

**SELECT BRITISH TRAVEL NARRATIVES AND MEXICO AS
INSPIRING FULCRUM: A STUDY**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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FULCRUM: A STUDY**

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Submitted

**In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in English and Culture Studies of Mizoram University, Aizawl.**

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, “Select British Travel Narratives and Mexico as Inspiring Fulcrum: A Study” is the bonafide research conducted by Miss Nikita Suman under my supervision. Miss Nikita Suman worked methodically for his thesis being submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Department of English and Culture Studies, Mizoram University.

This is to further certify that the research conducted by Miss Nikita Suman has not submitted an application of this or any other University/Institute.

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DECLARATION
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I **NIKITA SUMAN**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the **Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English and Culture Studies**.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Mexico has never been influential as a political power in the world map. Despite that, its rich ancient culture and wealth have long captivated foreign interest. This allure has drawn travelers, writers, and colonial powers to its borders. Consequently, Mexico has served as inspiration for numerous British writers, including D.H. Lawrence, Rebecca West, Aldous Huxley, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Malcolm Lowry, Rosa E. King, and Sybille Bedford. These authors, among others, found in Mexico a landscape for exploring themes of cultural encounter, political turmoil, and the search for alternative ways of life (Ramirez 55). Disentangling the colonial gaze from the perspectives of writers traveling from colonial centers presents a complex challenge. The influence of Mexico on British literature has been mediated by the historical relationship between Britain and Spain. Since the time of Elizabeth I, Britain and Spain were frequently in conflict. This rivalry extended to the Americas, where Mexico was a Spanish colony after 1519. As one account states, Catholic Spain aimed “not only to overthrow Protestantism, and to put an end to the assistance given by England to the rebellious Netherlanders, but to check for ever the attacks on his colonies and commerce by the audacious and piratical English adventurers” (Traill 416). The Anglo-Spanish conflict, therefore, had multiple dimensions: religious, economic (trade monopoly and commerce), and imperialist (expansion and influence). This historical context is essential for understanding the dynamics of British interest in Mexico. Despite the conflicts, English interest in Spanish culture, history, and politics had intensified over times (Samson 19). While religious and literary movements have fostered cross-Atlantic influences, Spain, during the Renaissance, looked to Italy; Germany inspired Reformation ideals; and the Restoration Era emulated French fashions. The French Revolution of 1789, with its ideals of liberty, equality, and freedom, initially inspired English writers and poets, but later produced disillusionment. Beyond the picaresque novels of the eighteenth century, with their Quixotic characters, Spanish influence on English literature is not readily apparent. However, British authors from 1934–1969 wrote travelogues and novels based on their experiences in Mexico, a significant political and geographic landscape within the Spanish American colony. During and after the Mexican

Revolution (1910-1920), Mexico attracted British writers for various reasons: the conditions of the Mexican peasantry, the perceived tyranny of Spanish imperialism, the allure of exotic territories offering escape from repressive domestic environments, and the opportunity to participate in the brewing Revolution.

As the primary sources, the following texts are selected for the proposed study : *The Tempest Over Mexico: A Personal Chronicle* (1935) a travel-memoir by Rosa E. King, *The Lawless Roads* (1939), a travelogue by Graham Greene; *The Fields of Paradise* (1941), a Mexican novel by Ralph Bates, ; *A Visit to Don Otavio: A Mexican Journey* (1953), a travel-memoir by Sybille Bedford, and *Survivors in Mexico* (2003), a travelogue by Rebecca West. As the travel writing produced by Ralph Bates during his stay in Mexico includes an essay, “Conversations in Mexico” (1939), and a Mexican novella, *The Burning Corn* (1939), they are to be analyzed along with the novel, *The Fields of Paradise*. The travelogue, *The Lawless Roads*, by Graham Greene, has inspired Greene’s subsequent Mexican novel, *The Power and the Glory* (1940), which will support the research at a secondary level. The selection of authors for this study is rooted in the premise that their travels to Mexico, motivated by a desire to escape British societal constraints, spurred both the creation of Mexico-based fictional works and their own personal evolution as artists. While scholarly attention has largely focused on the influence of Mexico on modern British authors such as Lawrence, Huxley, Greene, and Lowry, this study addresses a gap by examining lesser-known travel writers alongside novelists, namely Rosa King, Ralph Bates, Sybille Bedford, and Rebecca West. It investigates how these writers construct imaginative narratives from cross-cultural encounters, positioning Mexico as a crucible of interactions and interrelations. Travelogues and memoirs are prioritized for their capacity to reveal the authors’ subjective selves more intimately than realist fiction.

