropes of civilisational relativity to less developed or inherently flawed statuses. Kim Wagner describes, in the Indian context, the ‘conceptualisation of a colonial military doctrine’ which was ‘predicated on the “othering” of the enemies of Empire’ who were imagined through their easily categorizable

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<sup>125</sup> The problem of the difference between what the colonial gaze coded as ‘Fetish’ in West Africa, and what the cultural-religious practices incorporated by the term meant, is explored very effectively by William Piertz in three essays. W. Piertz, ‘The Problem of the Fetish, I’, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 9, (Spring 1985), pp. 5-17: W. Piertz, ‘The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish’, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 13, (Spring 1987), pp. 23-45: W. Piertz, ‘The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosnian’s Guinea and the enlightenment theory of fetishism’, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 16, (Autumn 1988), pp. 105-124.

<sup>126</sup> W. Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, Divided Into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts* (London, 1705), pp. 231-232, 445. H. Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa: With a Brief History of the African Company* (London, 1812), pp. 34-35, 115.

<sup>127</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 32-34, 287-289, ‘Hutchinson’s Diary’, in T. E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 393-394, 419. ‘Mission to Ashantee’, *Liverpool Mercury*, 30 January 1818. ‘Ashantee Superstitions’, *Caledonian Mercury*, 19 April 1818. ‘Immolation of Human Beings’, *Newcastle Courant*, 13 May 1818. ‘Immolation of Human Beings’, *Hereford Journal*, 24 May 1818. Anon, ‘Bowdich’s Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, No. XXVI, May 1819, pp. 175-182. Anon, Article VI, *The Edinburgh Review*, No. LXIV, October 1819, pp. 389-399. Article III, April 1819, *The British Critic, New Series, Vol XI*, January-June (London, 1819), pp. 372-388.

‘essential characteristics’. What Wagner sees as true of, and fully established by, the Second Anglo-Asante War in the 1870s, was evident in these British observations in this earlier period.<sup>128</sup>

The real cultural function of ‘human sacrifice’ in West Africa before colonial partition has stimulated some polarised interpretations from historians and includes some of the most extensive, if shallow, considerations of Bowdich’s, Hutton’s, and Dupuis’ accounts. Robin Law, writing in 1985, accepted the prevalence of public executions for ‘spectacle’ alone, while pointing out that even in the 1860s observers including Richard Burton still noted that public executions in Britain would appear to be comparably as ‘curious’ to a visiting Dahoman as the offending ‘customs’ witnessed by European observers in West African states.<sup>129</sup> Preoccupation with this as an ‘index of African barbarity’ began with Dutch scholarly accounts in the seventeenth century and was used persuasively in arguments for and against the slave trade. Law draws the conclusion that it was a predominantly ‘funeral’ phenomenon, offered to humans rather than gods. It displayed wealth and secured royal power, and sometimes formed part of the ‘ideological apparatus of militarism’ – much like acts of capital punishment under martial law in many European incidences.<sup>130</sup> This does correlate with several mentions of the phenomenon by Bowdich, Dupuis, and Hutton, but that is not enough to exclude the justification of capital punishment, political or military execution, or discount exaggeration –

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<sup>128</sup> K. Wagner, ‘Savage Warfare: Violence and the Rule of Colonial Difference in Early British Counterinsurgency’, *History Workshop Journal*, 85 (January 2018), pp. 217-237.

<sup>129</sup> R. Law, ‘Human Sacrifice in Pre-Colonial west Africa’, *African Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 334, (January 1985), pp. 53-87.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 53-87.

points made to some degree by the authors themselves. Furthermore, neither Hutton nor Dupuis made any claim to have witnessed human sacrifice for themselves.<sup>131</sup>

Law suggests that the case of human sacrifice had not been adequately explored by historians, being 'surprisingly neglected' by Phillip Curtin in *The Image of Africa*; given the scope of that work and the cloud of dangerous preconceptions surrounding this issue since the earliest British accounts of Asante, Curtin presciently avoided attempting to unravel 'human sacrifice' in the region itself, instead pointedly stating that its representation belonged to a range of sensationalised "'curiosities'" exploited to 'submerge the indications of a common humanity'.<sup>132</sup> Law does not address the blurred lines between human sacrifice and capital punishment in expansionist, militarised states like Dahomey and Asante, or the motivations of European observers in shaping the narrative towards the former, while the 'salutary terror' of European judicial or extra-judicial subjugation is consequently not addressed. Clifford Williams does deal with this in his 1988 article, specifically with reference to Asante from 1807 to 1874, when the decline of the Transatlantic slave trade made the practice of executing large numbers of captives, prisoners or undesirables both cheaper and of practical use. Williams sees the two practices as mutually inclusive ends of the Imperial Asante state throughout the period, while arguing from the beginning that Ivor Wilks's position was to dismiss all accusations of human sacrifice at Kumasi to the nefarious sensationalism of foreign observers, accrediting all executions to the system of punishment.<sup>133</sup> Wilks' 'Rejoinder' in the same issue points out that he had not assigned all forms of execution to the 'due process of law', arguing

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<sup>131</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 32-34, 287-289. W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 84-86, 224-234. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 97-100, 114-116, 128, 140-142.

<sup>132</sup> P. Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, pp. 23-24, 322.

<sup>133</sup> C. Williams, 'Asante: Human Sacrifice or Capital Punishment? An Assessment of the Period 1807-1874', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 21:3 (1988), pp. 433-441.

that language and translation between Asante and European observers' accounts was responsible for the prevalent misinterpretation of what 'sacrifice' and execution actually meant in Asante culture during the nineteenth century, suggesting that Williams 'takes insufficient account of matters of language and meaning'.<sup>134</sup> Evidently, the issue cannot be properly understood through the medium of the extremely rare first-person accounts and the more prevalent oral reports to observers via interpreters that occurred between Thomas Bowdich and the anthropologist R.S. Rattray a century after him. However, what is now much clearer is the use of the terminology of 'human sacrifice' to say something very specific about Asante cultural practices, and by association their racial status as black Africans. The legacy of this is shown to proceed right through intellectual discussions in the 1980s.

Reading the narratives demonstrates that variations in agenda influenced depiction of the practice significantly between Bowdich, Hutton and Dupuis' descriptions of executions, yet both Bowdich and Dupuis, whose versions of this sacrificial 'custom' differed in their visibility and severity, both made some degree of acknowledgement that many of the victims were 'culprits reserved' (Bowdich), or had rebelled in some way against the Asantehene (Dupuis).<sup>135</sup> Bowdich claimed witness to some of the 'sacrificial' practices in order to legitimise his graphic composite descriptions, while Dupuis noted the sheer volume of fresh blood on the Asantehene's clothes, accoutrements, and the foreheads of him and his retinue on the 'day of the custom'.<sup>136</sup> All three authors characterised what they saw or heard as 'human sacrifice' and fitted it within a rhetorical framework of signifiers for primitive superstition with terms

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<sup>134</sup> I Wilks, 'Asante: Human Sacrifice of Capital Punishment? A rejoinder', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1988, pp. 443-452. I Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 1-42, 43-79.

<sup>135</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 279. J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>136</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, p. 142.

such as 'custom', 'relics' and 'charms', 'invocation', and ubiquitous references to summary violent deaths.<sup>137</sup> The arguments made by Law, Wilks and Williams, despite their contradictions, collectively affirm that the practices of both 'human sacrifice' and capital punishment were far more intertwined with each other, Asante state authority, cultural practices, and beliefs, as well as conquest and governance, than contemporary observers from the Company man to the Foreign Office official, through to the modern anthropologist, ever tried to credit.<sup>138</sup> The probability of mistranslation that Wilks posits, which turns *twa etire* ('cut off the head') or *bo sepo* ('to inflict the dagger') into the much more evocative and loaded 'human sacrifice', ensures that it is not possible to unravel the content of these three accounts from either the agenda of the authors or the culture of West African representation within which they were observing and writing.<sup>139</sup>

The more useful conclusion to take from accounts such as those of these three British observers before the First Anglo-Asante War is that whatever the actual status of the phenomenon at the time, they had ample motivation to exaggerate or misinterpret what they were told, sensationalise what they saw, and misrepresent it all using a Eurocentric preconception that violent subjugation was legitimate under the aegis of justice and social conformity, as a legalistic British principle. Execution, to British observers in the 1810s and 1820s, was a standard legal process where the state was answerable in law; if state, law and standardisation could not be seen in the killing practices of other cultures, a fault was

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<sup>137</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 32-34, 75-76, 89, 103-104, 287-289. W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 84-86, 224-234. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 114-117, 128, 140-142, 232.

<sup>138</sup> C. Williams, 'Asante: Human Sacrifice or Capital Punishment?', pp. 433-441. I. Wilks, 'Asante: Human Sacrifice of Capital Punishment? A rejoinder', pp. 443-452.

<sup>139</sup> I. Wilks, 'Asante: Human Sacrifice of Capital Punishment? A rejoinder', pp. 443-452.

perceived in the other civilisation.<sup>140</sup> The counterpart to this culturally relative position, which developed from characterisations of fetishism and ‘human sacrifice’ in West Africa from earlier writers such as the Dutch merchant Willem Bosman in 1704, Henry Meredith and, later, abolitionists including Thomas Fowell Buxton, was what William Pietz describes as an implicit ‘identification of slavery and human sacrifice as ultimate violations of human life and of African fetishism as the antithesis of both free trade liberalism and Christianity’.<sup>141</sup> Pietz, in avoiding the transcultural question of translation around laws and ‘customs’, executions and ‘sacrifices’, has identified the worldview which motivated Bowdich, Dupuis, and especially Hutton, in writing back to an encultured British National-Imperial public discourse. This reached its apogee with an anti-slavery expedition up the Niger river, with Buxton involved in its organisation and its marketing as a campaign against “‘grossest ignorance’” and “‘savage superstition’”, in 1841.<sup>142</sup>

A similar exceptionalism is evident in visitors’ observations of violence in Spanish (de)Colonial society. Against the backdrop of *criollo* culture in places like Angostura, violence incorporated Iberian conceptions of honour, divided into status and virtue, which combined and competed amidst an intensely stratified yet mutable hierarchy of class and race. Legitimacy, ‘purity of blood’, and cultural exclusion were undermined or modified by miscegenation and assimilation, but society remained volatile and fraught with risk for people at all levels. They

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<sup>140</sup> A labour-based argument might also be relevant to the British position; transportation had its appeal to a colonial economy, over and above execution as a deterrent. For an account of the tensions between metropole and peripheries regard British Imperial judicial execution, see C. Anderson, ‘Execution and its Aftermath in the Nineteenth-century British Empire’, in R. Ward, ed. *A Global History of Execution and the Criminal Corpse* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 170-198.

<sup>141</sup> W. Pietz, ‘The fetish of civilization: sacrificial blood and monetary debt’, in P. Pels and O. Salemink, Eds. *Colonial Subjects: Essays on the Practical History of Anthropology* (Ann Arbor, 1999), p. 68.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas Fowell Buxton, quoted in M. Osborne, S. Kingsley Kent, *Africa and Britons in the Age of Empires* (London, 2015), p. 28.

faced those dangers eventually in the wars for independence.<sup>143</sup> From the perspective of the British mercenaries, though, none of this complexity was very clear at all. For Dr Robinson, the near-ubiquitous dishonesty he described was closely bound to the dishonourable practices of colonial governance dictated from Madrid, and particularly due to the 'most despotic tyrants' they sent to ensure that the colonial populace were 'galled with the chains of the most unprincipled oppression'. These oppressors placed 'insuperable barriers' in the way of the 'cultivation of the higher qualities of the mind' among the 'Creole' society he observed.<sup>144</sup> Later declaring that they had 'neither practical virtue, nor practical morality', the ingrained violence of a disordered and nearly lawless state was also referred to repeatedly. Robinson infrequently wrote of 'violence' explicitly, except in relation to the environment of the Orinoco region. However, Spanish oppression and 'Creole' degeneracy were referred to as cause and effect, dishonesty and mental deficiencies were ascribed to people of all backgrounds and social roles, and the physical violence that was described was connected with these characterisations. He did witness two 'natives', rather than 'Creoles', fighting with knives in the street. The objective of this brawl was to stab upward 'to allow the whole intestines to tumble out'; this did not occur, but the 'two monstrous barbarians' charged and cut each other until they both collapsed exhausted.<sup>145</sup> What he described was an image of commonplace street violence by unrefined 'barbarians' with the weapons of criminals, unrestricted by observers, right after he had heaped ridicule on the local retail sector for their inability to run

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<sup>143</sup> The history of this honour code in Spanish Colonial America is outlined clearly in the editors' introductory essay, in L.L. Johnson, S. Lipsett-Rivera, eds. *The Faces Of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque, 1998), pp. 1-17.

<sup>144</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 191-192.

a business. Robinson turned what was probably the enactment of a complex and violent honour code in *criollo* society into the behaviour of degenerate 'natives'.

The empirical authority of these authors relied on dealing with other imperial cultures beyond the frontiers of British Imperial control. It is clear that their encultured understandings of Us/Them, good and bad, and the hierarchy of civilisation that places even sophisticated and dominant cultures below 'Us', meant that the processes of social control that included religious culture and the social infrastructure were rendered violent. They were even declared degenerately, dangerously, or unjustly so, by a culture that approved violent subjugation when in line with the rule of British law. The idea of a "Manichean allegory" that led colonising European societies and imagined colonial subjects to be constructed through an 'inferior-superior dialectic' of 'black/bad, white/good' is, as George Yancy writes, due to the 'fixed' condition of the colonised because 'the colonizer does the fixing' as a superior authority.<sup>146</sup> This binary applied to early nineteenth century British constructions of 'Us/Them' to such an extent that it fundamentally affected the judgements of traveller-authors like Robinson, who constructed a 'Creole' identity of degeneracy that did not exist beyond his own imaginary of Angostura society, or like Bowdich who wove the rhetoric of 'human sacrifice' and 'bloodthirsty' superstition into his construction of the Asante far beyond the extent of his own observations, disregarding parallels with European cultures of violent killing or the issues with interpretation of Asante 'customs' and practices into English. Interestingly, that relationship between the constructed superior Imperial self, the inadequate current arbiter of social control, and the colonial or postcolonial other has continued to govern, through

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<sup>146</sup> G. Yancy, 'Colonial Gazing: The Production of the Body as "Other"', *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 32:1 (Spring 2008), pp. 1-15.

legalistic arguments and processes, much of the unbalanced power-dynamics of global geopolitics in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Ikechi Mgbeoji casts the USA-led coalition in the role of uber-Imperialist, whose 'imperial delusions of order are justified on the basis that the UN has become sclerotic', in a continuation of the civilised-self/barbaric-other dialectic. He describes a 'metaphor of the global North as the overworked nanny, constantly at pains to supervise the development of a delinquent, infantilised group of peoples' in the global South. This is the other end of the trail that began with the proto-Civilising-Mission discourse of encultured British National-Imperial authors such as those I examine here.<sup>147</sup>

### **Conclusion: Race, Civilisation and History**

In these accounts, race as a modern scientific theory of difference is emergent, but not broadly understood by all of the authors. They did not have to be of self-consciously scientific mind to accept that there were essential differences between races rooted in nature that separated nations and cultures clearly. They also accepted a hierarchy which allowed them to reconcile their Eurocentrism and British-Imperial exceptionalism with projections of national, ethnic, and physical difference on others. They could put themselves at the top, based on the advanced condition of their culture, as well as on evidence of perceived innate inferiority in any figures that were visibly, physically different. Stratification of ethnic groups they met or

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<sup>147</sup> I. Mgbeoji, 'The Civilised Self and the Barbaric Other: Imperial Delusions of Order and the Challenges of Human Security', *Third World Quarterly*, 27:5 (2006), pp. 855-869.

imagined was also influenced by assignments or denials of historical legitimacy, via Anglocentric understandings of the past. They ascribed physical characteristics, manners and behaviours in terms of nature and civilisation through the syncretic gaze of the encultured Imperial observer and carried out proto-anthropological evaluations in the ethnographic convention of the travel writing genre. Such observers as authors also attributed and legitimated histories to the ethnic categories they described. They undertook the task of fixing categories of difference, furthering the essentialisation of racial hierarchy beyond the intellectual theories of the time.<sup>148</sup>

The outcomes of this are partial, problematic, and frequently self-contradicting. However, what this chapter has implied throughout is that each of the key groups I have focused on in the accounts has been historicised according to its own civilisational status. So, the history of the South American 'Indian', as a primitive culture, only existed in relation to their colonial rulers. Their historical agency did not extend beyond their oppression by Spanish colonists and their descendants. The Fante had an indeterminate history, evidenced by their uncivilised 'manners and customs' but really assumed because of the decentralised structure of their wider society. They existed in history mainly in relation to the European slave-traders and their successors, and – dawning rather slowly on the awareness of the British on the coast – the far more powerful neighbouring Asante Empire. The hybridised population of Cape Coast was both historically legitimised and partially civilised by their direct associations with the British, in a way that Fante communities away from the European bridgeheads were not. In a comparable way, the imagined 'Creole' society of Angostura (and Venezuela more generally) was a corrupt hybrid, oppressed by its association with Spanish rule and degraded by its

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<sup>148</sup> S. Hall, *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 63-65.

blending with the indigenous population. It did not exist in the racially defined sense that the authors assumed, but its historical legitimacy was entirely subordinate to Imperial Spain. Although they shared the dissolute prehistorical habits of the 'Indians', along with their ubiquitous characteristics of laziness and so on, the miscegenated 'Creole' society of the rebellious colonies could share in Spanish historical legitimacy, but not their 'Oriental' despotism, stagnation and decline. The Asante represented the most problematic ethnicity for any of these observers to historicise. They were utterly different, 'pagan negros' to the British visitors, yet Asante was a powerful, expansionist, centralised imperial state with a strong elite and effective military machine. It had a long, detailed history in relation to its neighbours in all directions, which Bowdich and Dupuis both attempted to construct along European lines in their second parts. This was a problem that required the lenses of gender and class to unravel, and which was most usefully attempted using European understandings of intellectual and military prowess as categories of evaluation. The Asante, along with the transitional revolutionary societies of Spanish South America, were proving more difficult to assimilate into a modern imperial hierarchy of difference than the theorists of the age had determined. The work of assigning a status to Asante race and civilisation was also very much a work in progress, the arguments still being laid out by interested parties in the forum of British public discourse, when the real military clash between the British Imperial forces and the Asante ignited explosively at Nsamankow in January 1824.

