

Chapter 3

VISITING THE NEW NATIONS

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Spain and Portugal jealously guarded their New World colonies from the prying eyes of outsiders, but in the nineteenth century Latin America's newly independent nations opened themselves to visitors. Travel accounts created by nineteenth-century visitors to the region constitute a fascinating primary source, one uniquely accessible to students. For starters, such accounts were very often written in English. In addition, they were published in large numbers and addressed to a general reading public. And, because travel writing was a branch of popular literature, these accounts were widely disseminated and collected in US and British libraries where, encased in ornate bindings, they still await curious readers who are responsible enough to treat them gently.

Travel accounts help us imagine what it would have been like to visit Latin America almost two hundred years ago. Modes of transportation, the appearance of people and places, social manners and attitudes towards foreigners—all naturally receive considerable attention, often on a day-by-day basis, many accounts being organized and dated as diaries or, in another variant, as periodic letters written to friends or family. (It should be noted, however, that even in these cases publication was an important purpose for writing, rather than an afterthought.) In addition, early nineteenth-century travelers were visiting places that few of their readers had other ways of learning about, and they tried to provide all sorts of potentially useful basic information on geography and economic

activities. Many travelers were scientists who used accounts of their travels to report information on everything from botany to geology. The know-it-all attitude adopted by many travelers should give us pause, though. How much did they really know? How good was their Spanish or Portuguese? What was the source of the information that they often proclaimed with such confidence? The answer, of course, varies from traveler to traveler, and sometimes the answer is simply unknowable.

One thing is abundantly clear, however. Nineteenth-century travelers to Latin America normally wrote with a *superior* attitude. British travelers were coming from one of the world's dominant international powers, after all. That was not true of US travelers before the 1890s, when the United States had not yet become a world power, but US travelers did share certain racial and religious (anti-Catholic) prejudices towards Latin Americans. As a result, English-language travel accounts provide excellent practice at the sort of careful, critical reading mentioned in chapter 1. That kind of "reading against the grain" involves trying to understand the bias built into a source and compensating for it as one reads. Only by somehow filtering out blatant prejudice can one glean useful information from nineteenth-century travelers about the countries they visited. And the prejudice that one filters out constitutes useful information in itself. The sixteenth-century chronicler Francisco Cervantes de Salazar wrote about the Nahuas of New Spain in ways that tell us more about Spanish ideas than indigenous realities, and something similar can be said about nineteenth-century travel accounts. Sometimes their most valuable information concerns past attitudes toward Latin America that were common, until fairly recently, in our own culture. Often nineteenth-century travelers viewed Latin American countries through "imperial eyes."

Historians have used nineteenth-century travel accounts to investigate various topics relating to daily life. Travelers observed and commented on matters thought too commonplace or unimportant to elicit descriptions by local writers, such as the basic layout and furnishings of a house. The daily lives of women, to take another example, also get attention in travel accounts, most especially those

written by women. This chapter includes excerpts from two famous accounts written by women married to husbands who traveled to Latin America for professional reasons. Travel accounts also provide a vivid look at nineteenth-century slavery in the region. Slavery continued in Brazil and Cuba until the 1880s, while most English-speaking travelers to these countries wrote for audiences who considered slavery exotic and therefore fascinating in a horrible sort of way. As a result, travel accounts like the one written by Henry Koster, excerpted in this chapter, discuss and explain racial attitudes as no Brazilian or Cuban writer was likely to do. We are fortunate to be able to read these descriptions because people of African descent contributed enormously—in sheer numbers, in productive labor, in cultural richness—to the formation of Latin American societies, and their presence has not been adequately revealed in previous documents.

PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY

Alexander von Humboldt

Prussian scientist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt was among the earliest and most influential of nineteenth-century travelers to Latin America. Humboldt's journey, which lasted from 1799 to 1804 and was made in the company of his friend and fellow scientist Aimé de Bonpland, became the subject of a wide-ranging and detailed travel account of many volumes. This publishing project occupied Humboldt for decades, and the following excerpt is placed first in this chapter to indicate the timing of the trip rather than the publication of his text. Humboldt's writings recorded scientific observations and statistics that he collected en route, as well as scenes and impressions from his travels. The following excerpt, relating mostly to his stay in Cuba, gives a taste of his varied interests and observations—from botany to physical geography and demography.

The aspect of Havana, at the entrance of the port, is one of the gayest and most picturesque on the shore of the American tropical coastline north of the equator. This spot, celebrated by travelers of all nations, has not the luxurious vegetation that adorns the banks of the river Guayaquil, nor the wild majesty of the rocky coast of Rio de Janeiro, two ports of the southern hemisphere. But the graces which in those climates embellish the scenes of cultivated nature are here mingled with the majesty of vegetable forms and the organic vigor that characterizes the torrid zone. Amidst a variety of soothing impressions, the European forgets the dangers that menace him in the populous cities of the Caribbean islands. He seeks to take in the different elements of a vast landscape, to contemplate the fortifications that crown the rocks to the east of the port, the inland basin surrounded by villages and farms, the palm trees that rise to a majestic height, and the city, half concealed by a forest of masts belonging to the sailing vessels moored in port. To enter the port of Havana you pass between the two fortresses through a narrow channel three-fifths of a mile long. Thence one enters a basin just over two miles at its widest point and five to six fathoms in depth.