This approach also allows for an exploration of the female gaze, recognizing that women authors often faced unequal recognition at home. It also enables a critical examination of male authors abroad, scrutinizing their potential complicity in perpetuating colonial power dynamics. Drawing on Susan Bassnett’s observation that early travel accounts were predominantly male (Bassnett 202), this study acknowledges how women travel writers in the early 20th century used foreign travel

to reflect on domestic issues and challenge restrictive conventions. The analysis centers on whether the female gaze in their Mexican travel narratives reinforces Eurocentric perspectives or de-romanticizes the impact of the Mexican Revolution.

The British writers' fascination with Mexico represents a compelling instance of intercultural exchange, reflecting how one culture perceives and interprets another. These writers, often disillusioned with Western civilization's perceived failures – be it Christianity, Imperialism, Industrialization, or the aftermath of World War I – sought subject material and alternatives in Mexico (Mermann-Jozwiak 29). As Britain stood on the brink of another world war, Mexico was engaged in reconstructing its culture, politics, art, and literature following the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920.

Their journeys to Mexico, motivated by a desire to escape Britain's problems, contributed not only to the creation of fictional works set in Mexico but also to the writers' own development. These experiences often led to a transformation in their identities, evolving from initial negative impressions in their travelogues to more affirmative and humanizing perspectives in their fictional works, which explored universal human emotions and the strength of the human character. This process highlights the growth of the artist, both as a writer and as an individual.

The preliminary literature reviews for this research show that there are some areas of inquiry which remain yet to be addressed. Mexico unveils diverse viewpoints of these writers, which an apolitical or amoral aesthetic can hardly explain or connect the writers to a coherently united group. It is fascinating to realize that Mexico turns out various faces of the British writers. When perspectives of exotic mysticism and Lawrentian mystique in Mexico would interest Aldous Huxley the more, that of the rampant consumerism and conflicting political and religious denominations in Mexico and Britain would attract Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh to champion as well as critique the Christian faith. Despite different ideological locales from which Ralph Bates and Rebecca West look at Mexico, they are sympathetic to the common Mexican-Indians and plead their better material prospects and support recovery of their ancient civilizational identity.

Rebecca West, among travel writers, merits attention for her left-leaning ideology and divergence from purely neutral or mystifying narratives. She offers a

sympathetic portrayal of the Mexicans' struggles against the dominant narrative imposed by the Spanish Conquest. West's travelogue opens avenues for further investigation, highlighting the renewal of their sense of loss through continuous colonial regimes and exploitative policies. Her perspective is fascinating, particularly her endorsement of material progress juxtaposed against the demands of mystical and Catholic faith, which complicates her stance. The very terms of progress appear questionable when cultural identity, ancient belief systems, language, and native values are sacrificed. Conversely, as a female traveler in her seventies, West provides unique insights into the female experience within Mexico, an area that may be under-researched.

Rosa E. King's *Tempest Over Mexico: A Personal Chronicle* offers a valuable, yet often overlooked, perspective on the Mexican Revolution. It presents a firsthand account from an English woman who lived through the revolution, providing a European lens through which to re-examine the causes, necessities, and impacts of the 1910-1920 period. Having arrived in Mexico as early as 1905, King purchased a tourist hotel by the revolution's first year, which became a hub for revolutionary leaders. Her narrative frankly addresses the class divisions between Mexican-Indians and the descendants of Spanish colonizers.