Absence of an awareness of the scientised debate did not preclude an application of racist judgements – it does not do so now. Even as the science that underpinned modern racism has been consistently disproved, the cultural entrenchment of Eurocentric prejudices continues as a battleground for 'debate', for so-called 'culture wars', and for the defence of long-

standing inherently racist systems and structures. At our current stage of racialised Western discourses of difference, continuing intellectual advocates of its superiority have divorced the lexicon of biological racism from that of 'Civilisation', freeing the latter for continued usage as a yardstick for cultural value and delineation of 'us' and 'them'.<sup>149</sup> At its point of assimilation in the early nineteenth century there were variations in intellectual realisation from conscious biologism to unconscious encultured acceptance of recent but already integrated principles. Social observation, raised through the conventions of the travel account into a prototype of anthropological ethnography, allowed a further non-scientised yet putatively methodological judgement and racialisation of people within the hierarchical structure of imperial exchange.

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<sup>149</sup> This can be a continuing principle of British National-Imperial identity. In habitually misinterpreting legitimate complaints of material discrimination because the 'grand narratives' that established them have 'gone', prominent neo-Conservative commentator Douglas Murray represents a trend toward dissonance between 'history' and current social inequalities that replaces an overtly racist politics with one that essentialises cultural difference. See D. Murray, *The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity* (London, 2019), pp. 12-14. An historian's approach to using this dissociation can be found in N. Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (London, 2011), pp. 295-325.

## Chapter 5

### Martial Masculinities: Race, Gender and Militarism

From whom could the ignorant native of S. America, learn the usages of war, but from the Spaniards? And what was the civilised European's conduct, when conqueror? Invariably every prisoner was massacred in cold blood; villages and farms were ravaged and burned; and every species of cruelty and insult... were practised upon an unresisting, and often on an unoffending population... Revenge is a virtue in the opinion of the uncivilised. Ought those then to be harshly judged... if they retaliated as often as they had it in their power?

R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises* (London, 1831).

I was not a little surprised at coming directly in contact with a party of soldiers habited and armed in British costume, and headed by a white African (or, as it may be better understood, a white negro) dressed *en bourgeois*, with the exception only of a ponderous hat *en militaire*. These apish warriors, who formed a part of the king's body-guard, fell into open ranks, and made some awkward movements with their musquets, accompanying each caricature evolution with a low submissive obeisance.

J. Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (London, 1824).

Without established gendered assumptions about national, ethnic, and racial difference, British travellers could not apply critiques of sub-civilised ceremony or 'learned' behaviours of cruelty. A double-standard belonged to evaluations of masculine martial prowess and presentation in the British conception of the 'native' soldier, already clear in Joseph Dupuis' encounter with Asante soldiers 'habited and armed in British costume'. Ceremony, discipline, and modern European military accoutrement became an 'apish' and 'awkward... caricature evolution' when adapted by West African men. This image of ridiculous imitation and 'low

submissive obeisance' could not possibly accord the respect that British parade ritual and its underlying salutary terror of harsh punishments was proudly granted.<sup>1</sup> Here we see familiarisation of the exotic again, using symbols and analogies of similarity between cultures yet governed by the implication that the other was inadequate to civilised military 'originators'. Richard Vowell's exculpation of the brutal conduct of 'ignorant native' men foregrounded another facet of the hierarchy of difference. Again, dependent on military masculinity, it assigned blame to a violent and cruel expression of European civilisation, making responsibility for the cruelties of the *Guerra la Muerte* dependent on differing perceptions of racial maturity between the South American populace and the 'Spaniard'.<sup>2</sup> In truth, a more sophisticated political engagement with the violence of the colonial state had been ongoing in Spanish colonial societies for some time.<sup>3</sup> Dupuis and Vowell acted under specific understandings of European and British manliness, attached to martial priorities and 'desirable' character traits governed by context, fashion, and what they might be defined against. An assumed 'hegemonic', 'normative' masculinity governed how they presented themselves and their subjects, based on acceptability to expected audiences – Sara Mills reminds us that male and female travel writers frequently reinforced the same gendered expectations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 68-69. R.N. Price, 'The Psychology of Colonial Violence', in P. Dwyer, A. Nettlebeck, eds. *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World* (London, 2018), pp. 30-31, 37-38.

<sup>2</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>3</sup> C. Radding, 'The Many faces of Colonialism', and S. Serulnikov, 'Patricians and Plebeians in Late Colonial Charcas', in M.D. O'Hara, A.B. Fisher, eds. *Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America* (Durham, 2009), pp. 106-109, 168-174.

<sup>4</sup> J. Nagel, 'Masculinity and Nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 21, no. 2, 1998, pp. 242-269. S. Mills, 'Knowledge, Gender, Empire', in A. Blunt, G. Rose, eds. *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (New York, 1994), pp. 36-40.

This chapter will address the effect of encultured individual conventions of that National-Imperial male gaze exercised by the authors, and their influences on the hierarchical evaluation of gendered characteristics and cultures among the racialised categories of people they described. I consider the centrality of the body and the various ways this influenced their gendered outlook. I will then explore qualified male assessments of women as others before moving on to the uses of other men to develop representations of subordinate masculinities amongst the 'Native Soldier', 'Creole', Fante and mixed- heritage groups. I will discuss the construction of what were later called 'Martial Races', and their frequent definitions by what they were not. For example, the often sneering, negative characterisation of Fante masculine identity was useful for all the visitors to Kumasi, and even more so for Henry Ricketts in writing of a state of war, in defining just what was so effectively martial about the Asante soldiers.<sup>5</sup> I will close the chapter by reflecting on the characterisations of cruelty and qualifications of respect ascribed to the primary antagonists in each theatre – the Royalist 'Spaniards' of the South American context, and the Asante armies of West Africa. Each of the authors established some kind of relationship between their own male identities and the other side, displaying degrees of ambivalence towards counterparts or erstwhile enemies.<sup>6</sup>

A long-running legacy governs representations of the 'masculinity' of male travellers or adventurers. The variability of these imagined forms confirms that masculinity is a heuristic category, interacting with other simplified designations of identity and difference in order to

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<sup>5</sup> H. J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 86-97.

<sup>6</sup> On superordinate and hyper-visible masculinities, see M.S. Kimmel, preface, *The History of Men: Essays on the history of American and British masculinities* (Albany, 2005), pp. vii-x, and M.S. Kimmel, 'Invisible Masculinity', *Society*, Vol. 30, 1993, pp. 28-35. On the exceptional feminine figure in the Enlightenment, see A.C. Vila, "'Ambiguous Beings": Marginality, Melancholy, and the *Femme Savante*', in S. Knott and B. Taylor, eds. *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 56-64.

get at a point of analysis. Gail Bederman calls it ‘a conceptual placeholder which allows us to ask certain kinds of questions’, but it only works if we define what it means in context and what it is being applied to.<sup>7</sup> For Lucas Tromly, using the idea of ‘echotourism’, the male traveller-author following in H.M. Stanley’s footsteps defines the relationship with his own masculine identity directly through the exemplary traveller, making the experience of relating to his predecessor definitive, and his direct encounter with place secondary.<sup>8</sup> Echoes of exemplary masculinity in the early nineteenth century were provided by a reaffirmed male soldierly identity, in mainstream cultural acceptance with recent wars in Europe and North America. It had become popular, although it was already woven into non-military official roles.<sup>9</sup> The latter was displayed in Dupuis’ diplomatic uniform and pomp, African Company soldierly trappings demonstrated by Bowdich and Hutton, or status-oriented limited service records such as Hippisley’s; he reasserted his martial credentials through the mercenary opportunity in Venezuela, but the appeal of soldiering to Brown and Vowell may encapsulate this exemplary effect. The latter was certainly too young for service in the Napoleonic Wars, but they were surely very familiar with stories of adventure and success.<sup>10</sup> By the 1890s, this militaristic manliness had been recapitulated through representations of British soldiering in India, the Crimea, and back on the Atlantic periphery (including against Asante), but echoes of the comparison of these martial narratives stretched back past the authors in this study,

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<sup>7</sup> G. Bederman, ‘Why Study “Masculinity,” Anyway? Perspectives from the Old Days’, *Culture, Society & Masculinities*, Volume 3 Issue 1, 2011, pp. 13-25.

<sup>8</sup> L. Tromly, ‘Echotourism and masculinity: the African travelogues of Tim Butcher, H.M. Stanley, and Graham Greene’, *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 23, no. 2, 2019, pp. 158-174.

<sup>9</sup> L. Carter, ‘Scarlet Fever: Female Enthusiasm for Men in Uniform, 1780–1815’, in K. Linch, M. McCormack, eds. *Britain’s Soldiers: Rethinking War and Society, 1715–1815* (Liverpool, 2014), pp. 155-180.

<sup>10</sup> Several of the essays in the recent collection *Martial Masculinities* explore this rise in awareness and popularity during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. See M. Brown, A.M. Berry, J. Begiato, eds. *Martial Masculinities: Experiencing and Imagining the military in the long nineteenth century* (Manchester, 2019).

establishing a model that relied on both the exemplary figure, and the 'quest structure of adventure'.<sup>11</sup>

Also influencing the post-Napoleonic martial masculine ideal was the Enlightenment preconception that, in David Hume's words, 'none of the peoples of the tropics' were capable of military discipline (or art, or public order), due to climate and indolence – Silvia Sebastiani notes that the contemporary intellectual debate was between moral and environmental causes. Hume contributed a common understanding to the British worldview which favoured 'liberty and humanity but did not impinge upon the hierarchy of peoples'.<sup>12</sup> Many key faculties of a more civilised people (including military discipline) were masculine, but the idea that women were the agents of historical progress was also fundamental to the perception of Enlightenment societies as historical, sentimental and balanced, while the rhetoric of slavery and emancipation and the embodied role of women in the physical appearances of different races was also significant.<sup>13</sup> Encultured national-imperial masculinity, dependent on further binaries of difference that defined the components of this identity, experienced a discursive anxiety about the roles and relative importance of men and women to civilisation, racial integrity, and progress, as a result of these contradictions.

Napoleonic victory and maritime hegemony meant, however, that British representatives could assert their 'masculine' selves with some confidence, incorporating an imperial superiority with 'useful' male traits to form a frequently 'invisible' hegemonic British Imperial

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<sup>11</sup> For an exploration of the 'narrative imagining of masculinities', traced from Scott's *Waverley* through to T.E. Lawrence, see G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (Abingdon, 1994), pp. 22-25, 53-76.

<sup>12</sup> S. Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, gender and the Limits of Progress* (New York, 2013), pp. 41-43.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 134-141, 152-153, 162.

male identity. It was almost always the figure of man under discussion.<sup>14</sup> It is evident that conscious assertions of manliness or gentlemanliness and measurement of other male identities was undertaken by the soldier, sailor, navigator, explorer, traveller, adventurer, and author. They had to think about it and take care to express it acceptably. Manliness and gentlemanliness, according to John Tosh, were distinct and 'slippery' concepts by the early Victorian period, with inconsistent variations across contexts. These were just as complex before 1830, if not as separate, as the sources examined here demonstrate.<sup>15</sup> Any 'invisibility' of hegemonic male ubiquity did not make a dominant form of gendered control consistent to place, time and intention, though.<sup>16</sup> It was also addressed through the perspective of the male British agent as observer of other women, coming to terms with aspects of those ideas of the role of women as markers of civilisation in sometimes conflicting ways.<sup>17</sup> The long historical normativity or standardisation of the male experience, especially in Europe, has 'skewed the way that women have been viewed' in scientific and philosophical terms, according to Merry Wiesner-Hanks. This affected understandings of the superiority or perfectibility of certain male gendered physical and behavioural traits.<sup>18</sup> Standardised male experience was inextricable from racial measurement and categorisation from the late eighteenth century, reinforcing the gender binary within hierarchies that incorporated race, class, and other identities.

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<sup>14</sup> For the original discussion of the 'invisibility' of masculinity to social scientists, and particularly the centrality of power to the construction of masculinities, see MS. Kimmel, 'Invisible Masculinity', *Society*, Vol. 30, 1993, pp. 28-35.

<sup>15</sup> J. Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain : Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (London, 2005), pp. 86-90.

<sup>16</sup> G. Bederman, 'Why Study "Masculinity," Anyway?', *Culture, Society & Masculinities*, pp. 13-25.

<sup>17</sup> S. Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 134-141.

<sup>18</sup> M.E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History: Global Perspectives* (Chichester, 2011), pp. 88-92.

## Imperial Body Politics: Fashioning the Feminine Other

Nadia Brown and Sarah Allen Gershon describe bodies as ‘sites in which constructions of differences are mapped onto human beings’, subjected to social expectations, ‘systemic regimes’, and heuristic conventions of class, race, gender, sexuality, age, and ability in hierarchized dichotomic forms.<sup>19</sup> Acting against the assumption of stability and normalisation of form, the body as a site of analysis exists in contestation, resistance, and recontextualization of power. On peripheries of European cultural hegemony where colonial fantasies were tested, the effect of the national-imperial gaze on determining the politics of the other body was acute. This imperial gaze predominantly conformed to the standards of the observer’s hegemonic masculinity. Claudia Gronemann describes the effect of the ‘gendered order of vision – the female as “Other”’ on the ‘colonial production of difference’, with ‘the female body time and again serving as a signifier for unfathomable foreignness and described as a universal icon for otherness’.<sup>20</sup> It used the parallel separation of race and gender when the British male traveller as author observed women, or subordinate men. Angelina Paredes-Castellanos and Ricardo Rozzi explore the ‘biocultural exoticism’ of the ‘Imperial Eye’ on Latin America, through which ‘a foreign aesthetic and epistemological model acceptable to the West is imposed’.<sup>21</sup> Western witnesses evaluated and described feminine

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<sup>19</sup> N. Brown, S.A. Gershon, ‘Introduction: Body Politics’, *Politics, Groups and Identities*, 5:1 (2017), pp. 1-3.