The town of Havana, surrounded by walls, stands on a promontory bounded on the south by the arsenal and on the north and west by fortifications. Beyond the city walls is the military parade ground, which grows smaller, from year to year, with the construction of peripheral neighborhoods called *arrabales* or *barrios extra muros*. The great edifices of Havana—the cathedral, the government house, the naval headquarters, the arsenal, the post office, and the cigar factory—are less remarkable for their beauty than for the solidity of their construction. The streets are for the most part narrow, and most are not paved. As paving stones must be brought from Vera Cruz at great expense, someone conceived the idea of paving the streets of Havana with tree trunks, as is done in marshy places of

SOURCE: Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent during the Years 1799–1804*, vol. 7, trans. from the French by Helen Maria Williams (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1829), pp. 7–13, 285–87, 436, 466–68.

Germany and Russia. This project was soon abandoned, but at the time of my visit (1800), recently arrived travelers were still surprised to see fine trunks of mahogany sunk in the muddy streets. Indeed, few towns in Spanish America presented a less agreeable, less tidy appearance. People walked in mud up to the knee. The multitude of passenger coaches and carts loaded with cases of sugar and the porters who elbow passersby together rendered walking disagreeable and humiliating. The smell of jerked beef stank in the houses and the narrow, winding streets. It appears that the cleanliness of the streets has lately been improved, and that the houses are now better ventilated. The ill effects of the street layout, however, can be amended only very slowly, just as in the old towns of Europe.

There are two fine paseos where one can stroll in Havana. The first is the Alameda, running from the hospital to the theater, which was tastefully redecorated in 1803 by an Italian artist. The other is the Paseo Extra Muros, outside the city walls, deliciously cool and frequented by carriages after sunset. Near the parade ground is the Botanical Garden, a monument to Christopher Columbus, and something else, a spectacle that provokes both pity and indignation: the market where wretched slaves are displayed for sale.

The landscape in the vicinity of Havana gains its peculiar character from the most majestic of all palm trees, the *palma real*, which Bonpland and I have called the *oreodoxa regia* in our catalog of American palms. The *palma real* has feathered leaves rising perpendicularly towards the sky, curving at the tips. Its tall trunk, swelling slightly in the middle, rises sixty to eighty feet high and looks like two columns, one atop the other. The upper part, of a glossy, tender green, shines in contrast with the lower part, which is rough and whitish. The form of this plant reminded us of the vadgiai palm that covers the rocks of the cataracts of the Orinoco River, pointed leaves swaying over a mist of foam.

Around Havana, as everywhere else, the population growth diminishes the vegetation. The *palma real* on which I delighted to gaze is gradually disappearing now. The marshes which I saw covered with bamboo have been drained for cultivation. Civilization advances, and the soil, stripped of plants, scarcely offers any traces of its former wild abundance. Houses line the roads in Havana's

environs, and those that surround the bay are of a light and elegant construction. The owners trace a plan and have the materials brought from the United States, as if ordering a piece of furniture. As long as yellow fever continues to rage in Havana, people will retire to their country properties to breathe purer air. In the coolness of the night, when the boats cross the bay, leaving long, phosphorescent tracks of light behind them in the water, these romantic scenes will continue to furnish charming and peaceful retreats to the inhabitants who seek refuge from the tumult of a populous city.

Bonpland and I decided to split our herbal collection into three lots to avoid the risk of losing what had taken us so much trouble to collect during our journey up to that point. We sent one collection by way of England to Germany, another via Cádiz to France, and the third we left in Havana. Each collection contained nearly the same species. If the cases were taken by pirates, there were instructions to send them to Sir Joseph Banks or to the professors of natural history in the Museum of Paris. We had reason to congratulate ourselves on these prudent measures. Happily, I did not send my manuscripts with the part of the collection bound for Cádiz with our friend and fellow traveler Father Juan González, who left Cuba soon after us. But the vessel in which he embarked sank in a tempest off the coast of Africa and the crew and cargo were all lost. In the wreck we lost duplicates of our herbal collection and all the insects Bonpland had collected in the most difficult circumstances during our South American travels. Then for over two years we did not receive one letter from Europe, and those which arrived in the following three years made no mention of the collections that we had shipped. Imagine my uneasiness at having sent the journal with my astronomical observations and the barometrical measurements of which I had not had the patience to make a copy. After visiting New Granada, Peru, and Mexico I happened to cast my eyes on the table of contents of a scientific journal in the public library in Philadelphia, where I found these words: "M. de Humboldt's manuscripts at his brother's house in Paris, by way of Spain." I could scarcely suppress an exclamation of joy.

The probable population of Cuba at the close of 1825 was as follows: Whites 325,000; Free Colored 130,000; Slaves 260,000.

