
British Travel Writing about the Americas, 1820-1840: Different and Differentiating Views

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Volume 3 Issue 2 (June 2001) Article 3**Frank Lauterbach,****"British Travel Writing about the Americas, 1820-1840: Different and Differentiating Views"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss2/3>>

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Abstract: In his article, "British Travel Writing about the Americas, 1820-1840: Different and Differentiating Views," Frank Lauterbach analyzes representations of the United States and South America in British travel writing of the post-Monroe years. His analysis rests on examples from two travelogues by Basil Hall, written in 1824 and 1829, respectively. Lauterbach discusses three related points: 1) Intent on overcoming the colonial affiliation with Anglo-American culture, British travelers try to establish a clear (romance of) difference between themselves and the United States, they employ a post-colonial rhetoric that stresses the strangeness rather than likeness of America; 2) Ironically, US-American responses to Basil Hall's work refute such claims of difference and, in turn, re-assert British hegemony through a colonial rhetoric designed to leave sameness between both countries virtually transparent; and 3) In contrast to their differentiating view of the United States, British writers approach South America with a different objective: Here a colonial rhetoric both enhances their self-identification and parallels neo-colonial interests by making the Other recognizable and easily penetrable despite its (thus neglected) differences. Lauterbach proposes to view colonial and post-colonial representations or narrations of alterity as a potentially neutral duality in discourse since both rhetorics can equally well emerge in writings from the (former) imperial metropolis and ex-colonial periphery.

Frank LAUTERBACH

British Travel Writing about the United States and Spanish America, 1820-1840: Different and Differentiating Views

A prominent wit and Whig -- Sydney Smith of the *Edinburgh Review* -- made, amongst many others, the following four comments on America: 1) "Literature the Americans have none -- no native literature, we mean" ("Travelers in America" 144); 2) "There does not appear to be in America at this moment one man of any considerable talents" ("To Lord Grey" 307); 3) "[The American sloth] lives not *upon* the branches, but *under* them. He moves suspended, rests suspended, sleeps suspended, and passes his life in suspense, like a young clergyman distantly related to a bishop" ("Wanderings in South America" 308); and 4) "[The American] boa constrictor swallows [the land tortoise] whole, shell and all, and consumes him slowly in the interior, as the Court of Chancery does a great estate" ("Wanderings in South America" 309). These four quotes differ in at least three ways: First, in their geographic area of reference, the first pair referring to the United States, the latter one to South America. Second, in their thematic preoccupation, dealing with the state of literature or society and with natural phenomena respectively. Third -- and this seems to me the crucial difference -- in the discursive relation to their object, to America: The first two statements point at the presumed lack of US-American cultural achievements and of even the possibility to change this situation soon. Smith establishes a clear difference between the cultures of Britain and the United States, which becomes a marked indicator to position US-American society as the Other. In contrast, the second pair of comments familiarizes objectively different and remote observations through ironic similes and, therefore, subjectively minimizes the impact of difference. Smith, reviewing Charles Waterton's *Wanderings in South America* (1825), tries, in a continuous fashion, to liken Waterton's impressions of a potentially strange and hostile wilderness to fairly common experiences of the British urban middle class. Simultaneously, he relates and relates to even the remoteness of South America by superimposing an image of Britain onto that of America.

I argue that this contrast between establishing America as culturally different (in the case of the United States) and as imaginatively familiar (in the case of South America) informs, *mutatis mutandis*, a discursive duality underlying the essential assumptions of most British travelers of the post-Monroe period when they record their impressions of either part of the American continent. And I propose to describe this duality heuristically in terms of a rhetoric of colonial versus post-colonial representations of the Other. This entails two theoretical conjectures: First, by speaking of a rhetoric of representation I focus on the manner and way the Other is narrated in relation to one's own culture, that is, on the texture of power relations rather than their implied hierarchies of agency -- an approach somewhat akin to the anthropological turn towards the grammatology of field work (see, for example, Brettell 128-30). Second, my approach leads me beyond the premises of most post-colonial criticism to view colonial discourse by necessity as a hegemonial expression of the imperial center and post-colonial discourse as a reaction from the (formerly colonized) margins of empire. Instead, I suggest to look at the extent to which post-colonial discourse is produced in the metropolis rather than (exclusively) at/on the periphery.