<sup>20</sup> C. Gronemann, ‘A Hybrid Gaze from Delacroix to Djébar: Visual Encounters and the Construction of the Female “Other” in the Colonial Discourse of Maghreb’, in H. Fischer-Tiné, S. Gehrman, Eds. *Empires and Boundaries: Rethinking Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Settings* (London, 2009), pp. 149-150.

<sup>21</sup> A. Paredes-Castellanos, R. Rozzi, ‘Biocultural Exoticism in the Feminine Landscape of Latin America’, in R. Rozzi et al. Eds. *From Biocultural Homogenization to Biocultural Conservation* (Cham, 2018), p. 169.

forms, manners and behaviours for a readership that already expected the familiarisation, the subjective systemised equivocating, of the feminine exotic.<sup>22</sup>

Just as the previous chapter asserts that separating race from nationality, heritage and social status makes a clear understanding of the post-Napoleonic British Imperial worldview unworkable, separating these categorisations of difference from the gendered perspective of these authors would also be reductive of messy representations of identity, self and other. Ideas of racial difference, purity, integrity, and the cultural superiority of the national-imperial self, are dependent on what Anne McClintock calls the 'rigorous policing of women's sexuality', in contrast to men's sexuality in practical circumstances.<sup>23</sup> The 'bridgeheads' of pre-'Scramble' British presence in West Africa meant a predominantly male, adult white colonial presence. Racial 'purity' was 'inextricably implicated in the dynamics of gender'.<sup>24</sup> The body, through processes of assessment, judgement, and control, was the site for the enaction of this racial and gendered power. For the traveller-author the textual construction of bodies required that they made use of their experiences to legitimate their encultured worldview. Body politics – described by Gronemann as 'tactical body construction through codification' – legitimated the colonisation of the body. Preceding the possibility of occupation and exploitation, which needed to be justified to a self-consciously modern society, it was a vital

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<sup>22</sup> Patty O'Brien finds it already well established by the time the 'Pacific Muse' became a universally recognised trope. See P. O'Brien, *The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific* (Seattle, 2006), pp. 8-13.

<sup>23</sup> A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest* (New York, 1995), pp. 61-62.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 61-62.

founding exercise in the ‘symbolic constitution of hierarchical bodily *images* in legitimization of colonial interests’.<sup>25</sup>

Textual representations of encounters and accompanying images incorporated gender and geography with race and class, pushing gradations of their values into hierarchies of difference. Accompanying images were conventional by this period, and were very appealing to readerships, but they were also of course expensive additions, notable by their absence from those accounts that were published by payment from the author, such as Hippisley’s, or in the aftermath of public interest, such as Ricketts’ and Vowell’s.<sup>26</sup> They were used in some of the accounts, to ascribe precise visual signifiers to the written descriptions, including the ‘Mulatto Woman’ who accompanied William Hutton’s ethnographic description.<sup>27</sup> These representations of the colonised body, materially or imaginatively, were tied up in anxieties that surrounded hybridity of cultures and races. A confusion of ideas around the degeneracy of racial miscegenation, or cultural benefits of hybridisation, were used throughout the nineteenth century to justify oppression of colonial subjects or the colonisation of bodies, minds, lands, and economies.<sup>28</sup> They all left marks on the bodies of others from contact, through conquest, to colonisation.

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<sup>25</sup> C. Gronemann, ‘A Hybrid Gaze from Delacroix to Djébar’, in H. Fischer-Tiné, S. Gehrman, Eds. *Empires and Boundaries*, p. 150.

<sup>26</sup> MS 42725/6 Hippisley account ledger, John Murray Archive, National Library of Scotland.

<sup>27</sup> Engraving by I. Clark, after W. Hutton, ‘A Mulatto Woman of the Gold Coast’ in W. Hutton, *Voyage* pp. xii.

<sup>28</sup> M.S. Murphy, H.D. Klaus, ‘Transcending Conquest: Bioarchaeological Perspectives on Conquest and Culture Contact for the Twenty-First Century’, in M.S. Murphy, H.D. Klaus, eds. *Colonized Bodies, Worlds Transformed: Toward a Global Bioarchaeology of Contact and Colonialism* (Gainesville, 2017), pp 14-16.



Fig. IV: Engraving by I. Clark, after W. Hutton, 'A Mulatto Woman of the Gold Coast' in W. Hutton, *A Voyage to Africa*, pp. xii.

Using both race and gender as stereotypes, the relationship between knowledge and power depended, as we have seen, on the construction of difference in a dualistic oppositional form, utilising the binary of self and other and the translatory process of exotic to familiar. Sara Mills identifies the significance in imperial travel writing of the focus on 'manners and customs', but also on "'common-sense" knowledge', and assumptions that accept a normative social form from their society of origin. They all shaped constructions of the difference between men and women, relations between genders, age groups, and classes, and gendered economic roles.<sup>29</sup> The eighteenth century also saw an extensive development of British conventions concerning women's character, status, behaviour, education, and treatment within 'civilised societies' which saw the faults of mistreatment and oppression of women as endemic to 'uncivilised' cultures. Katherine Turner's research shows that 'conduct literature' directed at women frequently drew on travel writing and ethnography, describing how women were treated abroad and how they were to behave at home, then making direct comparisons of both status and behaviour between British and foreign women. These were significant preoccupations within the travel writing genre across generations, providing much material for the cultural production of civilised femininity.<sup>30</sup>

Like many ideas of human difference under debate by the 1800s, such conventions were part of the enculturation process for these authors and underpinned, without critical awareness, how they wrote about women. For William Hutton, this was most apparent in comparisons between 'native' Fante women of the region, and the 'mulatto' women he met at Cape Coast.

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<sup>29</sup> S. Mills, 'Knowledge, Gender and Empire', in A. Blunt, G. Rose, Eds. *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (New York, 1994), pp. 34-35.

<sup>30</sup> K. Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800: Authorship, gender and national identity* (Abingdon, 2018), pp. 55-86.

Dupuis brought class into the mix with reflections on elite Asante women in Kumasi, and the gendered differences in the general populace.<sup>31</sup> From South America, indigenous women were described in relation to their social status and relationships with men. Poverty was a key tenet of their character. Contrast was provided by women in the 'Creole' urban societies of Angostura and the smaller towns, as well as Bogota and the *llanos* in Richard Vowell's case. Vowell managed to construct the most nuanced representations of South American women. These examples provide some important clues to how the authors assumed characteristics of gender within imagined social and racial hierarchies.<sup>32</sup>

Hutton's attention to gendered difference incorporated 'common-sense' elements of knowledge within his description of 'manners and customs'.<sup>33</sup> He discussed behaviour of the 'purely' Fante women in the town in terms which highlighted their difference from British conventions of female behaviour along racialised lines. He had seen 'hundreds of them at a time in a state of nudity, at the sea-side' bathing early each morning, then oiling themselves to 'make their skins shine'. This brief, dismissive observation on their lack of 'delicacy', despite their 'cleanly' habits, was accompanied by the observation that the 'women work very hard, and are great slaves to the men', so that their treatment and status in relation to normative masculine societal expectations was directly related to their behaviour as a group.<sup>34</sup> Vowell, whose more considered observations tended to avoid stereotyping groups of people, observed a similar pattern of daily life at Guayaquil (now in Ecuador) where 'women of all classes' bathed in the river in large crowds at dawn and dusk, 'most of them without any

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<sup>31</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 89-97, 112-113, 174-175, 316. J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 61-63, 110-111, 114-116.

<sup>32</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 177-178, 246-249.

<sup>33</sup> S. Mills, 'Knowledge, Gender and Empire', in A. Blunt, G. Rose, Eds. *Writing Women and Space*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>34</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 93.

covering'. The reality of racial indeterminacy, especially in the eyes of the earlier three British writers on South America, does not however lead Vowell to condemn this behaviour as degenerate, indecorous, or unseemly; he made no explicit judgement even though the bathing place was so exposed, but gave the last word to the ladies who 'allege, as an excuse', that there were so many of them in the water at once that they could not be recognised by anyone watching.<sup>35</sup> The comparison here between the attitudes of the two men makes Hutton's agenda as Imperial prospector stand out even clearer.

Hutton saw greater affronts to the civilised treatment of women at Foso on the journey to Kumasi; an Asante man 'jealous of his wife' beat her so severely at their arrival that her cries were heard 'for miles in the woods', her groans so 'dreadful' that 'however much she might have deserved punishment, it was distressing to hear her'. In taking exception to this marital violence based on its severity and not its occurrence, the author made it clear that he endorsed a severely patriarchal, interpersonally, and emotionally violent form of relations between men and women. Again, he observed that 'the women in this country are considered so inferior to the men, that they are treated more like beasts of burthen than women', and were 'slaves' to their husbands, forced to carry 'heavy loads'.<sup>36</sup> Romona Bennett's work into colonial depictions of indigenous women's conditions in British Guiana emphasises that this interpretation of the division of labour betrays an ignorance or misrepresentation about the complementarity of men and women's domestic tasks.<sup>37</sup> The specifics of the situation were set aside here by Hutton in order to conflate the observation of violence in one marriage

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<sup>35</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, p. 247.

<sup>36</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 174.

<sup>37</sup> R. Bennett, 'Pulling the *takuba* ashore: the subtext of indigenous women's representation as drudges in nineteenth century travel writing set in British Guiana', *Borders and Crossings special edition, Studies in Travel Writing*, forthcoming, 2021.

where the husband was Asante, with the culturally distasteful sight of women doing hard physical labour in a small community in rural Fante, and with the generalisation that 'this country' treats all women as 'inferior' and as 'beasts'. Given the efforts of the author elsewhere to show his accumulated knowledge of the recent history of conflict and tension between Asante and the populations nearer the coast, his strident stereotyping of male-female relations and the obvious implication that the populace was savage due to the status of women, is particularly disingenuous. Hutton may well have been aware of the debates around hard labour and brutal treatment of women and children in the nascent heavy industries of England at the time – it was held within the forums of public discourse that he sought to contribute to, including the Parliamentary accounts that sat beside foreign correspondence in the press.<sup>38</sup> However, neither that comparison nor the fair reflection of recent history in the region would have played into his emphatic colonising agenda, while he had in fact already noted that the division of labour in the region typically saw women taking responsibility for agriculture, and men for fishing.<sup>39</sup>

Gendered stereotypes of racial difference were also prominent in the ways that modes of dress were described. Highly gendered along precise conventions, often rooted in illusions of tradition made unstable by fashion, and accompanied by anxieties about gendered difference, what people wore, how they wore it, and whether it left them subjectively 'naked' and 'savage' or otherwise, were important judgements on gendered cultural practices that became closely tied to biological and civilisational difference. Again, points of comparison

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<sup>38</sup> The parliamentary debate was underway by 1819, when a significant report was published. See F.J. Freudenberger, F.J. Mather, C. Nardinelli, 'A New Look at the Early Factory Labor Force', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Dec. 1984), pp. 1085-1090.

<sup>39</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 47.

involved an exemplary standard of pseudo-traditional 'normative' conventions of clothing and presenting the feminine form which omitted the realities of rapidly shifting European fashions in the period.<sup>40</sup> Instead, authors legitimised an imagined civilised standard of middle-class attire against which all others could be measured. Hutton took this to its fullest conclusion, providing a sketch of hybrid respectability to demonstrate the successes of the civilising influence on the local people. His 'Mulatto Woman of the Gold Coast' is represented by an engraving by 'I. Clark' (probably John Heaviside Clark), who had carried out other startlingly similar work for Longman authors in the preceding years, including in Dr Robinson's book and other travel accounts.<sup>41</sup> The original sketch is credited to Hutton and corresponds to the description he provided. These 'superior black women and mulattoes dress very modestly', he declared, in silk or cotton skirts, with 'silver keys' hanging to the front. What cannot be seen in the image, and the source of which is not made clear, is that they 'wear a girdle that goes several times round their loins' to form a 'cankey' at the rear on which their children were carried. The imprecision of the term girdle, as well as its religious and classical inferences, seems an odd choice of words. The image itself communicates the impression of a 'civilising effect' embodied in the 'Mulatto Woman'; she is fully attired in a respectable but subtly exotic outfit, while the parasol hints at a European-friendly refinement, contrasted with her bare

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<sup>40</sup> Christopher Lane draws an interesting connection between anxieties of normative gender identities and the construction of the literary 'dandy' figure in France and Britain around the end of the eighteenth century, which nevertheless avoids discussions of race and difference. C. Lane, 'The Drama of the Impostor: Dandyism and Its Double', *Cultural Critique*, No. 28 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 29-52. For an exploration of African 'nakedness', the Civilising Mission and colonial 'self-fashioning', see J. Comaroff, 'The Empire's Old Clothes: Fashioning the Colonial Subject', in D. Howes, ed. *Cross-Cultural Consumption: Global markets, local realities* (London, 1996), pp. 19-38.

<sup>41</sup> For example, R.K. Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia, &c. during the years 1817, 1818, 1819 and 1820* (London, 1820). This is probably John Heaviside Clark, artist and engraver, known as 'Waterloo' Clark for his eyewitness depictions of the battle. The link is made by various sellers of contemporary engravings and by the Royal Academy but is not clear. See RA Collection: People and Organisations, I. Clark (fl. 1819-22), [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk), <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/name/i-clark>, accessed 10 December 2020.

feet, the rootedness of her difference. The young women were 'proud of showing their bosoms', something he sees no reason to criticise like he did the naked bathing, although the linen shirt of the mulatto woman in the engraving completes the 'curious' costume that he wished to depict.<sup>42</sup> Objectifying statements on the shape and durability of female bodies were a staple of the male gaze throughout this period. Gustavus Hippiisley took a moment to comment on the 'remarkably firm' flesh of both 'Indian' and 'Creole' women, noting too that 'the bust, even of women who have borne children, retains its shape and firmness'.<sup>43</sup> Joseph Dupuis, in another apparently common association of 'native' women with water, romanticised his encounter with 'sable Naiads' while crossing one stream, when the 'nymphs of the African wilderness' took care to 'modestly' screen themselves from the travelling party of men.<sup>44</sup> Hutton's 'mulatto' figure is an ideal construction of contact zone femininity – respectably covered, incorporating unusual customary or practical elements, but conforming enough to the expectations of a British middle-class audience to imply the benefit of Britain's influence on the gendered behaviours of the West African periphery. These masculine objectifications, Romanticisation, and racialised constructions were recognisable to their readerships, and successfully exoticised and familiarised nameless female figures.

The hint at youthful promiscuity and implication of class difference in the status of Hutton's 'mulatto women' were repeated in his initial impressions of the crowds gathered to greet the consular party on arrival in Kumasi. 'Genteel, handsome women' crowded the porticoes and waved 'courteously' while 'fine young girls, not more than thirteen or fourteen' crowded their

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<sup>42</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>43</sup> G. Hippiisley, *Narrative*, pp. 470-471.

<sup>44</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 51-52.

hammocks and 'invited' the officers to 'notice them'.<sup>45</sup> He was more open to describing the women as attractive here, something he avoided in relation to the women of the coast. The idea that there was something more appealing about Asante feminine manners or appearance was also put forward by Thomas Bowdich in his chapter on 'Customs'. Bowdich mentioned individual women in passing throughout but presented no detailed stereotype in the narrative. In his cosmographical Part II though, he conflated femininity with civilisation and aesthetic appeal. At a funeral procession for the mother of a senior Caboceer, he was impressed by 'the principal females of the family, many of them very handsome, and of elegant figures.' Their rich attire was admired, and the dancing was 'incomparably better than the people of the waterside', with 'elegant' movement similar to the waltz.<sup>46</sup> Notwithstanding the sacrifice of sheep and 'sacrifice' of humans (which Bowdich saw 'from a distance'), throughout the proceedings, the formal, respectable, reserved performance of women in the mourning rituals seemed to suggest a cultural superiority over the Fante. In contrast to Hutton's conflation of Asante and Fante mistreatment of women, Bowdich made a gendered evaluation of Asante civilised status in relation to their coastal neighbours that fitted with hopes for a beneficial relationship with Kumasi. It also reflected the long-standing British contempt for Fante due to familiarity, long association, and their ability to hold their own in economic exchanges with overbearing European merchants while resisting Asante imperialism.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, pp. 208-209.