The slave population of Cuba would have diminished with great rapidity since 1820 had it not been for the fraudulent continuance of the slave trade with Africa. If this infamous traffic were to cease entirely through the advance of civilization and the energetic will of the new independent countries of America, the servile population would decline because of the disproportion between the sexes. The proportion of women to men on the island of Cuba is 1 to 1.7, and on sugar plantations, 1 to 4. In addition, slaves would surely continue to gain their freedom. In no part of the world where slavery exists is manumission so frequent as on the island of Cuba, for Spanish legislation (directly the reverse of French and English laws) favors in an extraordinary degree the attainment of freedom. In addition, the position of free blacks in Cuba is much better than it is elsewhere, even among those nations which have for ages flattered themselves as being the most advanced. But what a sorrowful spectacle is presented by civilized, Christian nations disputing which among them, over the span of three centuries, has destroyed the smallest number of Africans by reducing them to slavery!*

Our journey from Cuba to the South American coast near the Sinú River took sixteen days. On the morning of 30 March we rounded Punta Gigantes and made sail for the Boca Chica, the present entrance to the port of Cartagena. From there it was seven or eight miles to the anchorage near the town. On disembarking I learned with great satisfaction that the coastal surveying expedition had not yet put out to sea, and I was able to ascertain from my consultations with members of that expedition the astronomical positions of several towns on the shore which I required for my longitudinal calculations. The consultations also provided information regarding the route of my projected journey to Peru. We learned that the passage from Cartagena to Porto Bello, on the isthmus of Panama, is short and easy. But we were warned that we might have to wait in Panama for a long time for a vessel to take us to Guayaquil, and that in any event the passage from Panama to Guayaquil would

*This paragraph contains observations that Humboldt published in *The Island of Cuba*, trans. J. S. Thrasher (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1856), pp. 185–88, 211–13, 225.

be extremely long, because it takes one in a direction contrary to the winds and currents. Therefore, I relinquished with regret my plans to measure the height of the Panamanian mountains that divide the Atlantic from the Pacific Oceans. It would have been difficult to foresee that today, when I write these lines in 1827, people would still be ignorant of their altitude. The persons whom we consulted all agreed that an overland journey from Cartagena to Lima, via Bogotá and Quito in the Andean highlands, would be preferable to a sea voyage and would furnish an immense field for exploration. In addition, Bonpland and I felt the European predilection for *tierra fría*, the cool Andean climate, which gave further weight to these counsels. The distances were known, but we never imagined that it would take us eighteen months to traverse them on muleback. In compensation, this change in our plan and direction gave me occasion to observe volcanoes, to trace the map of the Magdalena River, to fix astronomically the location of eighty inland points between Cartagena and Lima, and to collect specimens of several thousand new plant species.

Analyzing the Sources: How would you describe Humboldt's "voice" in this selection? What impression do you believe it would have left in his English-language readers?

TRAVELS IN BRAZIL

Henry Koster

Henry Koster, an Englishman raised in Portugal, lived in the northeastern Brazilian province of Pernambuco between 1809 and 1820. His description of the lives of slaves has idealized tints clearly contradicted by much evidence of frequent harsh treatment. Travel accounts from this period sometimes underplay the well-documented harsh treatment received by slaves in Latin America, partly because the travelers received much of their information from the slaveholders. Still, humane treatment such as that described by Koster no doubt existed in places, and, keeping in mind its bias, his description helps us envision aspects of life on a plantation. In addition, Koster discusses the lives of free mulattos (particularly the degree

to which those of light skin were able to mingle with whites or even pass for whites) and the lives of free "creole" blacks (people of purely African descent, born in Brazil). Free mulattoes and blacks participated in the militia, an important source of social prestige.

All the slaves in Brazil follow the religion of their masters, and, notwithstanding the impure state in which the Christian church exists in that country, such are the beneficent effects of the Christian religion that these, its adopted children, are improved by it to an infinite degree, and the slave who attends to the strict observance of religious ceremonies invariably proves to be a good servant. The Africans who are imported from Angola are baptized in lots before they leave their own shores, and on their arrival in Brazil they are to learn the doctrines of the Church and the duties of the religion into which they have entered. These bear the mark of the royal crown upon their breasts, which denotes that they have undergone the ceremony of baptism and, likewise, that the king's tax has been paid upon them. The slaves which are imported from other parts of the coast of Africa arrive in Brazil unbaptized, and before the ceremony of making them Christians can be performed upon them they must be taught certain prayers, for the acquirement of which one year is allowed the master before he is obliged to present the slave at the parish church. This law is not always strictly obeyed as to time, but it is never evaded altogether. The religion of the master teaches him that it would be extremely sinful to allow the slave to remain a heathen, and indeed the Portuguese and Brazilians have too much religious feeling to let them neglect any of the ordinances of their church. The slave himself likewise wishes to be made a Christian, for his fellow bondsmen will, in every squabble or trifling disagreement with him, close their string of opprobrious epithets with the name of "pagan." The unbaptized black feels that he is considered as

SOURCE: adapted from Henry Koster, *Travels in Brazil* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817), pp. 2:208–22, 2:237–46, 2:262–67.

an inferior being, and although he may not be aware of the value which the whites place upon baptism, still he knows that the stigma for which he is upbraided will be removed by it, and therefore he is desirous of being made equal to his companions. The Africans who have been long imported imbibe the Catholic feeling and appear to forget that they were once in the same situation themselves. The slaves are not asked whether they desire baptism or not. Their entrance into the Catholic Church is treated as a thing of course, and indeed they are not considered as members of society, but rather as brute animals, until they can lawfully go to mass, confess their sins, and receive the sacraments.