In order to enter the rhetoric of British travel writing in terms of a dichotomy of colonial and post-colonial representations of America, I am employing -- as a Trojan Horse -- the semantic part of Homi Bhabha's conception of colonial mimicry as expressed in his *The Location of Culture* (1994). Ironically compromising between panoptical vision and historical change, colonial mimicry emerges as an ambivalent "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (86; emphases in the original). For the purpose of analysing the texture of colonial relations, Bhabha's italics are of primary importance (rather than the hierarchically motivated impulse of reform located in the psyche of the second British empire). Colonial rhetoric, then, is intent on making the Other "recognizable" (within a mutually constitutive colonial relationship) by subjecting it to such a difference as remains penetrable and leaves sameness virtually transparent. Accordingly, I view post-colonial discourse as a conscious denial of such likening of the Other, of its almost sameness, in favor of a perspective that stresses difference,

strangeness, or alterity as a (professedly factual) observation (without necessarily advocating it as a projected intention). In this sense, I argue for post-colonial discourse as a potentially neutral rhetoric -- instead of describing it in terms of activities like "murderous ... struggle" (Fanon 30), "writing back" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin), "massive retaliatory overcompensation" (Buell 435), "dissociation" (Frank), or "counter-discursive strategies" (Tiffin 18) -- to name only a few examples of what I feel should, more appropriately, be called de-colonization (with the interest of getting rid of imperial subjection).

My case study of British colonial and post-colonial representations of a transatlantic Other are first-hand travel accounts of the years after the Monroe Doctrine and the achievement of independence on the Spanish American continent -- years that were in many ways formative for American-European relations. While drawing on a variety of significant works of that time, my central examples are the two travel books by Basil Hall (1788-1844), a staunch Tory from the Scottish Lowlands and a captain of the Royal Navy, published about his trips to Chile, Perú, and México in 1824, and to the United States and Upper and Lower Canada in 1829. I argue that whereas the earlier work betrays a colonial rhetoric (in accordance with British neo-colonial interests in South America), Hall's later study adopts a remarkably post-colonial perspective towards the United States that is paralleled in most contemporary accounts of travels to North America. Furthermore, I will show that a surprisingly colonial rhetoric seeking closeness to Great Britain is apparent in a variety of US-American reactions to Hall's work of 1829.

Basil Hall's books can serve as a good starting point for various reasons: Having traveled widely (even after retiring from military service in 1825), he published his experience of places as diverse as India, Eastern Asia, South and North America, and the Mediterranean. This soon gained him both the election to the Royal Society and the friendship of Walter Scott and other important literati. Especially after the success of *A Voyage of Discovery to the Western Coast of Corea, and the Great Loo-Choo Island in the Japan Sea* (1817), he became one of the most prolific writers of his time, popular among adults and children alike (see Hall, "Biographical Preface" 5-6). Apart from his fame, Hall is significant for a comparative approach as one of the few writers who not only traveled to and published extensive accounts of *both* parts of the American continent, but who on either trip also visited more than one region (i.e., South America and Mexico on the first, and the United States and Canada on the second trip). Finally, his *Travels in North America, in the Years 1827 and 1828* (1829) was consequential within the history of British travelogues because it aroused particularly harsh reactions, introduced the "departure from the guidebook type" to "more discursive analytical books" (see Adams 250), and set a precedent for the overtly critical tone that was to dominate subsequent books on the United States in the following decade or so. Among them number such classics as Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), Thomas Hamilton's *Men and Manners in America* (1833), Isaac Fiddler's *Observations on Professions, Literature, Manners, and Emigration in the United States and Canada* (1833), Frances Kemble's *Journal* (1835), Frederick Marryat's *Diary in America* (1839), and even Charles Dickens's *American Notes* (1842). Rather unfairly, Hall's *Travels* soon became notorious on both sides of the Atlantic for his supposedly harsh indictment of US-American culture and society. While earlier travelers -- such as Richard Parkinson, Thomas Moore, Charles William Janson, Thomas Ashe, Henry Bradshaw Fearon, William Faux, or Frederick Fitzgerald de Roos -- had also been vehemently refuted in the US-American press, the attack on Hall's book reached a new dimension because he had been seen as a celebrity even before his arrival and, therefore, was, together with his wife, warmly welcomed into the circles of the Anglo-American elite's social life (see Mulvey, "Merchant Society" 412-14; M. Hall). Partly as a reaction to the criticism of his views, Hall's involvement with the United States did not end with the publication of his book in 1829: When Frances Trollope returned from her disastrous business (ad)venture in Cincinnati, Hall helped her publish her own interpretation of US-American "domestic manners" in March 1832 (Smalley lxi) -- well timed to enter the parliamentary debate over the Reform Bill at its zenith (Parent Frazee 148-65; Neville-Sington 167-70). While some assumed (mistakenly) that Hall was actually the author of Trollope's work, he did write the laudatory critique in the Tory *Quarterly Review*, a magazine always keen on attacking the young republic. He also took the opportunity to, *en passant*, praise and defend, under the