<sup>46</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 283-287.

<sup>47</sup> R. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 153-155.

In South America, a hierarchy of feminine types and behaviours was also reproduced by the mercenary returnees. There was typical confusion and ambivalence surrounding the definitions of female 'manners and customs' due to the poorly understood Spanish colonial categories of social difference. For Gustavus Hippisley, the ladies were, like the gentlemen he described, defined as Spanish rather than *criollo*. John Robinson and Charles Brown took similar approaches but there were subtle differences depending on how they extrapolated their own limited encounters. Hippisley met more of those women who belonged to the elite of Angostura society, while Robinson had more direct contact with the working and peasant populations in and around the town due to his medical credentials.<sup>48</sup> Brown made no note of the women of Angostura at all, probably due to his station as an impoverished junior officer, but he spent more time on Margarita, where he made two observations of note on the roles and treatment of women in Spanish colonial society. He saw the indigenous and 'mixed' population of the island as reluctant subjects of the Republican cause and described the indigenous 'women that followed' the Rifle Corps recruits, who were all 'Sambos (or Indians)', as 'naked, and most disgusting objects'.<sup>49</sup> It seems both soldiers and female camp followers were impressed from the missions and deserted whenever they could, while the latter by their appearance were animal savages to the young English middle-class observer.

Brown also addressed the role and treatment of high status Patriot women, using the example of General Arisimendi's 'young wife' and her capture by Royalists, along with 'several other females' who were not identified. Senora Arismendi was not granted her own name either, but the rumour of her adventures, which involved her husband refusing an exchange and

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<sup>48</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, p. 278. J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 101-126.

<sup>49</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 100-101.

executing the royalist officer in question, her transportation back to Spain and enslavement at Cadiz, her escape and journey to the United States, and return to the side of her husband on Margarita, was recounted. Anonymising a prominent Patriot woman, Brown may have intended to reflect his practical disapprobation of the independence cause, but this also occurred in post-independence South American writings as a device for feminising the character of 'symbolic systems'. Maria Luisa Cáceres de Arismendi was one of only two women named as heroes in Andrés Bello's epic 'Alocución a la Poesía', as Catherine Davies et al. note, amidst the consistent habitual uses of masculine collective nouns in 'events, facts and reality'. The representations of 'symbolic systems' in the work were feminine, including 'ideas, inspiration, imagination, nationalism, morality, nature, civilisation and lack of it, government and lack of it, and so on'.<sup>50</sup> For Brown, the story of Luisa Arismendi proved her husband's 'propensity for cruelty and hatred to the Spaniards', while reinforcing the trope of Imperial Spanish cruelty too, in their ill-treatment of respectable women of status and their masculine cultural degeneracy in abusing the idealised status of the feminine.<sup>51</sup>

Richard Vowell, too, made observations on the conditions of women at the polar extremes of economic status in South American society. Many of the urban 'Creole' women he described were represented as materially refined due to relative wealth and status, but rougher in manners and somewhat independent in their behaviour as members of the transitional wartime society.<sup>52</sup> Vowell was also able to make more effective longer term observations from multiple locations. The ladies of Bogota, for example, were 'remarkably lively, and pleasing in

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<sup>50</sup> C. Davies, C. Brewster, H. Owen, *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* (Liverpool, 2006), pp. 66-70.

<sup>51</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 144-147.

<sup>52</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 26-27, 32-33, 177-178, 217-218.

their manners', resembling 'Andalusian women' most of all in South America.<sup>53</sup> Poverty can be understood temporally in Vowell's descriptions, distinctly more nuanced than his contemporaries' reports published a decade earlier. Travelling from Bogota, he described 'wretchedly poor women and children, clothed in strange grotesque dresses', once the 'gaudy' attire of prosperous lives before the mines closed at Quilichao.<sup>54</sup> They contrast starkly with the impoverished indigenous camp followers Brown saw on Margarita, also victims of economic collapse during the wars. Across all of these case studies, from both theatres, Vowell stands apart as the only author to consistently look past his encultured preconceptions of difference and expectations of gendered societal role and status, to consider recent conditions of colonial social stratification, tumultuous change, economic collapse, or warfare, in the cultural roles of women and the conditions of their daily lives.

In both theatres, conceptions of elite women were based in part on limited yet lively personal encounters, but also on rumour and tales of their political actions. Elite women were assigned a qualified respect for their status and refinement, something that could be seen to reflect well on the two urban societies. Their descriptions also showed a capacity to influence that belied the subjugatory role that Brown had assigned to the impoverished indigenous women, or that Hutton claimed to have observed in Fante and Asante treatment of wives as 'slaves' or 'beasts of burden'.<sup>55</sup> In Kumasi, the women of the court were also given autonomous identities, with freedoms that marked them as cultural contributors in Asante society, showing that the British visitors were sensitive enough to detect the legacies of an 'openness'

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<sup>53</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>54</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 208-210.

<sup>55</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, p. 174. C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 100-101.

in early Asante society that gave women prominent and powerful roles.<sup>56</sup> Individuals such as the 'King's Sister' who visited Joseph Dupuis and whom he described as 'Governess of the Empire', exercised substantial cultural power, although this was primarily in the realms of 'mystery', 'custom' and religious practice, while the attendants of the Asantehene's ten year old daughter who was brought to meet the British officers were preoccupied with her marriageability and imminent sexual maturity, using the power of social and spiritual influence available to elite Asante women to manipulate the politics of the court.<sup>57</sup> Dupuis seemed to take a degree of pleasure in both visits and did not disparage their 'manners' or forwardness as 'savage', but the stark cultural differences were played upon and he was also careful to ascribe limits to their influence.<sup>58</sup>

The ladies of Angostura were presented, by Hippiely as well as Vowell, as an autonomous social and political cohort. They were encountered by Hippiely in the context of a grand society party. Vowell, on the other hand, recounted the story of those same upper class ladies' attempts to arrange the assassination of Bolívar.<sup>59</sup> The ladies of Angostura were desirable company, in principle, to Colonel Hippiely, enough to persuade him to hold a ball open to the city's elite rather than a private officers' dinner. He admired the 'ease and manners' of Bolívar's aunt, whom he could have taken to be English, and enjoyed the 'liberty, independence and equality' of upper class social attitudes. The 'pleasantry and complaisance' of wives and mistresses as they mixed together also impressed on him the equalling effect of

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<sup>56</sup> E. Akyeampong and P. Obeng, 'Spirituality, Gender and Power in Asante History', in O.Oye-wùmí *African Gender Studies: A reader* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 24-46.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, pp. 34-37.

<sup>58</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 114-116, 62.

<sup>59</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 32-33.

his party.<sup>60</sup> There is an odd lack of awareness of how this body of female society might have been formed, or of who may be excluded, in revolutionary Venezuela, and he made no mention of the plot to assassinate Bolívar by the women of Angostura's colonial ruling class. Vowell mentioned it in order to highlight the trust Bolívar placed in officers and soldiers of British origin, but he also hinted at the intra-class-based tensions in elite Venezuelan society, occupied by men and women whose interests were tied to one side or the other. Hippiisley made the rich and privileged women of Angostura into symbols of the benefits of 'liberty' but Vowell managed to point to their confused loyalties and 'liberty's' limitations.<sup>61</sup>

These anecdotes were carefully constructed in order to assign the roles of relatively powerful and privileged women a set of limited civilised characteristics. They included degrees of political and cultural agency, along with material and domestic power, but within separate domains to elite men. However, their identities were projected onto women of their class and status more broadly, while their individual agency was limited by the societal behaviour ascribed to them as figureheads of their culture's femininity. These elite women were granted socio-political status and agency, unlike those of lower status constructions of class and race, demonstrating a limited civilised class-differentiated culture in both (post)colonial Angostura and Imperial Kumasi. In keeping with the sub-normative men and women of the lower orders in each region, though, and unlike the elite male Patriot or Asante figures in any of the accounts, they were not named.

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<sup>60</sup> G. Hippiisley, *Narrative*, pp. 277-280.

<sup>61</sup> G. Hippiisley, *Narrative*, pp. 277-280. R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 33-35. C. Davies et al., *South American Independence*, pp. 66-70.

### **Masculine Others: Identifying Martial Races and the unsuited for war**

Other masculinities were defined against the normative, hegemonic ideal of the authors' own, whether acknowledged and celebrated or assumed and hidden. That hegemonic ideal was also completely dependent for its identity on what it excluded.<sup>62</sup> Reliant on many of the stereotyped markers of difference that constituted their civilisational gaze, these forms of masculine identities categorised others using three subordinate characterisations. They were either unrefined, containing several admirable manly qualities without the gentlemanly; uncivilised, encompassing characteristics of savagery, barbarity or degeneracy which made them distasteful, undesirable or threatening; or inadequate, encompassing traits including cowardice, disloyalty and feminine emotional excess.<sup>63</sup> Each time some or all of these strands of masculine othering were forwarded, they were constructed in opposition to the author's own masculine ideal which incorporated terms of difference, and communicated through embodied signifiers of appearance, form and behaviour to reinforce essential, material otherness.<sup>64</sup> John Tosh detects an 'Imperial Masculinity' in which the obverse of heroic white masculinity was the 'demonised colonial other', while the former was a 'collection of disowned negatives' and a means to 'forbidden sexual impulses.' Tosh notes the 'bloodless' limitations of many post-colonialist studies which imply that imperialism was essentially mindset and metaphor, 'rather than an exercise of authority', positing Catherine Hall's *Civilising Subjects* as a counterpoint, reattaching power to its 'material context' by

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<sup>62</sup> J.W. Messerschmidt, *Hegemonic Masculinity: Formulation, Reformulation, and Amplification* (Lanham, 2018), pp. 99-103. T. Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (London, 2006), p. 61.

<sup>63</sup> J.H. Arnold, and S. Brady, 'Introduction', in J.H. Arnold, and S. Brady, eds. *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 2-6.

<sup>64</sup> For a broader conceptual exploration of the relationship between male bodies and masculinities, see T. Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (London, 2006), pp. 123-139.

considering, using non-iconic texts, that the work of imagination in construction of imperial masculine identities was 'manifested in social action and inflected by it'.<sup>65</sup> Tosh highlights a clarifying point that is apparent in my own 'non-canonical' selection of sources, that the exercise of this imperial imagination is grounded in and flavoured by social change, intellectual fashion and practical exercises of political, economic and military power as well as knowledge acquisition. I am using texts that recount tales from limited, generally uncelebrated, or ultimately unsuccessful careers, which express ambitions about socio-economic change and opportunity on the peripheries, producing texts for domestic readerships in order to bring that opportunity home. They were written by men who, as authors, defined their own masculinities by what those identities excluded.

In these texts there is a curious tension between the practical and imaginary elements of the hegemonic masculine British-Imperial identity within which those 'disowned negatives' were ascribed.<sup>66</sup> The practical values and achievements of Fante men had to be both subordinated and effectively utilised. Observations on their hardworking temperament therefore had to be offset with their perceived 'thieving' tendencies.<sup>67</sup> Hutton's solution to this shortcoming of manliness was typically to subordinate them as workers to a formal colonial British economy. Henry Ricketts was explicit in ascribing cowardice and cruelty to the Fante, as a martial male culture; he observed them 'running away' from an overwhelming Asante force and called them cowards, then described them brutally dispatching wounded enemy warriors on the

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<sup>65</sup> J. Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity: An outdated concept?' in J.H. Arnold, S. Brady, eds. *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 25-26. C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>66</sup> J. Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity: An outdated concept?' in J.H. Arnold, S. Brady, eds. *What is Masculinity?*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>67</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 90-91, 102.

battlefield, with 'primitive' cruelty.<sup>68</sup> Their historical effectiveness in dealing with British demands and expectations was not compatible with this imagined identity of cultural-racial male inferiority.<sup>69</sup> In South America, John Robinson was aware of the material manipulation of the 'Indian' soldiers by colonial superiors yet declared their inherent unsuitability as soldiers. The 'native soldier' was defined exactly by what the ideal British soldier was not; ill-disciplined, ill-equipped, lacking in uniform or even in clothing, and so forth. Absence of resources should have been enough to apportion blame for the 'natives' unsuitability to the degenerate colonial rule of Spain, itself represented in terms of a masculine deficit due to cruelty and religious superstition.<sup>70</sup> The Fante and the 'Indians' were imagined to inhabit every undesirable masculine trait that a British paragon of manliness, gentlemanliness, and martiality excluded. These ideals, however, did not always stand up to the analysis of practical experience, as contradictions like Robinson's self-deprecating horror of tropical insect-irritation, or the Gold Coast authors' acknowledgements of Fante pragmatic usefulness, showed. All the authors were vulnerable as men and male representatives of their domestic cultures, when faced with the qualified adaptive suitability and the imagined cultural inferiority of subordinated male others. An assertion of the right kind of male identity was a necessary response to the undermining challenge of alternative masculine behaviours.<sup>71</sup>

Between 1815 and 1825, the regions of New Spain and the Gold Coast were recent, current, or imminent war zones. They were also, as I have discussed, locations of imagined and reimagined imperial ambitions. Even those actor-authors who had not pursued a specifically

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<sup>68</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 90-91, 118-122.

<sup>69</sup> R. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>70</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 235-240.

<sup>71</sup> T. Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (London, 2006), pp. 14-16.

military career path, or constructed a self-consciously soldierly persona, assessed racialised categories of men in terms of their apparent military prowess, potential, and presentation. Heather Streets relocates the development of a British martial race ideology from the late nineteenth century proliferation of commentaries on relative martial characteristics of races, defined by the colonisation and administration of the Indian Empire, placing it within a longer history of martial ideals long caught up with mythologies of fighting 'races' such as the Highlander. While the development of the types Streets focuses on –Highlander, Sikh, Gurkha – began to be compared from the mid-eighteenth century, she places the crucial emergence of a strident ideological position in the events of the Indian Rebellion and its aftermath.<sup>72</sup> However, at another moment of recapitulation for the British National-Imperial worldview, the evidence of post-Napoleonic conceptions of the martial other such as those of the travel writings examined here suggests that habits and agendas of evaluating and characterising distinct, racialised male ethnicities were already established by the 1820s. Martial prowess was a prominent measure of assessment when comparing, evaluating and racializing West African and South American cultures.

The term 'martial race' appeared in John Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in book IV, 'The Argument'. Originally published in 1697, it was reprinted in 1808, edited by Walter Scott. Dryden's mediated interpretation of the original work contained the idea of a people who could be defined positively by martial capabilities, exemplified in an individual hero, the fame of which 'from pole to pole extends', and whose 'race, in arms and arts of peace renowned,'

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<sup>72</sup> H.M. Streets, *Martial Races* (Manchester, 2004), pp. 2-7.

could not be contained in its ambitions.<sup>73</sup> The cultural model of the exemplary martial figure on a heroic quest was well-advertised by Scott.<sup>74</sup> Dryden's writing was oriented to a new idea of public readership, maturing in Scott's time, which prioritised present impressions rather than posterity. Its masculine virility was important to preserve for Scott.<sup>75</sup> If, as Paul Davis asserts, Dryden attempted to use Virgil to 'build up Britain's culture of resistance' against threats to its integrity during the Restoration period, then Scott's construction of such a culture for another period of change and challenge to British identity also drew on notions of masculinity as an essential base of national identity, a point of comparison between cultures, a project, contest and set of defining values. All of these were associated with arenas of martial achievement.<sup>76</sup> Engagements with Dryden in the early nineteenth century had a part to play in contemporary popular imaginings of Anglo-British masculine identities, assisting with their evolution from the sensibility of the late eighteenth century gentleman, to the harder-edged National-Imperial figure that succeeded him. David Hume's essay 'On the Populousness of ancient nations' (the first version of which appeared around 1742) also set a precedent for the admiration of an essential 'martial spirit' with a 'love of liberty' in the character-forming conditions of 'perpetual war'.<sup>77</sup> By the early nineteenth century,

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<sup>73</sup> S. Johnson, *The Works of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland, with Prefaces...Volume 3* (Dublin, 1804), p. 368. J. Dryden, W. Scott, *The Works of John Dryden: Now first collected in eighteen volumes* (London, 1808), pp. 334, 433.

<sup>74</sup> G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, pp. 53-76.