The slaves, as well as the free persons, have their religious brotherhoods, and the ambition of a slave very generally is to be admitted into one of these and to be made one of the directors of the brotherhood. Even some of the money which the industrious slave is collecting for the purpose of purchasing his freedom will oftentimes be brought out of concealment for the decoration of a saint. The Negroes have one invocation of the Virgin which is peculiarly their own, Our Lady of the Rosary, who is even sometimes painted with a black face and hands. The election of a King of Congo by the individuals who come from that part of Africa, a common practice, seems as though it would give them a bias toward the customs of their native soil, but in Brazil the Kings of Congo worship Our Lady of the Rosary and are dressed in the dress of white men. They and their subjects dance, it is true, after the manner of their country, but to these festivals are admitted African Negroes of other nations, creole blacks, and mulattos, all of whom dance in the same manner, and these dances are now as much the national dances of Brazil as they are of Africa.

The Portuguese language is spoken by all the slaves, and their own dialects are allowed to lie dormant until they are by many of them quite forgotten. No compulsion is resorted to make them embrace the habits of their masters, but their ideas are insensibly led to imitate and adopt them. The masters at the same time imbibe some of the customs of their slaves, and thus the superior and his dependent are brought nearer to each other. I doubt not that the system of baptizing the newly imported Negroes proceeded rather from the bigotry of the Portuguese in former times rather than from

any political plan, but it has had the most beneficial effects. The slaves are rendered more tractable. Besides being better men and women, they become more obedient servants, and they are brought under the control of the priesthood, a great engine of power.

The sugar plantations which belong to the Benedictine monks and Carmelite friars are those upon which the labor is conducted with the greatest attention to the system and with the greatest regard to the comfort and ease of the slaves. I can particularly speak of the estates of the Benedictine monks, because my residence at Jaguaribe gave me daily opportunities of hearing about the management of one of their establishments. The slaves of the Jaguaribe St. Bento estate are all creoles and are in number about one hundred. The children are carefully taught their prayers by some of the elder Negroes, and the hymn to the Virgin is sung by all the slaves who can possibly attend, male and female, at seven o'clock every evening. At this hour it is required that every person should be at home. The young children are allowed to amuse themselves as they please during the greatest part of the day. Their only occupation for certain hours is to pick cotton for lamps and to separate the beans which are fit for seed from those which are rotten, and other work of the same description. When they arrive at the age of ten and twelve years, the girls spin thread for making the coarse cotton cloth of the country, and the boys attend to the horses and oxen, driving them to pasture &c. If a child evinces peculiar fitness for any trade, care is taken that his talents should be applied in the manner that he would himself prefer. A few of them are taught music and assist in the church festivals of the convent. Most tasks are completed by three o'clock in the afternoon, which gives industrious slaves an opportunity of working daily on their own provision grounds. The slaves are allowed the Saturday of every week, in addition to Sundays and holidays, to provide for their own subsistence. Those who are diligent fail not to obtain their freedom by self-purchase. The provision grounds are never interfered with by the monks, and when a Negro dies or obtains his freedom, he is permitted to bequeath his plot of land to any of his companions. Elderly slaves are carefully provided with food and clothing.

None of the monks reside on the Jaguaribe estate, but one of them comes from Olinda almost every Sunday and holiday to say mass. Upon the other Benedictine estates there are resident monks. The slaves treat their masters with great familiarity. They only pay respect to the abbot, whom they regard as the representative of St. Bento himself. The conduct of the younger members of the clergy is well known not to be by any means correct. The vows of celibacy are not strictly adhered to. Thus, I have seen upon these plantations many light-colored mulatto slaves, but when the approximation to white blood becomes considerable, a marriage is projected with a person of darker tint.

The Jaguaribe estate is managed by a mulatto slave who married a person of his own color, and she likewise belonged to the convent. Her husband has purchased her freedom and that of her children. He possesses two African slaves, the profits of whose labor are entirely his own, but he is himself obliged to attend to the business of the plantation and to see that the work of his masters is properly executed. This man has offered his own two African slaves to the monks in exchange for his freedom, but they tell him that the Jaguaribe estate could not be properly managed without his assistance, and so he continues in slavery, much against his inclination.

[In another passage, Koster discusses the situation of free mulattos, who were able to rise socially, and free blacks, who were much less able to do so.]