For women travel writers in the early twentieth century, venturing to foreign lands served as a means of reflecting in hindsight on domestic issues from a fresh perspective and escaping the restrictive conventions of fiction writing in England. This exploration took the form of engaging with new non-fiction genres like essays and travel memoirs, as well as disciplines such as art criticism, sociology, and history—areas traditionally seen as beyond the domestic roles assigned to women. Within the dominant domestic ideals of the time, these writers cleverly questioned societal norms by both accepting and undermining the roles expected of them through their work (Morgan 193). The focus of this analysis centers on the female gaze within their travel narratives on Mexico, critically examining whether it reinforces a European white superiority that exoticizes indigenous culture and tradition, or whether it de-romanticizes the dispossession of native Mexicans' lands during the Mexican Revolution.

Sybil Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio: A Mexican Journey*, published in 1953, offers insights into her travels in Mexico, her perspectives on the violence of the Mexican Revolution, and the personalities involved, alongside the challenges she encountered during her journeys. Bruce Chatwin's introduction highlights Bedford's admission that she wrote the travelogue without taking notes and her preference for classifying it as fiction rather than travel writing (Mulligan 177). This distinction raises questions about whether inspiration or direct experience is sufficient for novelistic development. Analyzing Bedford's Eurocentric view through her travel memoir may benefit from a deconstructive critical approach.

While women travel writers were undoubtedly inspired by their male counterparts' explorations, whether for religious or scientific purposes, a critical question remains: did this inspiration lead to a new, distinctively female voice within the genre? Did women carve out a space for their own identity, separate from the male dominance in travel writing (Bassnett 227). This raises the question as to whether women's experiences and insights, differing from those of male travelers, enriched the emerging genre and broadened its scope. Or does gender play a crucial role in the representation of the 'other'? Furthermore, gender is to significantly impact perceptions of destination attributes and travel values as Meng and Uysal would observe in the research article "Effects of Gender Differences on Perceptions of Destination Attributes, Motivations, and Travel Values: An Examination of a Nature-Based Resort Destination" (455).

While some of the authors and their works selected for this study have been previously analyzed through post-colonial and psychoanalytical lenses, a comprehensive research gap exists in analyzing the travel narratives of Graham Greene, Ralph Bates, Sybil Bedford, Rosa E. King, and Rebecca West collectively, as a critical purview of Cultural Studies would expose. In recent years, cross-cultural encounters have garnered renewed interest within travel writing, moving beyond its traditional function as informative texts for tourists and geographical purposes. This proposed study aims to explore how these encounters expose the identities of both the traveler and the people they observe. The dynamic between the self and the other, the visitor and the visited location, reveals Mexico as a vibrant culture exceeding its geographical boundaries. Hence Mexico appears crucial to their creative endeavor.

This research will critically examine the perspectives of both male and female writers on Mexico, exploring the discursive connections between fiction and the emerging genre of travel narrative, and analyzing how their professional and artistic achievements have been enriched. By examining the selected travel narratives of Rosa E. King, Graham Greene, Ralph Bates, Sybille Bedford, and Rebecca West all of whom journeyed to Mexico at different times, Mexico becomes the central focus of their creative works. This study also seeks to understand the reasons behind the increasing interest of British writers in writing about Mexico, even in the mid-twentieth century. Undertaking this study aims to unravel the personal, cultural, and postcolonial perspectives of the selected writers. This research seeks to shed light on whether these British writers approached Mexico with objectivity and openness, embodying the ideal traveler, or whether they adopted a patronizing, colonial agenda.