<sup>75</sup> J. Lewis, 'Dryden: The poetics and politics of transition', in J. Lewis, L Zunshine, eds. *Approaches to Teaching the Works of John Dryden*, digital edition (New York, 2013), Part II: Approaches.

<sup>76</sup> P. Davis, 'Dryden and the invention of Augustan culture', in S.N. Zwicker, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 88-90. A. Lincoln, *Walter Scott and Modernity*, (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 7, 76-77, 103.

<sup>77</sup> D. Hume, *The Philosophical Works of David Hume, Volume III* (London, 1826), p. 448.

philosophical efforts effectively laid claim to a classical legacy of martial prowess, presenting both British intellectual works and inherent attributes within the classical lineage.

These works, in repeated reproduction, also constructed legitimacy using elements of primitive peripheral cultures of manliness, inventing traditions on their own fringes which were useful exercises in national-imperial remaking of the self by familiarising the other. Robert Burns romanticised the proud martiality of a National Scottishness, placing it within a more strident British identity. He also used the phrase 'martial race' when describing the 'bold, soldier-featured, undismay'd' countenance of an historic Scottish warrior in 'The Vision' in 1786.<sup>78</sup> Walter Scott took both Scottish and classical warrior heroisms and constructed a Romantic schema for determining the martial characteristics of distinct racialised groups within populations. The Highlander was at the core of this; Kenneth McNeil attributes 'anthropological underpinnings' to Scott's 'devotion to describing the "manliness" of irregular' military forces, including Spanish partisans and Cossacks which had apparently 'sprung from the rugged periphery of their respective nations'.<sup>79</sup> Depicted using idealised values and principles appealing to an emerging, aspirational middle-class, Scott was able to construct a tradition of desirable manly traits both modern in its valuation of ability, and noble by ignoring 'vulgar' priorities like professionalism and pay. Honour belonged to tribalized, primitive

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<sup>78</sup> R. Burns, auth., JM. Currie, ed. *The works of Robert Burns; with an account of his life, and a criticism on his writings... Volume 3* (Edinburgh, 1801) p. 85. Leith Davis notes the presence of a 'male "genius" of the nation', suggesting that Burns' national affiliation betrays a masculine primacy in contrast with the 'feminine' character of nation. L. Davis, 'Gender and the Nation in the Work of Robert Burns and Janet Little', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 38, No. 4, Autumn, 1998, pp. 621-645. In the view of Sarah Dunnigan, Burns' work is 'perpetually appropriated' in ways that have excluded women as readers, critics, or owners of the identities his writings have been used to shape. S. Dunnigan, 'Burns and Women', in G. Carruthers, ed. *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns* (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 20-33.

<sup>79</sup> K. McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire: Writing the Highlands, 1760-1860* (Columbus, 2007), p. 94.

identities, while ability came with desirable martial masculinities found in such societies.<sup>80</sup> Streets describes the use of ‘fantastic promises of wealth’ in late eighteenth century Scottish recruitment to the British Army, but the reality might have been due more to a prosaic need for employment and livelihood following the first wave of ‘Clearances’ and the concentration of agricultural land usage.<sup>81</sup> Given Scott’s extensive contribution to public discourse, his influence on the conception of a modern British National-Imperial manliness with its essential and historical martial primacy was substantial enough to form part of the encultured masculine identity of subsequent writers.

Returning to Heather Streets’ genealogy of martial race ideology, applications of an evaluating martial worldview could be expected to have followed harder on the heels of the Romanticised invention of the primitive Highland Warrior ideal than the aftermath of the Indian Rebellion. The writers in this study encountered fighters of evident ability and all encountered men seemingly unsuited to war too, judged by a specific set of cultural expectations informing their martial ideal. A complex range of evaluations took place, often subconsciously, in the fulfilment of societal expectations held by the reading public, which were shaped in turn by Neoclassical, Romantic, and Enlightenment intellectual fashions. Herbert Sussman recognises the ‘warrior code’ as the basis of the sense of self in many cultures of masculinity, with honour, reputation, glory, and renown at its core, acknowledging but not exploring the performative aspect of this tradition or its use as a measure of difference or a judgement of validity on other cultures. In its early nineteenth century manifestations,

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<sup>80</sup> D. Cottom, *The Civilized Imagination: A study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and Walter Scott* (Cambridge, 1985, digital edition 2009), p. 169. K. McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire*, pp. 94-99.

<sup>81</sup> H. Streets, *Martial Races*, p. 58. A. Mackillop, *Military Recruiting in the Scottish Highlands 1739-1815: the Political, Social and Economic Context* (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1995), pp. 1-10.

just as at the ideological height of British Imperialism, a culturally accepted white male 'warrior code' was very useful as a marker of cultural and racial difference, familiarity and value. Streets does note the 'suspect' character of British racial constructions of Sikhs and Ghurkhas, and the highly politicised motivations behind them.<sup>82</sup> Cultural awareness in Britain that the Highland regiments were not in reality 'pure' Highlander did not prevent their longstanding Romantic characterisation or undermine the usefulness of applying the same value judgements to men of specific religious cultures in the Indian subcontinent, or indeed to closely related groups with distinct political cultures in the region of the Gold Coast.<sup>83</sup>

In West Africa, reasons for carrying out assessments of the inherent martial capacities of different groups were clear from the outset. Asante was an aggressor with the numbers and reputation to worry British administrators and traders. They became a direct threat in 1816 with their siege of the Fante town of Cape Coast, which the British observed from Cape Coast Castle.<sup>84</sup> They were also a wealthy polity that might have offered opportunities to replace the trade in slaves. Evaluating their soldiers as men was important. Relations with people from Fante communities were long established, often complex, and ambivalent in their character. The Fante were closely associated with the slave trade in the minds of British observers; abolition meant their influence and due respect waned.<sup>85</sup> The other neighbouring and interrelated populations were less clearly determined – as Hutton's conflation of Fante

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<sup>82</sup> H.M. Streets, *Martial Races*, pp. 3, 8-9.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 8-11.

<sup>84</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 4. 'Coast of Africa', *The Caledonian Mercury*, 31 October 1816. 'English Mission to Ashantee', *The Morning Chronicle*, 3 November 1817. R. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p. 11.

<sup>85</sup> T.M. Reese, "'Eating" Luxury: Fante Middlemen, British Goods, and Changing Dependencies on the Gold Coast, 1750-1821', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 66:4 (October 2009), pp. 851-872. R. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 10-11.

cultural practices with those of the people of Accra shows – but even Dupuis, with his diplomatic positivity towards Anglo-Asante relations, could see the probable need for determining who might ally themselves with a British colonial force against Kumasi.<sup>86</sup> To Henry Ricketts, those alliances were real, and had lasting relevance to him in his account.<sup>87</sup> Different communities and their satellites could be characterised through imposed identities of ‘tribe’ or ‘nation’ so that an indeterminate mixed population in Asante territory could become, according to Bowdich, a subjugated nation with its own distinct ethnic character.<sup>88</sup> Dupuis took some clear pleasure in ridiculing this ‘invention’, although he was ready to make assumptions of essential difference between neighbouring populations too.<sup>89</sup> The main assessment of martial capacity by ethno-racial category was conducted by Ricketts and illustrated by graphic examples of ‘savage’, ‘cowardly’, or ‘martial’ characters on the battlefields.

In South America, misappropriated Spanish colonial signifiers of difference meant that characterising the relative martial capacities of racialised groups required several essential, assumptive, ocular distinctions. Slave or freed soldiers of evident African origin formed one distinctly racialised group. Hippisley saw them as ‘more savage in nature than the brutes who inhabit the woods and mountains’, tending to rush into battle uncontrollably seeking revenge, and to run away as wildly when beaten.<sup>90</sup> By contrast, the evidence of Peter Blanchard’s research into slave experiences of Independent military service demonstrates the complexity

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<sup>86</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 92-94. J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 208-210, 214-216, 218-223.

<sup>87</sup> H. J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 29-31, 42-43, 69-70, 86-92, 104-105, 147-148.

<sup>88</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 187, 236, 241-242.

<sup>89</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 225, 230-231, 238, CVI.

<sup>90</sup> G. Hippisley, *Narrative*, pp. 463-464.

of black South Americans' motivations for choosing sides, volunteering, fighting and deserting from the Imperial or Republican causes.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, the most inherently 'uncivilised' population group visible to the mercenaries was the indigenous 'Indian' or 'native' soldier. Again, assumptions about background and motivation were to the fore in judgements of their martial capacities too, pushed to the extreme by Robinson's disparaging racist assessment of them.<sup>92</sup> The ambiguous status of the 'Creole' portion of the population, encompassing most of the urban inhabitants they encountered as well as an indeterminable proportion of the armed forces (except in Vowell's more experienced assessment), meant that they were both easily condemned as fundamentally 'native' and therefore uncivilised, un-martial troops, primarily due to their equipment and attire, on much the same terms as any indigenous soldiers. Judgement by colour of skin was broadly evident.

The wide-ranging dismissiveness of Patriot soldierly abilities was not universal, however, as some limited groups were perceived to be entirely apart from the general 'Creole' population, materially and geographically. The *Llaneros*, plainsmen and cattle herders of the highland interior, fulfilled certain desires for description of an inherently martial race apart from the main miscegenated population, who could be adjudged half-civilised, and portrayed as the kind of wild and ferocious warrior race that Romantic depictions of Highlanders had fed into the British cultural worldview.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, judgements of Spanish colonial brutalisation and incompetency were possible here, making comparisons between the various racial groups within the Patriot forces and their Royalist former overlords, by attributing the atrocities of

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<sup>91</sup> P. Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave soldiers and the Wars of Independence in South America* (Pittsburgh, 2008), pp. 10-14, 113-140. C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 115-116. G. Hipplesley, *Narrative*, pp. 464-464.

<sup>92</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 134-140.

<sup>93</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 126-132.

the former in the pursuit of *la Guerra a Muerte* to the actions and precedents of the Spanish Imperial cause. I will now examine these key examples in turn, dealing with uncivilised unsuited soldiers as described by Ricketts and Robinson, before discussing the case of the *Llaneros* as a 'martial race', and then the characterisation of barbaric cruelty ascribed by the sources in each theatre to their main antagonists, the 'Spaniards' and the Asante.

### **Judging Un-martial and Inferior Allies: Fante 'Cowards' and the 'Native Soldier'**

The construction of un-martial races against which to contrast those suited to warfare allowed authors to further their own judgements or prevailing prejudicial characterisations of specific racialised groups in each region. For John Robinson, this was most notable in his detailed attempt at a scientific racist analysis of the 'native soldier', while Richard Vowell took the degenerate cruelty perceived in the Spanish colonial system as evidence that a particular morality of war could be undesirable and that a 'martial race' such as the *Llaneros* could learn these degrading behaviours from the 'wrong' exemplar of European 'civilisation'. There were very different circumstances in the region of the Gold Coast, covering the official status of British involvement, the long standing relationships with the coastal Akan communities, and the mysterious presence of the independent and aggressive imperial entity of Asante.

As I have discussed, a degree of political and social inferiority was ascribed to the Fante by all of the authors, reflecting their ability to hold their own against British trade agendas before

and after the ban on purchasing slaves.<sup>94</sup> This was extended by Henry Ricketts, from his soldierly point of view, to a racialised battlefield characterisation. In contrast to the Asante, characterisation of the Fante as unmartial incorporated several characteristics that would be assigned to similarly 'unsuited' communities in India, where they proved unmalleable by the British military-imperial project, and were consequently represented as effeminate and cowardly cultures of masculinity.<sup>95</sup> In Ricketts' judgement of the allies and enemies he observed during the First Anglo-Asante War, the ambivalent relationship with the Fante stood in contrast to the stark military superiority of the Asante, while the centralised leadership of other allies resulted in more reliable detachments in the line of battle than the often despised Fante from around Cape Coast.<sup>96</sup>

The Fante forces in particular, recipients of Governor Sir Charles MacCarthy's beneficent aid against Asante aggression, seemed to have a questionable commitment to this cause that was supposedly to their benefit. At Affettue, Ricketts did not establish whether it was the whole of the Fante force which argued against their position in the battle formation, or whether the dispute was the work of their leaders alone. He did however highlight distrust of them amongst the other allies, 'knowing the cowardice of this tribe,' and the general belief that the Fante wanted the right flank because 'the way to their country lay in that direction.' According to Ricketts, as predicted, 'the Fantees, three thousand strong... ran off to their own country at the first volley without firing a shot.'<sup>97</sup> In addition, the 'Warsaw' force, another regional Akan-speaking population, apparently left the field early in the action; seeing this, the porters

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<sup>94</sup> R. Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 10-11, 153-155.

<sup>95</sup> H.M. Streets, *Martial Races*, pp. 31-32, 93, 178.

<sup>96</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 92-93, 96.

<sup>97</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 92-93, 96.

detailed to resupply ammunition – largely drawn from the Fante labouring population of Cape Coast – refused to do so. The disastrous outcome of the battle was thus easily attributed to the failure of native allies rather than any shortcomings of the British leadership or the rashness of engaging with the huge Asante army with less than a quarter of the forces in the area assembled. Ricketts described the brutality of their Akan allies more broadly in the next battle; prisoners were not taken but ‘put to death’ as they advanced, against the protestations of the ‘gentlemen’ in command. They were ‘cut across the belly, when plunging their hands in, they took out the heart, pouring the blood on the ground as a libation to the good fortune of the cause.’<sup>98</sup> Readers were spared any graphic description of the damage caused to the enemy by the musketry and rockets of the British forces themselves, a more ‘civilised’ method of conducting war, the uses of which were often glossed over to conceal later anxieties about weaponry unsuited for ‘civilised warfare’ in colonial conflicts.<sup>99</sup> Brutality is in this manner attributed clearly to *other* combatants – savage, brutal or dishonourable people from outside European traditions of chivalric slaughter – although not to the ‘cowardly’ Fante who had already left the field.

While Ricketts condemned his unmartial allies by focusing on stereotyped characteristics and behaviour on the battlefield itself, Dr Robinson produced a condemning evaluation of the South American ‘native soldiers’ through a detailed and highly racialised description of their appearance and behaviour in transit and on parade. This was a closer, more self-consciously scientific treatment of the inherent unsoldierly qualities in the ‘Indian’ population, as displayed by their bodies, their attire, and attitudes to authority. These soldiers (120 of which

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<sup>98</sup>H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, p. 118.

<sup>99</sup> M. Gordon, ‘The Dynamics of British Colonial Violence’, in P. Dwyer, A. Nettlebeck, eds. *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World* (London, 2018), pp. 160-165.

were now aboard the *Bombard* with the author) were ‘mostly naked’, were prepared to vocally demand tobacco of their general, and were ‘readier to detract than to praise him’. Robinson provided a detailed sketch of the unit, which was accompanied by the engraving, emphasising primitivity:

These squalid troops presented a very motley group. They were of every age, from eight years to fifty, or even more. Some were completely naked; some had a hair rope bound round their body, to which was attached a piece of cloth, behind and before, which passes between the thighs, called *Yayuco* or *Guayuco*; some had a jacket; some, a kind of short pantaloons, of very coarse linen; some a cap; some, an old hat; some, a hat made of straw; but none of them were completely clothed; while all of them had a knife or dagger hid about some part of their body. They were all furnished with muskets.<sup>100</sup>

Here Robinson continued his preoccupation with the mode of attire of the people he met, established in his earlier descriptions of the ‘Creoles’. Here, the language of description became deeply deprecatory when turned on the infantry. Imbued with that European and very domestic sense of what constitutes a respectable soldierly form of attire, firmly established in the cultural imagination of British society at large, everything about the clothing and equipment of this force was incongruous to a military campaign. They were ‘squalid’. They were children and old men and all ages in between. Crucially, they had compiled their attire from remnants of recognisable European clothing including a wide variety of headwear, and elements of traditional ‘native’ dress that were signifiers of ‘primitive’ culture, specifically here the loincloths which Robinson took care to describe. The accompanying engraving also emphasised the ‘primitive’ aspects of the appearance of these men, as well as the juxtapositions of modern weaponry and the setting of the *Bombard* with the naked brown body. The figure’s vaguely European slouch hat, along with the white piped cross-belts, look

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<sup>100</sup> The *Guayuco* is a form of loincloth. J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, p. 138.

out of place against bare skin. The cartridge box mentioned in the text appears to be hanging from a string of large beads. This image took the starkest contrasts suggested in the text and put them all together to construct a composite visual representation that would be strikingly incongruous to a European readership.<sup>101</sup>

One of the strongest contradictions attributed by Robinson to his composite 'Native Soldier' was the condition of their armament, and the discomfiting blend of the native and traditional with modern and civilised. Their blade was 'hid about' their person (a challenge to an almost naked man, presumably the reason Robinson was so sure of the blades' ubiquity), implying that it was the tool of a criminal. They were, in contrast, 'furnished' with their muskets, making it clear that in the observer's eyes these weapons of contemporary European warfare were issued to these troops, implying that they were a naturally unsuitable weapon for such people and were alien elements of their accoutrement.<sup>102</sup> This dissonance between 'native' soldier and the manufactured European weapons or tools they carried has drawn little scholarly attention. However, it is implied across many similar observations of the indigenous 'other' in regions of conflict or roles of military service. Imaginings of the native African, or indigenous populations across the world, had by the 1880s popularly marked the 'primitive' other as a possessor only of 'primitive' weaponry and equipment. Images of the 'African villager' or 'savage', or the indigenous South American 'Indian', were constructed as 'primitive' warriors. As Ter Ellingson points out, Rousseau's conception of an 'uncorrupted' savage found 'civilised' weaponry and clothing cumbersome and restrictive in 1755.<sup>103</sup> In fact, long before Robinson

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<sup>101</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 135-140.