Sometimes a mulatto enters into holy orders with papers stating that he is a white man but his appearance plainly denoting the contrary. In conversing on one occasion with a man of color who was in my service, I asked him if a certain Captain Major was not a mulatto man. "He was, but he is not now," came the answer. I begged him to explain, so he added: "Can a Captain Major be a mulatto man?" Likewise, I was intimately acquainted with a priest whose complexion and hair plainly denoted his African ancestry. He was a well-educated and intelligent man, I liked him much, and I met with several others of the same description.

The militia contains mulatto regiments in which all the officers and men are of mixed caste. The principal officers are men of property and the colonel, like the commander of any other regiment, is answerable only to the governor of the province. The late colonel of the mulatto regiment, a man by the name of Nogueira, went to Lisbon and returned with the order of Christ, conferred on him by the queen. A chief person of the province is the son of a white man and a woman of color. He has received an excellent education, is of a generous disposition, and entertains most liberal views upon all subjects. He has been made a colonel, and a title of nobility has been conferred upon him. Likewise, the prince regent is the sponsor to one of his children. Many other instances might be mentioned. Some of the wealthy planters of Pernambuco and richest inhabitants of Pernambuco are men of color. The major part of the best artisans is also of mixed blood.

It is said that mulattos make bad masters. This is true, oftentimes, with persons who were once enslaved and now possess slaves of their own, also with those who have become managers on estates. This change of situation would lead to the same consequences in any race of human beings. I have seen mulattos of free birth who are as kind, as lenient, and as forbearing to their slaves as any white man.

Marriages between white men and women of color are by no means rare, though they are sufficiently so to cause the circumstance to be mentioned when speaking of an individual who has connected himself in this manner. The comment is not made, however, with the intent of lowering him in the estimation of others. Indeed, the remark is only made if the person is a planter of any importance and the woman is of a decidedly dark color, for even a considerable tinge will pass for white. If the white man belongs to the lower orders, the woman is not accounted as being unequal to him in rank unless she is nearly black. Europeans often marry here in this manner, which generally occurs when the woman possesses a considerable dowry. Rich mulatto families are often glad to marry their daughters to these men, although they may be of socially indifferent circumstances, for their daughters consequently will have lighter children. In addition, such men are reputed to be prudent and hard-

working, able to amass a large fortune from small beginnings. Whilst I was at Jaguaribe I often saw a handsome young man from the Azores who happened to be with me on one occasion when a military officer from the backlands was staying at my house. The officer asked the young man if he could read and write, and being answered in the negative, said, "Then you will not do," and turning to me, he added: "I have a commission from a friend of mine to bring a good-looking, dependable young Portuguese who can read and write, for the purpose of marrying his daughter."

Still, Brazilians of high birth and property do not like to intermarry with persons whose mixture of blood is very apparent. A man of this description becomes attached to a woman of color, connects himself with her and takes her to his home, where she is in a short time even visited by married women. She governs his household affairs, acts as and considers herself his wife, and frequently, after the birth of several children, he marries her. In connections of this nature, the parties are more truly attracted to one another than in marriages between persons who belong to families of the first rank, for the latter are entered into from convenience rather than affection. But it often occurs that inclination, necessity, or convenience induce or oblige a man to separate from the woman with whom he has thus been connected. In such cases, he gives her some property and she marries a man of lower rank, who regards her rather as a widow than as a person whose conduct has been incorrect. Instances of infidelity in these women are rare, they become quite attached to the men with whom they cohabit, and they direct the affairs of their houses with as much zeal as if they truly belonged to them.

I now proceed to mention that numerous and valuable race of men, the creole* Negroes, a tree of African growth. Only those who have no pretensions to a mixture of blood call themselves Negroes. They are distinct from their brethren in slavery, owing to their superior situation as free men. They are handsome persons, brave and hardy, obedient to the whites and willing to please. The free creole Negroes have their exclusive militia regiments in which every officer

*Brazilian-born.

and soldier must be perfectly black. There are two of these regiments in the province of Pernambuco, distinguished from each other by the names Old Henriques and New Henriques. The name is derived from the famous black leader, Henrique Dias, a hero from the war against the Dutch. Some of the most intelligent men with whom I have conversed spoke in enthusiastic terms of Henrique Dias. I have seen one of these regiments accompanying the procession of Our Lady of the Rosary, their patron saint. They were dressed in white uniforms, trimmed with scarlet, and they looked very soldier-like. They were in tolerable discipline and formed a finer body of men than any other soldiers which I had an opportunity of seeing in the country. On gala days, the ranking black officers in their white uniforms pay their respects to the governor, exactly as persons of equal rank belonging to any other caste. Militiamen receive no pay, so that their neat appearance on such occasions bespeaks a certain degree of wealth. Some of the whites rather ridicule the black officers, but not in their presence, and the laughter that is raised against them is caused perhaps by a lurking wish to prevent this insulted race from displaying the distinctions which the government has wisely conceded to them, but which hurt the European ideas of superiority.