A travel narrative holds the potential to evolve into a more comprehensive and mature novel over time. It's worth noting that in the hands of a creative writer, factual elements can transform into fiction, and conversely, factual works can incorporate fictive and imaginative components. In the context of eminent fiction writers Ralph Bates and Graham Greene, Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico*, a 264-page travel memoir comparable in length to a full fictional work, addresses gaps in existing literary and cultural studies on Mexico between 1934 and 1969. It suggests that a significant panorama of three decades about Mexico has been inadequately reflected in literature. So, it raises significant questions about purported Mexican history, civilization, art, tradition, culture, and politics in the post-Revolution period. West's travel memoir engages with the complexities of race, challenging notions of racial superiority and exploring the mixed heritage of the Mexican people. Her travel history offers an objective analysis of the Mexican Revolution and its impact on the liberation of Mexican Indians, particularly through the lens of Mexican Muralists like Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.

Alongside Rivera and Kahlo, other influential Mexican radical artists, such as Dr. Atl, are discussed, whose paintings and murals in early twentieth-century Mexico served as unique forms of self-expression, subverting the oppression of Spanish colonizers (Santiago 2010). It is crucial to acknowledge Rivera's influence from European modernism and Cubism, prompting an exploration of the reciprocal

influence between Mexican and British cultures. Rebecca West's complex narrative delves into the inner lives of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo as well as the socialist influences of Europeans like Leon Trotsky and Benito Mussolini on modern Mexican politics, and the history of Mexico's Conquest by Hernán Cortés and his initial encounter with the Aztec ruler, Montezuma. Her travelogue stands out as a British writer's insightful account of Mexican social and cultural conditions in the late 1960s, providing a platform for both colonizer and colonized voices, incorporating their religious and sorcery practices as integral aspects of Mexican culture. A textual analysis of her narrative reveals her ability to imbue conventional historical material with vivid interpretations and creative narrative extrapolations.

Rebecca West's skepticism regarding divine benevolence distinguishes her travelogue, *Survivors in Mexico*, from those of her British contemporaries. This comparison, previously unexplored in doctoral studies, presents a novel research avenue, as the cultural dimension of travel writing has been largely overlooked in existing scholarship. Unlike D.H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley, West did not view Mexico as a site for spiritual or religious renewal, nor as a place to revive pagan gods. She challenged the idealization of Mexican Catholicism and the Catholic Church, which Catholic writers like Evelyn Waugh in *Robbery Under Law: The Mexican Object Lesson* (1939) and Graham Greene in *The Power and the Glory* championed as a bulwark against anti-clerical left-wing politics. With West being a liberal left-leaning thinker, her travel memoir questions the very foundations of spiritual certainty, whether Christian or pagan.

A parallel can be drawn between West and Ralph Bates in their empathetic portrayal of native Mexicans, acknowledging their loss of land during the Mexican Revolution and the erosion of their civilization during the Spanish Conquest. Both writers challenged dominant narratives and sought to elevate the status of native Mexicans in modern Mexican cultural history. This perspective is evident in Bates's travel essay, "Conversations in Mexico", and his subsequent novel, *The Fields of Paradise*. This chapter also considers Ralph Bates's travel essay, "Conversations in Mexico", along with his Mexican novella, *The Burning Corn*, as a secondary source to explore how Bates's experiences in Mexico and his recorded conversations with

Spanish and Mexican peasants influenced his subsequent Mexican novel, *The Fields of Paradise*.

In the shadow of the Great War's devastation (1914-1917) and the looming threat of another, Britain sought solace and understanding. George Woodcock, in his introduction to Douglas W. Veitch's *Lawrence, Greene and Lowry: The Fictional Landscape of Mexico*, observes that writers, "who sensed despair and crisis in the air, were attracted to lands such as Mexico where the moral divisions would be less obscured by tradition and hypocrisy than in Britain." Furthermore, Mexico offered a daring escape from the thronged tourist destinations frequented by the "middle-class English", providing a fascinating alternative and the promise of imaginative fodder from the brutal aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) (Veitch xiii). While both Greene and Bates were committed Communists, Greene's curiosity lay in witnessing the interplay of extremes in religion and politics, prompting his travels to Mexico in 1938.