guise of anonymity, his own earlier travel account and to restate his views on the United States (see "Domestic Manners" 40-48).

These views center on the claim that British and US-American society and culture are and ought to be fundamentally different. Basil Hall (a Scotsman after all!) explicitly states in *Travels in North America, in the Years 1827 and 1828* that he "consider[s] America and England as *differing* more from one another in many essential respects, than any two European nations I have ever visited" (2, 48; my emphasis) including, as he points out, the British archrival France (2: 17). With respect to literary production, he adds that, due to both countries "writing not for each other at all, but for themselves exclusively," they are "virtually using two *different languages*" (2, 49; my emphasis). This ties in with Hall's more general observation that American and British English differ so significantly as to allow for misunderstandings as easily as if completely different languages were spoken in either country (2, 43-44; 2, 46-48). Beyond merely registering those (real or supposed) differences, Hall is even proud of the so-called "state of blissful ignorance" (2, 49; see also 2, 22-23; 2, 123-26) of the British with respect to the United States and recommends it for future relations: "It would be a very foolish sort of wisdom on our part to destroy [that ignorance], by extending our acquaintance with their literature and history beyond its present confined limits" (2, 50). Hall expresses his view of the relationship between the British Isles and the United States through what I call a post-colonial rhetoric of differentiatory representation that appears even as a prospective model for future relations. It becomes both statement and program.

This strategy far from constitutes a minority position as most British travelers, especially after the War of 1812 (see Wisneski), are eager to point out the otherness of the United States (even if they are less explicit than Hall) -- in their consideration of US-American literature as inferior, for example. Henry Tudor, in a statement that is quite representative, emphasizes that he does not "esteem the enlightened citizens of the United States, taken in a body, to be as learned, as deeply versed in literature, science, and the arts, as extensively educated in the classical lore ... as ourselves in England" (2, 394). Fanny Kemble, more pathetically acting out a pose of despair, asks: "Where are the poets of this land? ... Have these glorious scenes [of the Hudson] poured no inspirings into hearts worthy to behold and praise their beauty? ... [It] is strange how marvellously unpoetical these people are! ... Even the heathen Dutch, among us the very antipodes of all poetry, have found names such as the Donder Berg for the hills, whilst the Americans christen them Butter Hill, the Crows Nest, and *such like*" (Butler 270-71). Vigorously embittered in her criticism, Frances Trollope declares in *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) rather disingenuously that upon returning to some miscellaneous poetry, which she had extracted for transcription, she "thought that ill-nature and dulness, ('oh ill-matched pair!') would be more served by their insertion, than wholesome criticism" (2, 157). Finally, Lucas George, who characterizes a variety of individual US-American writers, claims that "it is not *English* that [the reviewer Johnson] writes ... it is *American*. His periods are accompanied by a yell, that is scarcely less dismal than the warhoop of a *Mohawk*" (Davis 139).