The creole Negroes of Pernambuco are, generally speaking, artisans of all descriptions. They have not yet reached the higher ranks of life as gentlemen, planters, and merchants. Some of them have accumulated considerable sums of money and possess many slaves to whom they teach their own trade or destine for other employment. The best church and image painter of Pernambuco is a black man. He has good manners and quite the air of a man of some importance, though he does not by any means assume too much. Negroes are excluded from the priesthood, however, and from the offices which mulattoes may obtain by passing for white, but which the unequivocal color of the Negro precludes him from aspiring to. In law, all persons not white are classed equally. Owing to their color, Negroes are unable to serve in regiments of the regular army, which at least allows them to escape persecutions which members of other castes suffer because of forced recruitment.

The men whose occupation it is to apprehend runaway slaves are, almost without exception, creole blacks. They are called *capitães do campo*, or "field captains," and several may be found in every rural district. They are men of undaunted courage and are usually followed by two or three dogs trained to seek out runaways and, if necessary, attack them and take them down. The men who bear these commissions can oblige anyone to turn over an apprehended runaway to be returned to his owner.

Analyzing the Sources: Narratives like Koster's once made historians believe that Brazilian slavery was "milder" than that in the United States—a now discredited view. How and why does this selection constitute a "best-case scenario"? Consider particularly Koster's description of the role of the Catholic Church. Also, how would you characterize Koster's description of Brazilian race relations in the period?

JOURNAL OF A RESIDENCE IN CHILE

Maria Graham

Maria Graham, a writer and illustrator, was born in Scotland in 1785. As the wife of a British naval captain, she accompanied her husband to Chile, and though he soon died she remained in the country during much of the year 1822, at the very dawn of the country's independence, when it was still ruled by Bernardo O'Higgins, who is remembered today as the country's founding father. After leaving Chile the next year, Maria Graham traveled to Brazil where she was hired by the emperor and empress of that newly independent country to take care of their daughter.

August 24th. The dinner was larger than would be thought consistent with good taste, and yet everything was well dressed, though with a good deal of oil and garlic. Fish came among the last things. All the dishes were carved on the table, and it is difficult to resist the pressing invitations of every moment to eat of everything. The greatest kindness is shown by taking things from your own plate and putting it on that of your friend, and no scruple is made of helping yourself to any dish before you with the spoon or knife you have been eating with, or even tasting or eating from the general dish without the intervention of a plate. In the intervals between the courses, bread and butter and olives were presented.

Judging from what I saw today, I should say that the Chilenos are great eaters, especially of sweet things, but that they drink very little. After dinner we took coffee, and, as it was late, everything passed as in an English house except the retiring of most of the family to prayers at the hour of the Ave Maria. In the evening, a few friends and relations of the family arrived, and the young people amused themselves with music and dancing. The elder ones conversed over a chafing dish and had a thick coverlet spread over it and their knees, which answers the double purpose of confining the heat to the legs and preventing the fumes of the charcoal from making the head ache. It is only lately that the ladies of Chile have learned to sit on chairs instead of squatting on the *estradas*.^{*} Now, in lieu of the estrada, there are usually long carpets placed on each side of the room, with two rows of chairs, as close together as the knees of the opposite parties will permit, so that the feet of both meet on the carpet. The graver people place themselves with their backs to the wall, the young ladies opposite, and as the young men drop in to join the *tertulia*, or evening meeting, they place themselves behind the ladies. And all conversation, general or particular, is carried on without ceremony in half whispers.

SOURCE: Maria Callcott, *Journal of a residence in Chile, during the year 1822. And a voyage from Chile to Brazil in 1823* (London, Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, and John Murray, 1824), pp. 198–202, 242.

^{*}Low platforms on which women sat to converse and sew.

When a sufficient number of persons is collected, the dancing begins, always with minuets, which, however, little resemble the grave and stately dance we have seen in Europe. Grave, indeed it is, but it is slovenly—no air, no polish, nothing in which the famous Captain Nash would recognize the graceful movements of the rooms full of dancers over which he presided so long and so well at Bath. The minuets are followed by allemandes, quadrilles, and Spanish dances. The latter are exceedingly graceful, and danced as I have seen them here, are like the poetical dances of ancient sculpture and modern painting. But then, the waltz never brought youth and beauty into such close contact with a partner. However, they are used to it, and I was a fool to feel troubled at the sight. After all the dancing was over and the friends had retired, the gates were shut carefully, and the family went to their principal meal, a hot supper. As I never eat at night, I retired to my room, highly pleased with the gentle and kind manners and hospitable frankness of my new friends and too tired to think of anything but sleep.

August 25th. My first object this morning was to examine the disposition of the different apartments of the house. And first I went to the gate by which I entered and looked along the wall on either hand in vain for a window onto the street. The house, like all those to which my eye reached, presented a low white wall with an enormous projecting tiled roof, in the center a great portal with folding gates, and by it a little tower called the *alto* with windows and a balcony at the top, where I have my apartment, and under it, close by the gate, the porter's lodge. This portal admits one into a great paved quadrangle into which various apartments open. Those on either hand appeared to be storerooms. Opposite are the *sala* or drawing room, the principal bedroom, which is also a public sitting room, and one or two smaller public rooms. Behind this band of building there is a second quadrangle laid out in flower pots, shaded with fruit trees, and a pleasant veranda. Here the young people of the family often sit and either receive visits or pursue their domestic occupations. Round this court or *patio* the private apartments of the family are arranged, and behind them there is a smaller court, where the kitchen, offices, and servants' quarters are placed, and through

which, as is the case in most houses in Santiago, a plentiful stream of water is always running.