In the same year, Ralph Bates also visited Mexico, seeking to raise funds for the Loyalist cause in the Spanish Civil War. Unlike Lawrence and Huxley, Bates did not view Mexico as a promising alternative to the moral decay of post-war Europe or as a glorious escape in the form of revolution. Having lived in Spain since 1923, he possessed fluency in Spanish, actively engaged in political campaigns, and championed "the impoverished, dispirited Indian as the focal point, and to the *ejido* system as the one hope for the future of Mexico" (Walker 4). On looking back, D. H. Lawrence, however, struggled to decolonize his mind; as a foreign traveler, his motivations were driven by both the political dream of his unrealized utopian colony 'Rananim', and a religious yearning to witness the incarnation of ancient Aztec gods in the form of men and women. Bates critiques this stereotypical portrayal of Indians as virile, with reptile-like eyes, still reliant on the character of the Indian General like Don Cipriano in *The Plumed Serpent*, who patiently awaits orders from Don Ramon, the Spanish landowner embodying the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl. Through a postcolonial lens, Bates expresses indignation over the loss of indigenous land rights, while Lawrence romanticizes it.

The core of Bates's novel, *The Fields of Paradise*, originates in his travel essay, "Conversations in Mexico", where he extensively discusses the social issue of

stolen indigenous lands during the Mexican Revolution and the land-reform movements under President Cardenas aimed at rectifying this injustice. In his article, “The Mexican Campaign of Ralph Bates”, Ronald Walker critiques the Lawrentian vision and exoticism, highlighting Felipe, a native Mexican character in *The Fields of Paradise* who inspires peasants to revolt against wealthy landowners. Walker notes that Felipe ultimately grapples with the decision to remain in Mexico or retreat to “a place of safety and hope and at the end ... accepts the consequences of his decision” (Walker 4-5). Despite Bates’s rejection of “mystifying nonsense in the manner of Lawrence or Huxley” he presents a more optimistic local perspective on the Mexican Revolution (Bates 394). His protagonist, Felipe’s, commitment to remaining in San Lorenzo is rooted in a desire to reinstate a form of progress reminiscent of pre-Spanish Conquest Mexico.

The parallel between *The Fields of Paradise* and *The Power and the Glory* lies in their depiction of Mexico’s galvanizing influence on fictional narratives, where the nation’s politics and culture serve as potent forces. In Graham Greene’s *The Power and the Glory*, the narrative centers on an anonymous Catholic priest fleeing persecution under the Communist government of President Calles, elected in 1924. The novel, published in 1940, originated from Greene’s travelogue, *The Lawless Roads*, written after his 1938 visit to Mexico. In it, Greene describes “the fiercest persecution of religion anywhere since the reign of Elizabeth” (Greene X). Greene, a Catholic, explored the disruptive impact of the Communist government’s anti-Catholic secularization campaign and the retaliatory Cristero War (1926–1929). Through the conflict between Catholicism and Marxism, Greene examines Europe, transforming realistic travel observations into a powerful work of fiction.

Similar to how Bates returned to Mexico for his novel *The Fields of Paradise*, Rebecca West revisited Mexico in 1969, seeking to reignite her creative energies. Interestingly, Graham Greene never went back to Mexico after his 1938 journey, yet his travel experiences underwent a significant transformation during his time in Britain, particularly as the nation approached World War II. In Greene’s travelogue, Mexico and its indigenous population are depicted negatively, characterized by the dirt, the poverty, the diseases, the squalor, the oppressive heat, creating a disparaging image of Mexico during the tumultuous Mexican Revolution.