<sup>102</sup> J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, p. 138.

<sup>103</sup> T. Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, pp. 90-93.

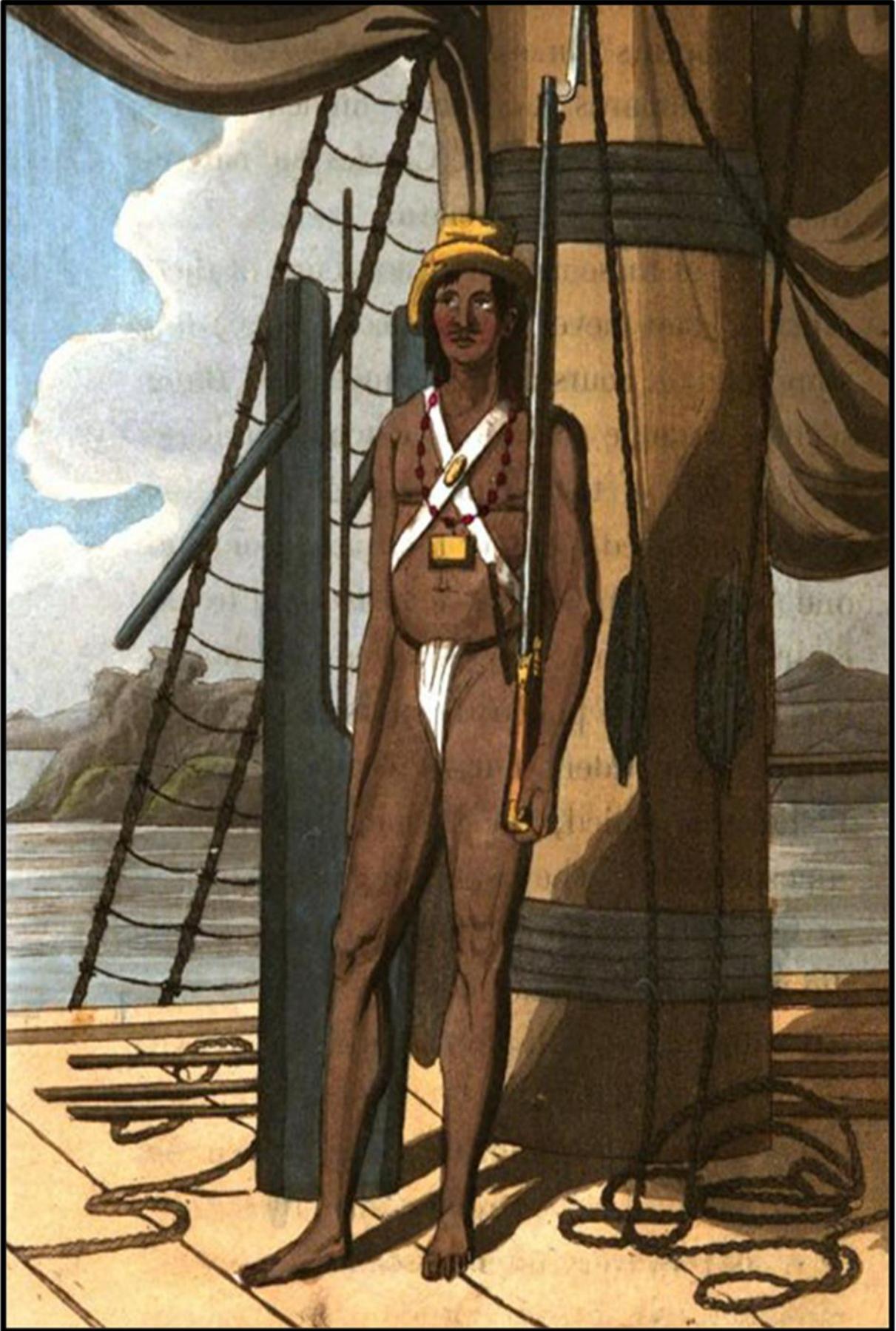


Fig. IV: 'A Native Soldier, in JH. Robinson, *Journal*, p. 238.

and his contemporaries were writing, even before Rousseau conjured his unencumbered primitive man, West African and South American indigenous people had been trading in firearms and equipping their soldiers with them for decades by the time the photograph became a widespread currency of colonial representation, entrenching the 'noble savage' and 'primitive warrior' tropes.<sup>104</sup>

In both of these examples, the prominent characteristics of the observed soldiers are overwhelmingly negative. They also reflect the existing cultural prejudices accepted by each author as attributes of the Fante or the Venezuelan 'natives'. The Fante were supposed by their actions to be cowardly. The 'native soldiers' were demonstrated by their appearance, behaviour, and equipment to be untamed, potentially criminal, and unmalleable by military authority. Disrespect for their officers seemed to be reflected in their ridiculously ragged and variable appearance. Contrasting motivations were at work here. Major Ricketts, in accounting for his own actions throughout the campaign and later decisions as commander, needed to reinforce his military authority as well as apportioning some of the blame for earlier setbacks to the Fante allies. Issues of leadership among a decentralised network of communities, or the established culture of ambivalence towards the Fante due to their long-standing role as effective negotiators in trade with the British merchants, were not confronted. Dr Robinson's motivation, most keenly revealed by the additional discussion of the phrenological condition of the 'native soldier' and his reference to the works of Gall and Spurzheim (discussed in Chapter 4), was to represent a learned opinion based on the author's

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<sup>104</sup> J.E. Inikori, 'The Import of Firearms into West Africa 1750-1807: A Quantitative Analysis', *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1977), pp. 339-368. R. Law, 'Horses, Firearms, and Political Power in Pre-Colonial West Africa', *Past & Present*, Volume 72, Issue 1, (August 1976), pp. 112-132. A. Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the Native and the Making of European Identities* (London, 1999), pp. 1-15.

own empirical knowledge and self-shaped reputation as the scientific man. Nevertheless, both of these accounts constructed their subjects as distinct racial categories, then condemned them as unmartial and inherently inferior soldiers and men. In stark contrast, the construction of the *Llaneros* as a Romantic warrior-race affected even the least Romantically-inclined of the South American authors.

### **The *Llaneros*, Venezuelan Plainsmen: ‘Far from civilised society’**

The cultures of the Venezuelan *Llanos*, or upland plains region had a long history of characterisation at the fringes of colonial society. Before the Conquest, the plains formed a geographical barrier and cultural bridge between regions of ‘higher political development’ to the west and north. Mary Helms describes their wealth and status as ‘middlemen’ in exchanges with those more centralised polities, while links with distant Carib societies have been traced, even as nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyles remained the norm on the savannah.<sup>105</sup> According to Jaime Rodriguez, the legacy of this way of life continued to affect attitudes in 1811, as the General Congress of Venezuela tried to ‘impose order on the “chaotic” *Llanos* by creating formal social hierarchies’.<sup>106</sup> The ‘free pastoral existence’ of the *Llaneros*, who considered the cattle and horses of the savannah their own, was seen as a

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<sup>105</sup> M.W. Helms, ‘The Indians of the Caribbean and Circum-Caribbean at the end of the fifteenth century’, in L. Bethell, ed. *Cambridge History of Latin America, Volume I: Colonial Latin America* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 37, 48-49, 55-56.

<sup>106</sup> J.E. Rodriguez, *The Independence of Spanish America*, pp. 114-115.

threat to the new elite regime constructed by the Congress, who introduced laws against 'vagrancy', movement restrictions, and regulatory bodies that further sought to exclude them from active citizenship. They were also perceived to be of mixed ancestry, a vaguely assigned blend of African and indigenous heritage. This, typically, baffled the British mercenaries who made observations on their racial status.<sup>107</sup>

Following defeat in 1816, many *llaneros* who had served the Royalist cause under General Boves were discharged at his death and returned to the savannah; they then joined insurgent armies raised in the region under leaders such as General Paez, who would command exceptional loyalty from them in the campaigns of the next four years, leading them under Bolívar's overall command into Bogota.<sup>108</sup> Consequently, the dynamic, wild looking irregular cavalry encountered by Europeans were better drilled, collectively more experienced, with a more consistent martial appearance and cultural identity than the hastily recruited and under-equipped forces of the Orinoco region that made up the infantry and the local recruits of the mercenary regiments. Like the archetypal Highlander, they were not 'pure' in their identity as mixed-heritage plainsmen, due to the vagaries of recent and historic population movement, socio-economic exchange and para-military recruitment, but they were, on encounter, consistent enough to fit with a Romantic and racial paradigm of 'fringe-of-civilisation' martial identity that held such cultural and practical appeal to the British observer.<sup>109</sup> Like the

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p. 115.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 184-185. D. Bushnell, 'The Independence of Spanish South America', in L. Bethell, ed. *The Cambridge History of Latin America, Volume III: From Independence to c. 1870* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 111. G. Andrade, J. Lugo-Ocando, 'The Angostura Address 200 Years Later: A Critical Reading', *Nordic Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 10, no. 10, pp. 1-9.

<sup>109</sup> H.M. Streets, *Martial Races*, pp. 58-59, 140-142. K. McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire*, pp. 22, 123-129.

Highlanders, they were imagined as 'pure', peripheral, 'free', and inherently as warriors, constructed as such in comparison with other ethnically ascribed bodies of troops.<sup>110</sup>

This becomes clear in each of the authors' encounters with Paez' cavalry. Hippiisley constructed the martial character of the *Llaneros* deliberately, in opposition to General Sedenó's 'Creole' cavalry. The latter had a 'ferocious, savage look', unrestrained by either military 'regimentals' or a recognisable shared identity. They were 'all sorts and sizes, from the man to the boy', of 'black, brown, [or] sallow complexion', partially clothed or nearly naked, and ill-equipped with a wide variety of partial, broken and makeshift tack for their 'half-starved, jaded beasts'.<sup>111</sup> They were a rabble of hastily recruited peasants of impoverished 'cast'. It is immediately clear that the *Llaneros* under Paez were no more uniform in any sense, but they were allowed a Romanticised representation that was refused Sedenó's motley force. They were 'clothed in the spoils taken from the enemy', including brass bound helmets, silver-ornamented sword hilts and saddles, and even silver stirrups. They all had some form of trouser or breeches on, and even those without shirt or jacket wore their distinct 'blanket', the 'necessary appendage to the general uniform'.<sup>112</sup> This was the *ruana* or *cobija*, a widely used, practical and versatile garment among people across the Andes region of Venezuela and Columbia. It lent a consistent appearance to the plainsmen while leaving room for individual or collective identity, in very similar ways to the cheap and versatile belted plaid of the Highlanders, mythologised as the visual symbol of wild and unruly true warriors from the

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<sup>110</sup> Some interesting points are made on primitive nobility, 'martial races' and 'highlanders', including with reference to Walter Scott's depiction of the Highland warrior and his admiration of 'peasant fighters', in K. McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire*, pp. 92-95.

<sup>111</sup> G. Hippiisley, *Narrative*, p. 414.

<sup>112</sup> G. Hippiisley, *Narrative*, p. 416.

geographic periphery, and already turned into the kilt, that commodity of the Romantic age, by the 1810s.<sup>113</sup>

The *Llaneros'* leader José Antonio Páez was shrouded in rumours of his talents. Called 'self-taught' by Hippisely, he 'sprang up all of a sudden, from nothing' to become a courageous soldier and commander. The 'four thousand brave men' who followed him loyally were 'all so many Paezes' too, echoing the assigning of a 'natural' uncivilised nobility and an embodied heroic tradition by Scott and others to the Highlander – something that Colin Calloway notes was depicted as under threat by modernising processes in a similar manner to that of the *Llaneros'* way of life by the Congress, its successors, and Bolívar. Calloway draws further contemporary parallels between the constructs of Scott's writing on Highland identities, and James Fenimore Cooper's on the more problematic North American 'Indian', whose colonial subjugation he romanticised in *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Pioneers*.<sup>114</sup> In the *Encyclopedia Americana*, in 1831, the *Llaneros* were compared to the Cossacks, while their 'pantaloon' were 'broad and full, in the Mameluke style'. This entry went on to misquote Hippisley, using his description of Sedeno's cavalry to apply to the plainsmen.<sup>115</sup> Conflating elements of the *Llaneros'* wildness and irregularity as mounted troops furthered their mythical otherness. Again, corresponding to the cultural archetype of a 'martial race' in the encultured view of the British observer in the 1810s, this is remarkably similar to philosophical

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<sup>113</sup> For an account of the 'invention' of the kilt from the origins of the belted plaid, due to its suppression, see H. Trevor-Roper, 'The Highland Tradition of Scotland', in E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 19-29. The Highlander identity had changed from individually expressed to regimented in the British Army in the eighteenth century. See K. Lynch, *Britain and Wellington's Army: Recruitment, Society and Tradition, 1807-15* (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 139.

<sup>114</sup> C.G. Calloway, *White People, Indians and Highlanders: Tribal People and Colonial Encounters in Scotland and America* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 240-250.

<sup>115</sup> F. Lieber, *Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. VIII (Philadelphia, 1831), pp. 29-30.

conclusions on the relative conceptual 'purity' of Highlanders as a 'race' compared to other peripheral uncivilised groups across Europe.<sup>116</sup>

Charles Brown was struck by the apparently distinct and superior character of the irregular cavalry under Paez. In keeping with his casually derogatory habit, they were racialised as 'Guerilla Indians', under the command of Paez, 'a Sambo of low stature but pleasing aspect'. They were adventurous, daring, and brave – he illustrated these qualities, and accompanying rashness, with an anecdote of Paez leading them into the river to attack and seize Royalist gunboats. They were the 'only troops which the Royalists dread to encounter', due to this wild and fearless character. Further parallels with similar peripheral warrior cultures in Europe can be seen here.<sup>117</sup> Not only the Highlanders in British public discourse and the fears of their enemies, but also Spanish peasant Guerrillas in the Peninsular War, and the Cossacks in the campaign of 1812, were depicted as relatively primitive, peripheral, brave, fearless, rash and entirely uncompromising to the point of cruelty. Cossacks were, according to Joseph Clarke, seen by the *Grande Armée* as 'relics of an older way of combat'.<sup>118</sup> For Brown, Paez' 'Guerrillas' were marked by the 'irregular manner' of their charge, vulnerable in a 'general engagement' against the 'disciplined troops of the King' – they were admirably ferocious, but primitive and undisciplined. Brown also made the point of juxtaposing these striking 'Indian' warriors with an inferior group. In this case, it was the 'people of Guyana, 'a pusillanimous race, yet very proud and haughty, and remarkably jealous of foreigners, whom they consider as interlopers

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<sup>116</sup> S. Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>117</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 86-88.