This disposition of the houses, though pleasant enough to the inhabitants, is ugly on the outside, and gives a mean, dull air to the streets, which are wide and well paved, having footpaths paved with slabs of granite and porphyry. And because through most houses a small stream is constantly running, a little more attention from the police might make Santiago the cleanest city in the world. It is not very dirty. When I recollect Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, I am ready to call it absolutely clean.

The house I was in is handsomely, but not elegantly, furnished. Good mirrors, handsome carpets, a piano by Broadwood, and a reasonable collection of chairs, tables, and beds—not exactly the styles of modern Paris or London, but such, I daresay, as were fashionable there a little more than a century ago—look exceedingly well on this side of Cape Horn. It is only the dining room that I feel disposed to quarrel with. It is the darkest, dullest, and meanest apartment in the house. The table is stuck in one corner, so that one end and one side only allow room for a row of high chairs between them and the wall. Therefore, anything like the regular attendance of servants is precluded.

My breakfast is served in my own room according to my own fashion, with tea, eggs, and bread and butter. The family eat nothing at this time of day, but some take a cup of chocolate, others a little broth, and most a *mate*. The ladies all visited me on their way to mass. On this occasion they had left off their usual French style of dress and were in black with the *mantilla* and all that makes a pretty Spaniard, or *chilena*, ten times prettier.

About noon, M. de la Salle, one of the Supreme Director's aides, called with a polite compliment from His Excellency,** welcoming me to Santiago. By this gentleman I sent my letters of introduction to His Excellency's wife, doña Rosa O'Higgins, and it was agreed that I should visit her tomorrow evening as she goes to the theater tonight. Soon after dinner today we went to the plain on the southwest side of town to see the *chinganas* or amusements of the com-

**A reference to Bernardo O'Higgins.

mon people. On every feast day they assemble at this place and seem to enjoy themselves very much in lounging, eating sweet puffs fried on the spot in oil, and drinking various liquors, but especially *chicha*,*** while they listen to a not disagreeable music played on the harp, guitar, tambourine, and triangle, accompanied by women's voices singing of love and patriotism.

Analyzing the Sources: How does Graham's portrait of domestic life in a well-to-do household add to an historical view focused on economics and politics?

LIFE IN MEXICO

Frances Calderón de la Barca

Frances Calderón de la Barca, another Scottish woman, was married to a Spanish diplomat and resided in Mexico City during the years 1839–42. The following passages, extracted from entries that span several months, deal with the sort of dress worn by young mestizo women of the popular class who had enough resources to afford considerable finery—although few indeed would own more than one such dress. Calderón de la Barca first described this sort of dress during a visit to the city of Puebla, so she calls it a Poblana dress, referring to the women of that city.

24 December 1839. The dress of Poblana peasants is pretty, especially on holidays: a white muslin chemise, trimmed with lace round the skirt, neck, and sleeves; a petticoat divided into two colors, the lower part a scarlet and black cloth made in Mexico, and the upper part of yellow satin; with a satin vest of some bright color, covered

***The same indigenous corn beer mentioned in Núñez's "Happy Captivity."

SOURCE: adapted from Madame Calderón de la Barca, (Frances Erskine Inglis), *Life in Mexico, during a residence of two years in that country* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843), pp. 57, 79, 116–18, 122–23, 200, 210.

with gold or silver, open in front; long earrings, with all sorts of chains and medals and tinkling things worn around the neck; a broad colored sash around the waist; a small colored handkerchief crossing over the neck, fastened in front with a brooch; a *rebozo** thrown over the shoulders; silk stockings, or more commonly, no stockings; and white satin shoes trimmed with silver. This is on holidays. On common occasions, the dress is the same, but the materials are more ordinary.

c. 30 December 1839. A great ball is to be given in the theater to benefit the poor, under the patronage of the most distinguished ladies of Mexico. After much deliberation they have decided that it is to be a costume ball, and I have some thoughts of going in the Poblana dress which I before described to you. As I am told that the Señora _____ wore such a dress at a ball in London when her husband was minister there, I have sent my maid to learn the particulars from her.

1 January 1840. This morning a very handsome dress was forwarded to me with the compliments of a lady whom I do not know, the wife of General _____, with a request that, if I should go to the fancy ball as a Poblana peasant, I wear this costume. It is a Poblana dress, and very superb, with much gold trim and embroidery. I already had another dress prepared, but I think that this is the handsomer of the two.

5 January 1840. Yesterday was Sunday, a great day here for visiting after mass is over. We had a concourse of Spaniards, all of whom seemed anxious to know whether or not I intended to wear a Poblana dress at the fancy ball and seemed wonderfully interested about it. Two young ladies or women of Puebla, introduced by Señor _____, came to proffer their services in giving me all the necessary particulars; dressed the hair of Josefa, a little Mexican girl, to show me how it should be arranged; and told me that everyone was much pleased

*A shawl-like garment.

at the idea of my going in a Poblana dress. I was rather surprised that *everyone* should trouble themselves about it.