However, in *The Power and the Glory*, Greene portrays his flawed protagonist, the whisky-priest, with empathy. Despite fleeing persecution from the Communist Lieutenant and lacking faith in the Catholic Church, the priest's conviction blossoms in a prison scene, surrounded by criminals, as he finds compassion for the fallen, the needy, the Lieutenant, and the world. Years later, Rebecca West's travel writing on Mexico, "instead of celebrating and mystifying the nation's Indian roots (like Lawrence and Huxley) . . . was written with the aim to find out in what ways the history and culture of Mexico were typical of the larger human predicament" (West xiv).

This study aims to explore the connections between selected travel narratives and Mexico, focusing on the Mexican Revolution, its politics, history, culture, and literature. It seeks to comparatively analyze the imaginative positions of male and female fiction writers, examining the formation of cross-cultural identities as writers juxtapose their art and experiences against domestic realities. Furthermore, it investigates the role of Mexico as a living culture that extends beyond a mere tourist destination. Finally, the study provides a critical analysis of diverse female perspectives on the Mexican setting, as portrayed by West, Bedford, and King.

In the essay, "Authority and Veracity in the Modern Travel Book" (2015), Carl Thompson defines the modern travel book as the "more literary branch of the travel writing genre which has flourished since the nineteenth century" (Thompson 86). Rapid industrialization led to the development of towns in nineteenth century, increase in production of goods and manufacturing of machinery, inventions such as the steam engine also led to the development of the first railway steam locomotive in 1804. As Mexico achieved its Independence from the Spanish Empire in 1821, transportation was easier for the European rising middle-class which demanded entertainment during travel in form of magazines, newspapers, or cheap novels. Invention of railways also made sure that heavy machinery for printing could be transported easily which led to a revolution in print culture (Shillam 2) as the British Empire expanded its colonies and reached its height of unprecedented glory. As travel became more affordable and necessary for social status, what the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has termed 'cultural-capital', a group of readers were also simultaneously created back at England who were eager to keep track of the

developments in the rest of the globe. It is more literary in the sense that it is a serious account of the travels of the author who covers a significant distance from one place to another and records his experiences of the people, place, culture of the new place. Secondly, more significantly, it is written with the intention to cater to the needs of a certain reading public back at the homeland of the author. As the reader enters the modern age however a change occurs in writing in general, and travel-book in particular due to the tumultuous atmosphere created by the first and second world wars, and the resulting avant-garde movements, so the nature of truth itself is deliberately compromised in a travel book which broadens the scope of its creative imagination. Another reason why the realism and linearity of the narratives of the 19th century was questioned in the modern age was because of the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) by Sigmund Freud at the turn of the century which allowed a study into the subconscious human minds, previously an uncharted, unexplored territory, after which it became impossible to go forward with a linear progression of narratives.

The period from 1880 to 1940 saw this change take place. There was a move – as in imaginative literature – from the detailed, realist text, often with an overtly didactic or at any rate moral purpose, to a more impressionistic style with the interest focused as much on the travelers’ responses or consciousness as their travels (Hulme and Young 74). Therefore in 20th and 21st century literary travelogues, the concept of accuracy, faithful representation of events and experiences, and truth itself becomes contorted. Modern travel books are “both more overtly autobiographical, and more self-consciously literary” (Thompson 88), they voluntarily, and constantly draw the readers’ attention to their fictional nature, i.e., they are self-reflexive, they use narrative and stylistic devices used in novels and “claim, in short, the authenticity of fiction” (89), they go forward so much as to opine that by virtue of relating their subjective experiences of people and places, the truth, otherwise factual, and hence banal, is enhanced, “thus the writers of more literary travelogues often claim, somewhat paradoxically, the authority both of fiction and of non-fiction” (90).