An oft-cited reason for such perceived deficiencies of US-American literature is the swift availability of British literary productions on the American continent, which does not allow for the growth of a native literature. Basil Hall is very outspoken on this point when he states that "nearly all that [the United States] has of letters, of arts, and of science, has been, and still continues to be, imported from us, with little addition or admixture of a domestic growth or manufacture" (*Travels* 2, 19). (Sydney Smith's afterthought in the above-quoted statement that the US-Americans have no literature slyly alludes to the same fact: "no *native* literature, we mean.") While this seems like an uncharacteristic admission of similarities, it only shows, upon closer inspection, that where likenesses might exist, they are the work of US-Americans who, in this case, neither change their copyright laws nor the economic set-up of the book market. Hall clearly emphasizes this monodirectedness of creating closeness in his conclusion that US-Americans "have done scarcely any thing as yet to attach *us to them*" (2, 17; my emphasis). Thus, even this point underlines the assumption of difference in a double way: Not only are similarities not acknowledged from Hall's strictly British perspective of superiority, but the very difference of perspectives *per se*, marks the otherness of US-American culture. However, Hall's rhetoric of post-colonialism does not only per-

vade his overt conclusions but is, additionally, reenacted in the very structural perspective of the book. This allows him to resolve a paradoxical dialectic, which is, as Paul Fussell has noted in *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars*, potentially inherent in all travel writing: On the one hand, travel accounts generally present themselves as memoirs "in which the narrative -- unlike that in a novel or romance -- claims literal validity by constant reference to actuality" (Fussell 203). Hall is eager to assert this validity from the start. He emphasizes that, in all of his three volumes, he simply tells "what I conscientiously believe to be ... assuredly nothing but the truth, and without the slightest shade of ill-will" (1, 17). On the other hand, a travel book "is addressed to those ... who require the exotic or comic anomalies, wonders, and scandals of the literary form *romance* which their own place or time cannot entirely supply" (Fussell 203). In his insistence on the fundamental differences between the United States and Great Britain, Hall meets this demand by, from the outset, giving his observations an air of romance. Hence, his first impressions of New York seem to him "more like a dream than a sober reality" (1, 6). This aura of romance continues to pervade both the perception of the two societies, whose "views and wishes are so diametrically opposed, not merely in name but in substance" (3, 435), and of natural phenomena like the Balize which is supposedly "beyond any imagination to conceive" (3, 338), or the Mississippi in whose "wretchedness" an "artist, in search of hints for a painting of the Deluge, would ... have found them in abundance" (3, 353).

In his attempt to resolve this dilemma between the motivation to present the object of travel in terms of a romance and the necessity to claim narrative verisimilitude in order to be effective, Hall very self-consciously reminds the reader, over and over again, that the truthfulness of whatever account he gives is derived from unbiased observation. When he maintains that his opinions and feelings were formed "by the gradual progress of a pretty extensive observation, varied and checked in a thousand ways, and under circumstances ... perhaps better than most natives could hope to find, even if their own country were the object of research" (1, 108-09), he diminishes the impact of both his individual subjectivity and his potentially prejudiced point of view as a British foreigner. This suggestion of his narrative transparency cleverly places his own authority at the center of his report, thus attesting to the (paradoxical) truth or realism of the romance of difference underlying his rhetoric. The perpetual gestures of detached autoreflexivity, around which Hall organizes the plot of his travels, strikingly contrasts with the immediacy of perspective in his earlier account of Spanish America (see below) and constructs the United States as a field of differences within a post-colonial discourse.

The last quote, furthermore, exemplifies Hall's constant reassurance of his status as a non-participant observer, of his not being part of US-American society. Whereas Hall's Spanish American travelogue is informed by a curious attempt at immersion, his *Travels in North America* betrays an anxiety to stay disinterested and disinvolved. He negotiates (in)difference in his attempt not to be associated with US culture -- as, for instance, in his uneasy reaction to the entreaty of a US-American acquaintance to "admit ... that we are treading close on the heels of the Mother Country": "I remained silent, not knowing well how to reply to such an appeal" (3, 433-34). Even or better: Especially since Hall enjoyed the attention of US nationals, this anxiety is a reflex to the constant threat that the differences between US-American culture and his British identity might be blurred or even erased. His narrative position as an observer is, therefore, not only stylized to authorize a romance of difference, but to unmistakably position and define himself as a post-colonial subject of this difference.