At twelve o'clock the president, in full uniform, attended by his aides-de-camp, paid me a visit and sat for about half an hour, very amiable as usual. Shortly after came more visits, and just as we had supposed they were all concluded, and we were going to dinner, we were told that the secretary of state, the ministers of war and of the interior, and others, were in the drawing room. And what do you think was the purport of their visit? To adjure me, by all that was most alarming, to discard the idea of making my appearance in a Poblana dress! They assured us that Poblanas were generally *femmes de rien*,** that they wore no stockings, and that the wife of the Spanish minister should by no means assume, even for one evening, such a costume. I brought in my dresses, showed their length and their propriety, but in vain; and, in fact, as to their being in the right there could be no doubt, and nothing but a kind motive could have induced them to take this trouble. So I yielded with a good grace and thanked the cabinet council for their timely warning, though fearing, in this land of procrastination, that it would be difficult to procure another dress for the fancy ball; for you must know that our luggage is still toiling its weary way, on the backs of mules, from Veracruz to the capital.

They had scarcely gone when Señor _____ brought a message from several of the principal ladies here, whom we do not even know, and who had requested that, as a stranger, I should be informed of the reasons which rendered a Poblana dress objectionable in this country, especially on any public occasion like this ball. I was really thankful for my escape.

Just as I was dressing for dinner, a note was brought, marked *reservada* (private), the contents of which appeared to me more odd than pleasant. I have since heard, however, that the writer, don José Arnaiz, is an old man and a sort of privileged character who interferes in everything whether it concerns him or not. I translate it for your benefit: "The dress of a Poblana is that of a woman of no character. The lady of the Spanish minister is a *lady* in every sense of the

**Women of very low social status.

word. However much she may have compromised herself, she ought neither to go as a Poblana nor in any other character but her own. So says to the Señor de Calderón, José Arnaiz, who esteems him as much as possible."

10 January 1840. The fancy ball took place last evening in the theater, and although, owing either to the change of climate or to the dampness of the house, I have been obliged to keep to my room since the day of the bullfight and to decline a pleasant dinner at the English Minister's, I thought it advisable to make my appearance at the dance. Having discarded the costume of the light-headed Poblanas, I adopted that of a virtuous woman of ancient Rome, simple enough to get up in one day: a white skirt, red bodice with blue ribbons, and a lace veil.

We went to the theater about eleven, and found the *entrée*, though crowded with carriages, very quiet and orderly. Inside the boxes were hung with bright silk draperies, and a canopy of the same, drawn up in the form of a tent, covered the whole ballroom. The orchestra was also tolerably good. The boxes were filled with ladies, presenting an endless succession of crepe shawls of every color and variety and a monotony of diamond earrings. Of Swiss peasants, Scottish peasants, and all manner of peasants, there was a goodly assortment, as also of Turks, Highlanders, and men in plain clothes. But being open to the public, it was not a select crowd, and among many well-dressed people, there were also hundreds who, assuming no particular character, had exerted their imaginations to appear merely fanciful . . . and had succeeded.

Upon the whole, I saw few very striking beauties and very little good dancing. There was too much velvet and satin, and the dresses were too loaded with adornments and absurdly short. The diamonds, though superb, were frequently ill-set. There were various unfortunate children bundled up in long satin or velvet dresses, covered with jewels, with artificial flowers in their hair. The room was excessively cold, nor was the underlying odor of the theater entirely obliterated, nor do I think that all the perfumes of Arabia would overpower it. We remained until three in the morning and declined all offers of refreshment, though, after all, a cup of hot chocolate would not have

been amiss. There was supper somewhere, but, I believe, attended only by gentlemen.

Holy Week 1840. The whole of Mexico City was filled with picturesque figures. After the higher señoras were to be remarked the common women, chiefly in clear white, very stiffly starched muslins, some very richly embroidered and the petticoat trimmed with lace, white satin shoes, and the dress extremely short, which in them looks very well. A rebozo is thrown over all. Amongst these were many handsome faces, but in a still lower and more Indian class, with their gay-colored petticoats, the faces were sometimes beautiful and the figures more upright and graceful. Women of this class invariably walk well, whilst many of the higher classes, because of overly tight shoes and because they are unaccustomed to walking, seem to feel pain in putting their feet to the ground. The pure Indians, with whom the churches and the whole city is crowded, are as ugly as can be imagined—a gentle, dirty, and much enduring race. And none of the foregoing could vie with the handsome Poblana peasants in their holiday dresses, their petticoats frequently fringed and embroidered with real gold. We saw several whose dresses could not have cost less than five hundred dollars. Some were so rich and magnificent that, remembering the warning of our ministerial friends, I am inclined to believe them more showy than respectable.

Analyzing the Sources: What seems to be at stake in the struggle over whether or not Mrs. Calderón de la Barca, a diplomat's wife, would wear a Poblana dress to the costume ball?