<sup>118</sup> J. Clarke, 'Encountering the Sacred: British and French Soldiers in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Mediterranean', and L.S. James, 'Violence and the Barbaric East: Germans and the Russian Campaign of 1812', in J. Clarke and J. Horne, eds. *Militarized Cultural Encounters in the Long Nineteenth Century: Making War, Mapping Europe* (London, 2018), pp. 62-64, 86-87.

and needy adventurers.’ Unlike the wilder *Llaneros*, Guyanans were corrupted by the imposed Catholicism of the colonial order, ‘inculcated to them by bigoted fanatics.’<sup>119</sup> Fears of corruption, belied by the realities of social and cultural intermixture, were also a distinct feature of writings on other ‘martial races’ in Asia and Africa, as well as those Highland warriors closer to home.<sup>120</sup>

While Brown described Paez’ force as guerrillas and Hippisley saw them as brave but irregular, Dr Robinson called them, more formally, ‘dragoons’. Many of them ‘were naked as at the moment they were born’, others were ‘blanketeers’, and some of those had a ‘cap made of the skin of some indigenous animal, because *they* were commissioned officers’.<sup>121</sup> Robinson’s frequent tone of subtle mockery was present here as he conflated Sedenó’s with Paez’ troops as one entire mounted force, then pointedly dismissed the authority of the alleged officers. Robinson drew a distinction too, however, this time between the whole mounted contingent and ‘Páez’s guard of honour’ of around three hundred properly uniformed and mounted cavalry which had ‘every appearance of English troops’, and it was their uniformity of attire and armament, ‘wholly with the lance’, which marked them as competent warriors, ‘fully equal in the field to one thousand of any other troops of the Patriot army’.<sup>122</sup> The ragged, poorly equipped majority were not celebrated for their rough and uncivilised masculinity, all moustaches and impetuous bravery in the other three accounts, but simply made inferior by comparison to the more recognisably martial troopers in their actual uniforms. Robinson, no military man but a self-styled rational objective observer, contradicted the constructions of

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<sup>119</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>120</sup> H.M. Streets, *Martial Races*, pp. 93-95.

<sup>121</sup> Emphasis in the text. J.H. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 193-194.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 194-195.

the *Llaneros* as a distinctly martial race – it was only the most recognisably ‘European’ of the troops that were soldierly enough to his eyes. As he did with the ‘native soldier’, Robinson carried the views of his contemporaries concerning colonised populations through to a more completely modern, proto-scientific conclusion regarding their essential racial inferiority.

Richard Vowell, in keeping both with his longer service and wider experiences in South America, and his comparatively capable literary talents, took the Romantic construction of the *Llaneros* as a warrior people of the colonial periphery to its fullest realisation. His first introductory anecdotes, explaining their name as ‘inhabitants of the plains’, saw them ‘taking delight in catching the cayman’ with a bull’s hide rope, laughing at the English officers’ attempts to mount and ride the unbridled horses they were issued, and proving themselves ‘excellent swimmers’ in addition to being ‘fearsome horsemen’, in the same gunboat-seizing adventure observed by Brown.<sup>123</sup> They were ‘dreaded’ by the gunboat crews because they ‘never gave quarter’, but were ‘indifferent sailors’. Without slipping into the pseudo-objective superior perspective of the ethnographic account, Vowell had fleshed out the *Llaneros*’ key characteristics along with evidence for their reputations as exciting, frightening and decisive fighters on horseback. He left any detailed ethnographic account of the people of the plains until Chapter VIII, where he described what he learned of their way of life as a society and a culture distinct from neighbouring regions.<sup>124</sup> Dealing with the ‘beautiful spectacle’ of wild horses and the evidence of the ‘general wreck’ of farming infrastructure during the wars, his evocation of the landscape was moderated by an understanding of the impact of recent events. This sensitivity continued when discussing various aspects of the way of life on the

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<sup>123</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, pp. 56-57, 61-63.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 118-136.

*Llanos*. Nevertheless, there were still anecdotes reinforcing the characteristics of the *Llaneros* as wild, peripheral, war-like, brave and merciless, from their methods of breaking in the wild horses, to Paez' tactics for defeating a royalist force by setting light to the high and dry savannah grasses in which the Spanish soldiers hid from the cavalry. He also casually reinforced misunderstandings around racial labelling in the Spanish colonies with use of terms such as 'Zambo'. The reader could only be left with a reinforced impression that these people were a fiercely independent 'martial race' worthy of both admiration and wariness.<sup>125</sup>

Vowell also attempted to situate the *Llaneros'* mercilessness within a brutal colonial context in which they fought for survival. While lip-service was paid by the other authors to the idea of the Spanish being a brutalising colonial occupier, Vowell made a vociferous case for the destructive effects of Royalist colonial oppression on the people of the plains. The 'indiscriminate massacres' of both parties, including the especially brutal treatment of the enemy by Paez' force, sounded 'dreadful in civilised ears'. However, before his readership were to 'judge these rude *Llaneros* as rigidly as their antagonists', they were to consider that the 'ignorant native of South America' learned their martial cruelty from their colonial rulers. Vowell ascribed this brutalisation to 'civilised' Europeans but made it clear that the Spanish forces under Morillo consisted of men 'picked out of jails and condemned regiments'. There was, to Vowell, a deliberate strategy of cruelty at work, using the basest of European stock as its instruments, which excused the 'rude *Llaneros*' and the 'uncivilised' in general for viewing revenge as a 'virtue'.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 118-137.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 129-130.

This passage bolstered a specifically British-Imperial worldview that made the author's value judgements into a condemnation of the imperialism of regional competitors, in this case the Spanish. Further, it encapsulates a civilising imperative, a view through consciously British 'Imperial Eyes'. Matthew Brown has argued that Vowell's travel writing and the two novels that followed *Campaigns and Cruises* were 'not typical of the other British Travel writers studied by Pratt'.<sup>127</sup> I agree that aspects of his writings can be considered more imaginative and creative, and 'more ambiguous' in their relations to imperial projects, than 'canonical' examples such as those used by Mary Louise Pratt.<sup>128</sup> However, the coding and categorising of increasingly racialised differences in 'civilisation', and the colonial relativism that could condemn the Spanish legacy without reproach to that of the author's own homeland, prove that Vowell was able, like his contemporaries, to admire a romanticised construction of a warrior-race like the *Llaneros*, and still see them as childlike victims of Spanish suppression because of their 'uncivilised' nature. There was an overt celebration of idealised masculinities in situations of war in Vowell's account of his adventures, as Brown touches upon; this contributed to a positive representation of the *Llaneros*, indigenous communities, and the ambiguously mixed colonial 'Creole' people he met and fought alongside. However, the passage I have focused on here demonstrates that this author depended on a belief that the idealised 'uncivilised' elements of *llanero* manliness required the superior moral leadership of a better 'civilised' culture than that of Spain, if they were to temper 'learned' behaviours of cruelty.

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<sup>127</sup> M. Brown, 'Richard Vowell's Not-so-Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Adventure in Nineteenth-Century Hispanic America', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Feb. 2006), pp. 95-122.

<sup>128</sup> M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 111-115.

### **Spaniards and Asante: Enemy Warriors, Cruelty and Respect**

Tensions between competing practical and imagined judgements of male subjects were a complicating factor in each of the accounts. Apparent when examining and defining the masculine characters and innate martial capacities of erstwhile allies, the problem was heightened when dealing with the enemy. However, while they were mostly forced by proximity to confront at least some of the variations and complexities among the very diverse alliances of racialised groups within the British-led Gold Coast coalition and the South American Patriot armies, some of the conflicting ascriptions of competence and cruelty to the Spanish colonial forces or people of Asante could be passed over through the application of stereotypes that were less immediately challenged by personal encounter.

In the case of the forces of Imperial Spain, renewed public discourse on their national character, imperial agenda, and religious identity had reasserted long-standing prejudices against Spanish culture within English intellectual circles. According to Lauren Working, there had long been a conflation of Spanish political intrigue with native Catholic resistance to oppression in England, with comparison of Catholic and “‘savage’ fascination with bells, trinkets, and false or misdirected worship’ in British polemics such as those against tobacco consumption in the early seventeenth century.<sup>129</sup> There was a tendency to wrap national-imperial ambition and jealousy up with anti-Catholic prejudice and disparagement of Spanish civilisation – a habit of judgement tied up with the English travel writing tradition from Hakluyt onward and influencing wider European anxieties about Spanish power.<sup>130</sup> Exaggerations of

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<sup>129</sup> L. Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity: Civility and America in the Jacobean Metropolis* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 145-146.

<sup>130</sup> J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, pp. 25, 217, 404-405. G.B. Paquette, 'The Image of Imperial Spain in British Political Thought, 1750–1800', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 81:2, 2004, pp. 187-214.

the proportion of the Spanish population in holy orders during the Peninsular War, by visitors including British soldiers – “‘lazy young monks’” crowding cities and “‘swarming’” the countryside – helped to feed the critique of Catholicism as a ‘drain on the economy and a scourge on society’.<sup>131</sup> This established prejudice, easily reinforced by the perceived strangeness of the trappings of a Catholic identity, made it easy to be disparaging about a Spanish enemy. If the observer expected to see superstition or oppression by religious authorities, it would appear prominent. In South America, these presumed aspects of the Spaniard’s character were accompanied by those of their gross brutality, while such judgements were particularly significant where the colonial power was supposed to be more civilised than its subjects, including in the matter of military competence and the conduct of war.<sup>132</sup>

This compares curiously with assessments of Asante, which occupied a role and status as a militarised state and culture analogous to that of Imperial Spain in South America in the sources from that theatre. They were a highly centralised state, expansionist with powerful influence over their nearest neighbours and subjects and historically antagonistic relationships with many of them.<sup>133</sup> Like Catholic Imperial Spain, their culture had strong influences from what were considered flawed civilisational legacies including the Islamic world, legitimating their status as a recognisable state while questioning the morality of their government, society, and cultural identity. In contrast to the situation in South America,

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<sup>131</sup> J. Clarke, ‘Encountering the Sacred’, in J. Clarke, J. Horne, Eds. *Militarized Cultural Encounters in the Long Nineteenth Century*, p. 60.

<sup>132</sup> J. Krauel, *Imperial Emotions: Cultural Responses to Myths of Empire in Fin-de-Siècle Spain* (Liverpool, 2013), pp. 63-64.

<sup>133</sup> I. Wilks, ‘Aspects of Bureaucratization in Ashanti in the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of African History*, 7:2 (1966), pp. 215-232.

though, Asante also had strong economic links in all directions of a kind that speculative British visitors were hoping to tap into, while often disparaging their sophistication.<sup>134</sup> Ivor Wilks has argued that Asante displayed a recognisably 'bureaucratic' form of organisation, but according to T.C. McCaskie this projects various western foundationalist interpretations of state practices onto the strategies of the Asante elite in order to familiarise their epistemology.<sup>135</sup> McCaskie considers Asante to be a more hermeneutic or interpretative hegemonic culture which sought to 'subordinate and shape the possibilities in the spectrum of knowledge and belief', with the objective of 'securing the social order's consent in its own subordination', rather than enclosing subjects and institutions in a bureaucratic, systematic structure of accountability.<sup>136</sup> In this sense, the centralised Asante Imperial state looks even more like Absolutist Catholic Imperial Spain did to its rebellious American colonies. However, British imagined potential in the Spanish colonies lay in the downfall of colonial rule but with the legal end of the slave trade along the Gold Coast, ambition lay in seeking ways to exploit a new relationship *with* the regional power.

The South American observers tended to characterise the Spanish forces as entities with a core of European military identity, dangerous in an organised way, but below the standard of effectiveness of Northern races uncorrupted by Catholicism.<sup>137</sup> The Asante, on the other hand, were seen as a martial race in the sense of later British Imperial assessments. They were distinct enough to be defined apart from and in direct comparison to their neighbours, capable

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<sup>134</sup> I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 1-42, 43-79. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 330-343.

<sup>135</sup> I. Wilks, 'Aspects of Bureaucratization in Ashanti in the Nineteenth Century', pp. 215-232. I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 43-79, 374-400. T.C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 14-23.

<sup>136</sup> T.C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante*, p. 23.

<sup>137</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 81, 112-114. G. Hippiusley, *Narrative*, pp. 289-290, 338-339, 524.

and organised enough to be genuinely dangerous opponents, but also respected enough to be considered potentially useful as an allies, strategically capable as enemies, and styled by extensive military 'customs'.<sup>138</sup> This is not a departure from later ideals in British Imperial militarisation. Streets suggests that 'martial races' in India were designated in part due to their alliance with British interests in 1857.<sup>139</sup> While the Fante were allies in the First Anglo-Asante War, but not adequately 'martial', some of the other allies were perceived to be much more valuable as soldiers, and the qualified respect for Asante military capabilities (organised or inherent), established before they became a direct antagonist, remained in the immediate aftermath of the conflict.<sup>140</sup> They were seen throughout the period as having the potential at least to be brought in line with British interests in economic exploitation of the region, as continued recognition of their military threat after British victory in 1827 demonstrates.<sup>141</sup>

In the Asante case, measured respect for the organised, disciplined military threat posed was accompanied by frequent and sometimes graphic examples of their violent cruelty and depravity in war. This encompassed actions on the battlefield and in the aftermath, as well as in their treatment of non-combatants and prisoners. Bowdich and Hutton both mentioned the recurring threat of invasion posed by the Asante army and the impoverishing effects of previous incidences on the Fante.<sup>142</sup> Bowdich pointed out, during the 1811 invasion, the 'butcheries in cold blood', with 'thousands' of Fante people 'dragged into the interior to be sacrificed to the superstitions of the conquerors'.<sup>143</sup> Dupuis recognised the eradication of

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<sup>138</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 7, 208-209, 212-213, 248-249, 256-257. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, pp. 241-249, 298-302.

<sup>139</sup> H.M. Streets, *Martial Races*, p. 34.

<sup>140</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 61-62, 89-92, 105-106, 117-118, 120-125.

<sup>141</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 171-175. 'By accounts just received from Africa', *The Times*, 19 December 1832.

<sup>142</sup> W. Hutton, *Voyage*, pp. 50, 100, 123.

<sup>143</sup> T.E. Bowdich, *Mission*, p. 4.

Fante settlements in the invaded areas, evocatively noting the bleached bones and skulls that were the only remnants of the villages, and sought to highlight the primitive callousness of both Fante and Asante members of their party toward the human remains.<sup>144</sup> Publishing a little late to get his conciliatory diplomatic recommendations across before the defeat at Nsamakow, Dupuis nevertheless made the least of the relative brutality displayed by the Asante army, describing only the vaguest mechanics of Asante military victories and imperial suppression of revolt in his historical chapters. Despite this, readers could not help but be left with the sense of threat represented by Asante military strength and successes.<sup>145</sup>

For Major Ricketts, the vicious military threat was important to highlight, from the 'accustomed cruelty' shown by the massacre of prisoners and the widespread 'dread' of the Asante name, through the defeat in January 1824, to the subsequent military movements. The brutality of the Asante enemy was, as Ricketts was keen to remind the reader, well known by reputation and report. Their actions in Fante country were reported, looting and killing apparently regular. The trigger for the governor's intervention, the capture and murder of a British sergeant, began a series of what Ricketts clearly viewed as savage and horrific but quite characteristic Asante practices; treatment of white prisoners after the disastrous action of the 21st January 1824 was clearly a priority for him to communicate and was dealt with in much more detail indeed than the allied treatment of wounded in battle.<sup>146</sup> Focus continues throughout on the Asante brutality and savagery; the treatment of MacCarthy's corpse was

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<sup>144</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, p. 9.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 209, 213, XVIII-XIX.

<sup>146</sup> H.J. Ricketts, *Narrative*, pp. 32, 47, 82-88, 104-107.

dealt with in salacious detail, compiled from rumour and report and becoming infamously associated with the warlike Asante for future generations:

'...the heart of Sir Charles Mac Carthy was eaten by the principal chiefs of the Ashantee army, that they might imbibe his bravery; that his flesh had been dried, and with his bones, divided among every man of consequence in the army, who constantly carried his respective proportion about with him, as a charm to inspire him with courage.'<sup>147</sup>

This was a version of MacCarthy's demise that built on many of the rumours put forth in reports of his death throughout 1824, and which were still being rewritten and associated with tales of Ashante cruelty by the time Ricketts published *Narrative of the Ashantee War*.<sup>148</sup> Ricketts had, however, also pointed out the propensity for cruel, uncivilised slaughter among the allied forces; what made the Asante army really stand out was their high degree of organisation and discipline. They were a substantial antagonist deserving respect, as well as a barbarically cruel aggressor from which the coastal people needed protection.