Ironically though, US-Americans, keen on countering the reports of British travelers in general and of Basil Hall in particular, do so by subscribing to a colonial rhetoric of minimizing difference in order to seek sameness to an *alter ego* that is construed as recognizable. Hall himself notices the endeavour of the US-American middle class to be accepted by British standards not by their own which leads them, paradoxically, to forms of self-praise that in and of themselves become, for Hall, a mark of difference (see 1, 109-11). As Christopher Mulvey has shown, Hall's perception was, in this point, far from being wrong, considering the openly displayed desire of the urban East Coast society to match British aristocratic manners ("Anglo-American Fictions" 69). Hence, Hall's US-American acquaintance mentioned above articulates his hope that the travel report Hall is to pub-

lish upon his return will "bring the two countries more together" (3, 434). He retains this hope, even after the Scottish captain had made his argument for irreconcilable differences, by querying if Hall is not doing both countries injustice (3, 434) and "wanting in true philanthropy" (3, 435). Yet, Hall, in the record of this discussion, which closes his three volumes of travel impressions, firmly insists on delimiting British as opposed to US-American society, whereas his counterpart is eager to bridge the remaining gap between the two countries (see also Ullreich 107-08). Later on, Hall would poignantly stress "the utter absurdity of comparing the two countries together" ("Domestic Manners" 41). Hall earnestly maintains a division that clearly defines the United States as a post-colonial Other, whereas his friend retains a colonial dependency on British opinion in his desire to negotiate stronger likenesses between both cultures in order to remove perpetual misunderstandings (*Travels* 3, 436).

This US-American gentleman's opinions closely resemble those articulated in the responses to Hall's book. Edward Everett, reviewing it for the *North American Review*, refutes Hall's (above-cited) claim that the United States and Britain fundamentally differ in many essential respects. Everett, conversely, points to the English descent of ninety percent of the people in the United States as well as to the virtual identity of the language, the law, and even the government of the two countries. He, then, concludes that he "should be glad to know what two European nations are more like each other, in these or any other respects, than England and America" (538, see also 536-37) a statement diametrically opposed to Hall's insistence on the utter lack of likeness. In a similar manner, Calvin Colton's *The Americans* (1833), which summons Frances Trollope and Basil Hall, in a rather tedious manner, before an imaginary court, sets out to refute most of their observations. Among them are those "some dozen points of radical and essential difference between Great Britain and America" (153) that Hall took up in his review of Trollope's *Domestic Manners*. Although Colton does not argue the point that neither king, nor court, nor aristocracy exist in the United States, he does take issue with Hall's implication that this makes them "destitute of the most refined state and the highest culture of society" (162). And, even though he admits that Great Britain has indeed, over the centuries, been able to develop advantages in university education, he pronounces that "the real advances of knowledge in different nations are not measured by this accident." Instead, "there are always lovers of science and devotees of learning, not a few, in every considerable community, whose ambition will keep them in equal pace with the most accomplished of their respective professions in any part of the world" (165). Thus, whatever outward differences Colton acknowledges, he does not see them as constitutive of a fundamental otherness of US-American culture. Quite on the contrary, he confidently measures the United States by foreign standards and concludes that being "of the same blood, the same language, the same laws, and the same institutions ... it is unnatural for [Britains and US-Americans] to differ" (364).

Rather than perceiving the pertinence of, for example, a shared language and a common (cultural) history as a burden, both Everett and Colton (among others) consciously re-cast themselves as sharing an imperial vision and opposing the differentiating writing of British travelers. Therefore, US-American responses to British representations of the transatlantic Other remain doubly involved in British dominance through their colonial insistence on close cultural ties as well as, more intricately, through allowing British travelers to set a discursive precedent against which these ties are expressed. Even though most British writers advance post-colonial distinctions, their US-American counterparts blur such distinctions not only in what they argue but in the very act of arguing it. They ascribe to British conceptions of the United States a hegemony already significantly tuned down by some British writers. US-American identity is subjected to networks of British values and traditions rather than to differentiating strategies. The potential of a post-colonial (cultural) independence is deferred or disseminated within a field of negotiation dominated by the aesthetic and economic power of Great Britain, strongly (if perhaps unwillingly) reinforced by US-American critics. Thus, Richard Biddle, in his book-length reply *Captain Hall in America* (1830), paradoxically defends the "reveries" of his countrymen for British poetry against Hall's indictment of them. Biddle wants to hear nothing of any "complaint ... made of the absence of any thing peculiar distinctive in our Literature" and asks: "Why may we not be, good-naturedly, suffered to suggest that we employ a medium of thought, and of description, appropriated, irrevocably and

jealously, in the reader's memory to the *chef-d'oeuvres* of the English muse?" (59). And, such rejections of the rhetorical dividing line drawn between the two countries by Hall and other travelers are not confined to essayistic treatises like Biddle's, Everett's, and Colton's. Satirical responses to Hall (and Trollope) like Frederick William Shelton's *Trollopiad* (1837), and James Kirke Paulding's 1835 revision of *The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan*, furthermore, ridicule any attempts to narrate the Other as different as mere market strategies to sell books that would otherwise have been largely unsuccessful in Britain (see Shelton 51-53, 59; Paulding 135-39).

The books of Hall and others did, indeed, sell well. Yet, this alone is not a sign for their lack of earnesty. Rather, it reflects their participation, at home, in the public reorganization of relations to the rest of the world, in attempts to reposition the identity of the British empire on an international scale. As such, excursions to the United States are only one side of a coin whose reverse side displays, among other things, a remarkably contrary view of South America. Whereas British travelers affirm the existence of the United States through an acknowledgement of its difference -- and thus provoke a paradoxical dialectic between colonial responses to a post-colonial rhetoric -- they approach Spanish America in a way that ignores its very existence as a cultural (as well as a political or economic) entity in its own right. It is seen as essentially empty, as a blank sheet of paper to be written on by the British who, through *their* inscriptions, also manifest and enhance their own basic ideals and, thus, their very identity. They project an ideal(ized) perception of their homeland onto the reality of Latin America. Consequently, the travel writers appear surprisingly little troubled by the utter otherness of both South American society and nature. Instead, they focus on a prospective development designed to reflect and foster their own ideals and to further British interests. In other words, they implement a colonial (or neo-colonial) rhetoric that minimizes difference, explores it as penetrable, and relegates it to a past which, on top of it, can conveniently be associated with the arch-enemy, an Inquisition-ridden (and Inquisition-riding) "Popish" Spain not generally present as a reality but rather as the fiction of countless eighteenth and early nineteenth-century novels. While British travel writers allow very little closeness to the United States, they eagerly sustain and embrace it in South America and, thus, repress the potential persistence of strangeness in a variety of areas.

Basil Hall, for example in his *Extracts from a Journal, Written on the Coasts of Chili, Peru, and Mexico, in the Years 1820, 1821, 1822* (1824), happily welcomes the "benefits" and the "universality" of the "real and solid advantages" that the Spanish American revolutions have brought to all classes, and he remarks with satisfaction that "every successive hour of freedom will have the effect of enlarging the circle of knowledge and virtue throughout the country" (1, 28). Hall even sees freedom, republicanism, and independence as necessary prerequisites for an "encouragement [of] literature and the arts" (1, 89; see also 1, 297-98). Coming from a Tory like Hall, this is a surprising attitude towards revolution; but it does serve the essentially important end of diminishing remaining differences between South America and Europe -- as Hall himself points out in reference to Chileans: "It is of essential use to their cause, that [the people] should take delight in assimilating themselves, even in trifles, with other independent nations of the world" (1, 90). Thus, revolution is not primarily laudable in itself but as an opportunity to implement standards closely resembling his own. Though not advocating a monarchy, Hall is clearly in favour of a form of government similar to that of Great Britain when he recommends the type of strong leadership he sees exemplified in San Martín (see e.g., 1, 255-62). While Hall would stress, over and over again, not only the differences between the United States and Great Britain but the desirability of such differences, he appears equally eager to point at the advantage of erasing existing divisions between Spanish America and Britain, to stake out a common ground based on his own, British standards -- despite the fact that the South American republics have embarked, as it were, on a political experiment comparable to that of their Anglo-American neighbour.