Contradictory remarks on Spanish Royalist brutality littered the three South American sources that were published quickly after their authors' return to Britain. These authors each stated their clear intention to discourage more British men from committing themselves to the Independence cause but tied up with this was their impression that there was little moral difference between the leaders of either side. Charles Brown mentioned Patriot cruelties such as the massacre of 'ecclesiastics' at Guyana, or the slaughter of the Royalist troops at Angostura 'in cold blood', but evidently saw the leaders of the Independence movement as

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, pp. 104-105.

<sup>148</sup> 'MELANCHOLY NEWS FROM THE AFRICAN COAST', *The Morning Post*, 3 May 1824. 'DEFEAT OF THE BRITISH TROOPS BY THE ASHANTEES', *The Times*, 3 May 1824. 'Extract of a letter from Sierra Leone, dated April 18, 1824', *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 June 1824. 'We yesterday copied', *The Times*, 18 August 1824.

'Spanish' themselves, especially where they were not 'Creole' or 'Indian'.<sup>149</sup> Gustavus Hippiusley mentioned Spanish Royalist cruelty to contextualise that of the Patriots, from the blood-thirsty freed slave soldiers to Simón Bolívar himself.<sup>150</sup> This residual elite 'Spanish-ness' seemed to explain the propensity for cruelty demonstrated by the Patriots, even when the widespread evidence of brutal suppression by Royalist forces was mentioned. The overall effect, though, and one which did not contradict the three author's objective of discouragement to their readership, was to paint a picture of a desperately mutually violent and unfair conflict in which a more 'civilised' British military morality did not fit. It also effectively essentialised a 'Spanish' characteristic of cruel unjust violence, despite the apparent politics of the perpetrator.

Moral judgements of these patterns of depravity differed between the two theatres. Spanish brutality was condemned by Richard Vowell for the shocking moral example it had set for the colonial mixed population, which was excused its own supposedly reactionary brutalities. The racialised element of judgement concerned the lack of moral agency on the part of the 'Creole' or 'native' colonial subject. Vowell made this connection prominently and frequently, qualifying his evident respect and affection for the people he met and the communities that welcomed him with this limited moral authority over their own violent actions. Often it was their inflamed if irrational passions for revenge against cruelties done to 'their' people that justified Patriot responses to Royalist violence, 'a full extenuation of all Bolívar's *alleged* severity towards his prisoners'.<sup>151</sup> When referring to Spanish figures, by rumour and

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<sup>149</sup> C. Brown, *Narrative*, pp. 71, 96-97, 149-150.

<sup>150</sup> G. Hippiusley, *Narrative*, pp. 217, 463-466.

<sup>151</sup> R. Vowell, *Campaigns and Cruises*, p. 97.

reputation, he also sought to reinforce the deep-seated character flaw of almost inhuman cruelty and did not fail to mention in doing so the 'Spanish' identity of the perpetrator.<sup>152</sup> In the case of Asante, the cruel and brutal enemy were themselves sub-civilised, demonstrating the depraved racial characteristics of sub-Saharan Africa while enabled in their greater cruelty by a dangerous level of military capability. An anxious hybridity of characteristics undermined British knowledge of Asante throughout the 1820s. Hope of economic advantage underwrote the two diplomatic missions, and even after the defeat at Nsamakow Joseph Dupuis was still calling for reasoned, measured relations with Kumasi on these grounds, in his belatedly published account.<sup>153</sup> The transition in the press through 1824 was rapid and reactionary, with optimism concerning the potential of the relationship with Asante being replaced by fear of the Asante 'horde', indignation at MacCarthy's defeat and death, and all of the salacious rumours that accompanied the incomplete and delayed reports. By the time Ricketts published, Asante was irredeemable in the eyes of British public discourse, even as their defeat meant a power vacuum and a resurgence of slave trading. As early as 1827, a correspondent from Cape Coast to *The Standard* claimed that 'where one tyrant was destroyed, numbers have sprung up - all the cause, within their narrow circles, of much oppression and of infinite evils'.<sup>154</sup> Whatever the status of the Asante enemy in victory or defeat, expansion or retreat, there were voices calling for the expansion of a benevolent and civilised British influence in the region as a countermeasure against 'native tyranny'. In South America, the 'tyranny' was perpetrated by the Spanish Imperial regime. In both circumstances, though, there was a moral degeneracy unique to the antagonist against which authors and

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid, pp. 25, 98, 114, 150-151, 192.

<sup>153</sup> J. Dupuis, *Journal*, pp. 194-223.

<sup>154</sup> 'AFRICA. A Letters from Cape Coast Castle to the 17th of April', *The Standard*, 21 July 1827.

readers could position their own British National-Imperial identities and make the connection between a distinctly British rhetoric of moral superiority and the civilisational inferiority of allies and enemies in these Atlantic theatres of confrontation.

### **Conclusion: Masculinities and the Authors**

The authors could not help seeing differences between themselves and other people they encountered in gendered terms. Affected at all times by a sense of expectation about how they presented themselves as men and differentiated their own gendered personae from those they encountered, it was necessary to make assessments of different male or female cultural behaviours using terms that highlighted their shortcomings to a domestic audience that expected affirmation of their own fragile cultural conventions about gender and social position. Each of these authors was exercising this urge to gender their subjects using newly solidified social conventions. Civilisation was therefore related to both modesty and similarity to shallow European norms when assessing the appearance and behaviours of other women. Aggression and adherence to discipline were the behavioural imaginaries used to measure the civilisation of other men. The former had to be moderated to keep it within the confines of a British model of justification if it were to meet the marker of the civilised. The latter reflected a resurgence of respect for British military behavioural norms. None of these projections of British gendered behavioural ideals would have stood much scrutiny if applied to domestic examples because they were, fundamentally, moral imaginaries designed to define through

partial or full exclusion of the subject. Highlighting difference and defining cultural superiority by exclusionary characteristics was made easier when fundamental racial separations could be found to form the basis for any characterisation of other people and their cultures of daily life. It was further intensified when the author's gaze could be turned on the inherently male province of martial identity and behaviour or directed in judgement of civilised dignity on display in the domestic behaviours of the women of an observed society.

## Conclusion

Travel writing provided British agents and adventurers with an outlet for sharing their experiences with the society that shaped their worldview, and a forum for equating their encounters with the authority of knowledge that might facilitate an effective social career. Each of these authors achieved a kind of lasting re-contribution to British public discourse on National-Imperial identities, ambitions, and imaginaries of the British Imperial project for successors and subsequent generations to recapitulate through their own service, journeys, and adventures. They achieved this, regardless of their own levels of personal success in their domestic or imperial careers, by having their stories published.

The authors I have focused on in this study contributed their efforts to a growing body of published work that can be broadly defined as belonging to the travel writing genre. Already, by the 1810s, this distinct if diverse body of literature had developed a series of conventions, reader expectations, and purposes within British public discourse. It was fundamentally outward facing in its subject matter yet had the capacity to contain the minutest details of observation and empiricism, where this suited the agendas or interests of authors, editors, publishers, or sponsors. It contained the scope of history, ethnography, and cosmography, bolstered by the authority that came from at least some direct experience in collecting and collating the knowledge each volume exclaimed.<sup>1</sup> For these reasons, it was an ideal ecosystem for the development of a range of ideas and principles of British identity and worldview,

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<sup>1</sup> Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 1-30, 45-55.

culturally young in their essence and in need of legitimation through direct contact with the wider world. Due to the power relationships on which the possibilities of travel, service, exploration, and adventure were based, as well as the domestic cultural pressures of expectation that demanded a certain degree of British pre-eminence in chronicles of experience, post-Napoleonic travel accounts were inherently imperial in their perspectives and assessments concerning the peripheries of British influence. As a result, the narratives I have focused on here share a set of common tropes, conventions, ambitions, and imaginaries, which demonstrate a collective enculturation with distinctly and sometimes self-consciously British National-Imperial values and identity.

In chapter 1, I demonstrated that the official geopolitical context of British interests in regions at the periphery of their power affected the authors' translations of their experiences into narratives but did not do so definitively, even in the case of the authors who were appointed by institutions of the state. Personal worldview and agenda were at least equally as important. This contrasts interestingly with officially sanctioned and commissioned travel writings by explorers in West Africa and elsewhere during this period, including notably those concerning the Arctic regions.<sup>2</sup> Justification of the author's own actions was also important – reviews and commentary on travel writings meant that even nationally peripheral or insignificant adventures could be publicly critiqued. In the cases of Gustavus Hippisley and Thomas Bowdich, this could reach damaging levels of vehemence and triggered determined responses. For authors of their own travels and adventures at this time, justification needed to incorporate national-imperial identity in order to lay legitimate claim to the respect for empirical authority that they sought in telling their stories into the public discourse. It had to

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<sup>2</sup> J. Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*, pp. 12-17, 74-76. C. Withers et al. *Travels into Print*, pp. 34-36.

stand up to partisan political and social attacks and confirm their genuine status as representatives of British Imperial values and principles of cultural pre-eminence. Without this, they could not be assured the respectability due to their positions as authors of their own experiences.

It was necessary for authors to draw on their broad enculturation with current trends and accepted principles of intellectual and cultural identity, to lay their claims to the British National-Imperial voice of authority. Chapter 2 notes the efforts of the authors to construct landscape and environment using tropes, conventions, literary and intellectual fashions that readers expected from travel writing. These included the sublime, picturesque, exotic, the familiarisation of difference, and inherent threat of the alien or other place or environment. The objective was to engage with terrain, flora and fauna as obstacles, exotics, dangers to be surmounted, then to surmount them effectively, or at least lay claim to a need for culturally British approaches in order to do so. Efforts to systematise knowledge of the landscape, although broadly attempted by contemporary authors, were inconsistent and often inept – science was a rhetorical trick to employ for the reinforcement of worldview, not a system of principles to aspire to in order to produce categorical contributions to natural philosophy, geography, botany, or taxonomy. It had already become a language of dominance to the non-expert observer at the periphery.

By examining the human geographies of the places they travelled through, processes of conquest and colonisation were imagined and constructed. The ideological pursuit of imperialism turned prescriptive here. Some of the authors were less consciously aware they were doing this – they reproduced prejudices and exclusions encultured in their worldview, helping to continue their cultural reproduction. They talked of improvement. They assessed

cultivation and commerce against idealised British models. Some prescribed British colonisation as a solution or desirable objective for 'improving' land, infrastructure, or production. While all the authors did this implicitly or even subconsciously in their accounts, William Hutton was by far the most deliberate and explicit British colonial prospector in his evaluations of the existing human infrastructure, and his imaginaries of British replacement, enhancement, or occupation. They all thought that an imagined but widely understood British interpretation of human geography was a more effective way of identifying and utilising place and environment than any alternative model or practice they encountered.

Hierarchies of human difference were also subjected to an encultured model of British pre-eminence. Quick and often unsophisticated judgements, often based on misunderstandings of local cultural differences between racialised groups, were applied throughout each of these accounts with varying degrees of consistency. In South America, this ranged from Dr Robinson's continual and pseudo-scientific racial denigration of 'native' and 'Creole' others to Richard Vowell's uneven, sometimes affectionate, and occasionally condescending use of terms of difference to define sections of the population. In the Gold Coast region, reductive stereotypes of the 'negro' character could be sketched by Joseph Dupuis, sharply contrasting with his own qualified respect for evidently educated, complex and sophisticated individuals, groups, or social practices witnessed during his time in Kumasi. The hierarchies of human difference the authors brought with them from their intellectual enculturation were challenged by the evidence of experience, which complicated simpler theoretical models in practice, but none of the authors abandoned the simple encultured premises that put a British white male 'officer-class' identity at the apex of a hierarchy that placed subjugated indigenous people at the lowest level.

Those complications came from the many ambiguities of racial, cultural and class delineation they observed, and the interaction of their responses to the unfamiliar with perceptions of racial background in particular. All of the authors addressed this by imagining and constructing hybrid categories to explain the diversity away – these were composite and could be problematic compared to those of their protagonist-counterparts, like the ‘Creole’ of the South American accounts which bore only a loose connection to the *criollo* of Spanish Colonial societies. Other composites that did not directly reflect the cultural heritage or the upbringing of individuals and communities included the *llaneros* in Venezuela, and the Fante in West Africa. The *llaneros* were essentialised in order to be romanticised as a Warrior or Martial Race by several of the South American authors, partly because of their often problematic social and political circumstances on the periphery of both colonial and post-colonial governmental control. They were, however, as dynamic a mixed and interactive part of the broader South American population as any of those people who moved across the wide variations of mixed and mutable racial categories extant in the more centralised communities of colonial New Spain.<sup>3</sup>

In carrying out these assessments of population groups, essentialising characteristics and marking them as desirable, subordinate, or inadequate, these all-male traveller-authors made the constructed ideal of the British-Imperial observer itself male, as well as (aspiringly) gentlemanly, intellectual, authoritative, and white. They confirmed their hierarchies of human difference with a lens of current ideal hegemonic masculinity. In doing so, they addressed contemporary intellectual and cultural interests in the Romantic construction of Martial Races along idealised lines, such as that of the Scottish Highlander, while also interacting with ideas

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<sup>3</sup> P. Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London, 2010), p. 27.

of biologism that reinforced the pre-eminence of the British middle or upper class male within a globalised hierarchy of difference.<sup>4</sup> They found ways to fit evaluations of women, racialised as other through observed habits and behaviours, into their self-affirming worldview and used the exclusionary tools of categorisation and generalisation to define an ideal British Imperial manliness by what it was not. It was not 'cowardly' or 'dishonest'. It was not 'superstitious' or 'cruel', towards its own subordinate members or its enemies. All of these things could be found in the less civilised, or the racially inferior.

In this thesis, I have argued that the traveller-authors whose published accounts I have focused on were powerfully, inexorably shaped by their own encultured backgrounds and worldviews. While it was conventional during the period to lay claim to empirical authority and to the independent integrity of observation and experience, travel writings such as these tell us more about the cultural roots of their authors' confidence, arrogance, anxiety, and prejudice than they possibly could about the places they travelled through or the people and cultures they met. Across this sample of texts, it is evident that a certain type of British National-Imperial worldview was well established in the imagination and in the social expectations of public discourse by the late 1810s and early 1820s. It incorporated a range of intellectual fashions and trends, as well as conventionalised if often relatively 'new' traditions. It allowed its exponents to form judgements of other places and people based on the preconceptions this cultural ecosystem enculturated them with, and not on any objective openness of observation and evaluation of their experiences themselves. In the Civilising Mission, rooted in missionary activities from the 1840s, Christianity was at the heart of the cultural construction of this British Imperial worldview that could incorporate a self-assigned

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<sup>4</sup> E. Balibar, I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, pp. 58-62.

right to rule with the hard-nosed pragmatism of those who exercised the means to conquer and subjugate in the name of such a self-righteous cause.<sup>5</sup> This study demonstrates that the other core elements of that colonial driving force – William Hutton’s vaunted Cultivation, Civilisation, and Commerce – were fully encultured in the Imperial gaze of British agents and adventurers in the decade and a half after 1815. It is notable that Christianity was conspicuous by its absence, and yet without it these authors were still able to subjugate and colonise the material of their encounters in the British Imperial imagination.

Accounts like these, published and read and added to libraries, contributed to the body of material from which this British Imperial imagination formed its ambitions, objectives, and justifications over the following century. The authors and their accounts were encultured with a keen sense of imperial pre-eminence, affecting their worldview, and shaping the interpretation of their experiences. In turn, they completed the feedback loop by returning to the culture that shaped their gaze a recapitulated version of this perspective with the exalted evidence of personal experience, ready for successive efforts at renewed confirmation of this National-Imperial identity.

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<sup>5</sup> A. Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792–1850: The ‘Heathen’ at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 4-5, 211-219. E. Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 4-10, 22-23, 119-122.



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