In contrast to his pose of indifference, even ignorance, towards the United States five years later, Hall continually highlights the immediacy of his perspective. Despite subsequent reservations, he is instantaneously "dazzled by the brilliancy of the spectacle" of Spanish American emancipation (1, 49) and expresses his interest to participate more fully in the novel developments (see e.g., 1, 11; 2, 129). He even regrets that his position (as naval captain on a diplomatic mission) prevents

him from a deeper involvement (1: 276) as well as from "examining the whole at leisure" (2, 128). Hall's difference in attitude towards the two parts of the American continent is, however, not only apparent in a comparison of his two travel books but can already be detected in this earlier work. During a stop-over in Colombia (Panamá, to be precise), he criticizes and is annoyed by the ignorance and carelessness of Panamanian merchants with respect to the South American revolutions, while he candidly admits his own indifference to affairs in New York. Whereas South America seems constantly on his mind, the United States are utterly uninteresting for him (see 2, 150-51). In his appreciation of the newly independent nations, he is even willing to downplay (perceived) breaches of etiquette in the theatre of Lima, such as the smoking of cigars so often harshly censored by British travelers to the United States. Despite his dislike, Hall explicitly writes off such occurrences as insignificant, as "little circumstances which strike the eye of a stranger, as being more decidedly characteristic, than incidents really important" (1, 132). Among these "really important" incidents is his discovery of the likeness of the houses along the Peruvian river Huaura to Grecian temples with Gothic ornamentation. This induces him to support the argument for a universal sense of natural beauty, even "amongst rude nations," thus stressing aesthetic links with Spanish America upon which a "more cultivated taste" ought to be developed (1, 264-66).

While Hall is mostly interested in the macro-political opportunities of Spanish American independence and in their cultural implications, other writers have more specific agendas. Charles Waterton -- the amateur scientist reviewed by Sydney Smith -- appreciates the largely unexplored rainforests of South America for both his research of the indigenous fauna and his experiments in the taxidermy of birds. Even though he points out the otherness of life in the tropical wilderness in comparison to that in the urban metropolis of London, he sees in it an experience more rewarding than alienating: "Animation will glow in thy looks, and exercise will brace thy frame in vigour" (147). Outward differences become meaningful not in themselves but only when narrowly perceived as such. Waterton considers even the dangers of distant regions "not real but imaginary," as "not half so numerous or dreadful as they are commonly thought to be." While a South American experience can enhance the traveler physically as well as mentally, the "youth, who incautiously reels into the lobby of Drury-lane ... is exposed to more certain ruin, sickness, and decay, than he who wanders a whole year in the wilds" (148). Thus, differences, though objectively manifest, can and ought to be overcome through a proper disposition that likens the new situation to the stranger as easily as the old habits at home.

Whereas Waterton's colonial representation of topographic differences is mitigated by his adherence to an individualistic, romantic discourse of imagination, others project and advocate certain types of social action for developing sameness. George Thomas Love in his *A Five Years' Residence in Buenos Ayres* (1825), for instance, praises the Argentine government for its "most laudable anxiety to forward education, by patronizing schools upon the Lancasterian system" (97). And he concludes by positively stressing an increasing closeness between Argentines and Britains: "It is gratifying to observe that those Creolians who have been in England evince the greatest attachment to us" (99). This appreciation of seeking to adopt British manners is echoed even more emphatically by the Robertson brothers who claim that, while Spanish Americans (in Buenos Aires and elsewhere) "imitated the comfortable habits of John Bull, they avoided his dissipation" (69). Hence, the differences between British and Spanish American societies have not only been largely overcome, but Spanish Americans have actually adopted virtues that make them even better John Bulls, better Englishmen than the British themselves. Even though the Robertson brothers do not deny the differences in language, religion, habits, customs, or education, they consider these differences now a matter of almost negligible degree -- as in John Parish Robertson's following panegyric rhetoric of colonialism in *Letters on South America, Comprising Travels on the Banks of the Paraná and Río de la Plata* (1843): "There has always been some magic influence exercised over the minds of both parties, which has obliterated those strong distinctive features which often draw an almost insuperable barrier between two nations, bringing the South Americans and English into as close a contact as if they belonged to one and the same family" (277). Closeness, based on an erasure of difference, is desirable both in the present and for the future.

Despite the aspired-to and already perceived proximity of British and Spanish American socie-

ties, Frank MacShane's contention in *Impressions of Latin America: Five Centuries of Travel and Adventure by English and North American Writers* (1963) that the works of Hall and others represent a "natural sympathy of the English toward the newly independent countries of Latin America" (70; my emphasis) is too short-sighted in its ignoring of the conflictous potential inherent in the discursive power relations established by British writers. At times, even the imagery underlying the perception of South America reveals that more specific interests are driving the desire to make similarities transparent. When James Thomson, a religious educator and major perpetuator of the *leyenda negra* (Nuñez 249), who came to Perú to establish schools and distribute vernacular Bibles, talks about "an immeasurable field," "white ... to the harvest" and open "for the exercise of benevolence in all its parts" (*Letters* 37), his intentions to "contribute in no inconsiderable degree to the progress of this country" (73) are -- at least metaphorically -- tainted by the possibility of economic or agricultural gain. In fact, gold and copper mining was seen as a primary South American asset by many Britains in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Yet to reduce the travelers, in Mary Louise Pratt's phrase, to a "capitalist vanguard" (146-55), or to state, as Noé Jitrik has done, that they "fueron impulsados a visitarnos por una poderosa curiosidad mercantil, instrumentos ... de la inbatible [!] expansión económica europea" (13), ignores the larger cultural work of British travelers to (re)define themselves collectively and individually in the act of establishing a relationship to a whole subcontinent beyond its momentary economic value. To be sure, British writers were very well aware of the economic opportunities of exploiting the young Spanish American republics. Nevertheless, as the social visions of Basil Hall or the Robertson brothers, the educational objectives of Love or Thomson, and even the scientific investigations of Waterton show, Spanish American societies are not "mainly incoded in this [travel] literature as logistical obstacles to the forward movement of the Europeans," as Pratt claims (148). They instead form the very stage for acting out this movement, for a positioning of ideological power and authority that helps to represent (and reassure) British identity to itself through the collective image of being a model -- superior, yet a model that entails future likeness. Whatever economic power is enacted by British entrepreneurs, it is only a side-effect, not the prime and sole goal of the vision of South America as expressed (for example) by travel writers. This vision, refracted through the rhetoric of colonial discourse, is, however, an even more effective way to silence the specifics of Spanish America and to over-write it with a presumed proximity to British society -- or, at least, the prospect of such proximity.

British travel writing to South America thus enhances British values not by estranging the transatlantic world (as in the case of the United States) but by projecting such values onto an appropriated similarity between Great Britain and the newly independent republics. This difference to the differentiating attitude towards the United States (observable not only in British travelers but in a large percentage of the British middle class in general) did not go unnoticed within contemporary Britain itself. William Jacob's "Mrs. Trollope's *Refugee*" and "Mr. Ouseley on the *United States*" (1832) observes, in ways that underscore my argument, an almost inevitable tendency among the British to be "insensible to all but the more prominent differences" in relation to Latin Americans, "while discrepancies and peculiarities of perhaps precisely the same order, among the North Americans, assume, in our eyes, the meaner and more degrading aspect of provincialism and vulgarity" (518-19). Far from recording transparent, objective relationships, British travelers (as well as authors writing from Britain itself) employ a necessarily subjective rhetoric of representation of the US- and Spanish American Other by means of post-colonial and colonial discourses respectively.

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