A comprehensive review of the existing literature is given due attention in this study which essentially attempts to address and answer certain gaps and research void left in existing earlier accounts and writings focused on Mexico. Drewey Wayne

Gunn's *American and British Writers in Mexico* (1974) examines approximately 140 British and American writers who resided in Mexico between 1556 and 1973, documenting their experiences in various forms. Gunn explores their lives and works set in Mexico, identifying common themes and suggesting that their engagement with Mexico marked a turning point in their literary careers. Contrary to previous scholarly assertions, Rosa E. King, a British traveler, journeyed to Mexico in 1905, predating D.H. Lawrence's arrival in 1923, and provided a firsthand account of the Mexican Revolution. This chapter seeks to address a research gap by examining King's travel memoir, along with other understudied female travel writers such as Rebecca West and Sybille Bedford, thus offering a novel perspective in this field.

Douglas W. Veitch's *Lawrence, Greene and Lowry: The Fictional Landscape of Mexico* (1978) highlights the significant role of the Mexican landscape in the novels of these three British authors between 1923 and 1936. Veitch argues that the landscape serves "as a rich source of symbols and images reflecting the human drama" in Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent*, Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, and Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (Veitch xiv). He posits that these works, born from travel experiences in Mexico, offer insights into the authors' own nations and selves, as well as the foreign land. However, Veitch's analysis overlooks the fact that, besides Malcolm Lowry, Ralph Bates and Rebecca West also visited Mexico twice. This research aims to fill a gap by comparatively analyzing male and female travel writers—Rosa E. King, Rebecca West, Sybille Bedford, Ralph Bates, and Graham Greene—as Mexico takes center stage in their creative works.

Ronald G. Walker's *Infernal Paradise: Mexico and the Modern English Novel* (1978) analyzes Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), Huxley's *Eyeless in Giza* (1936) Greene's *The Power and the Glory* (1940), and Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (1947) to explore the reasons behind British writers' fascination for Mexican culture and landscape in the twentieth century. Walker suggests that for Huxley, Lawrence, Greene, and Lowry, the landscape, climate, post-revolutionary violence, and the enigmatic history of Mexico and its native people resulted in an "oppressive experience" rather than an affirmative one. This "infernal" vision contrasts with the more "paradisiacal" depiction of Mexico by Ralph Bates in *The Fields of Paradise*, where it serves as a space to evaluate the optimistic outcomes of the Mexican

Revolution (Walker 245). Walker's study notably omits detailed analysis of Ralph Bates's Mexican works and fails to address Rebecca West, Rosa E. King, and Sybille Bedford. This omission creates a research gap that this research aims to address by including those authors Walker does not discuss in *Infernal Paradise*.

In her article "Is There anybody There? Graham Greene in Mexico" (1982), Sheryl S. Pearson analyzes how Greene's novel, *The Power and the Glory* expands on the material found in his travelogue, *The Lawless Roads*. She posits that Greene's perspectives on revolutionary policies, including education, agrarian reform, nationalism, and populist movements like Zapatismo, illuminate sub-themes within the novel. As Pearson notes, "the imaginative expansion that Greene's novel, *The Power and the Glory* makes of the travelogue's materials (*The Lawless Roads*), his opinions concerning revolutionary policies and ... education ... or agrarian reform, or nationalism, or populist movements such as Zapatismo ... frequently illuminate sub-themes of the novel" (Pearson 277-279). He observes that "Greene habitually leaves behind the literal Mexican setting, establishing and re-establishing links between Mexican history and Western mainstream" (283). This technique echoes Rebecca West's approach in *Survivors*, where she draws parallels between the Aztec taxation system and the demands of the British Inland Revenue, and equates wealthy Aztec traders with affluent members of the English middle class (West xvi). Pearson also suggests that Greene's journey to Mexico provided an escape from a libel suit in his home country. During his travels, Greene became disillusioned with the perceived failures of the Mexican Revolution, noting a lack of "spiritual consolation" in Western Christianity (Pearson 286). To address this perceived void, he created the character of the whiskey-priest, whose imperfect faith, mirroring the simple yet tenacious faith of the native-Indian peasants, ultimately offers redemption for himself, other priests, and humanity at large.

Bernard Schweizer's article, "Genesis of a 'Might-Have-Been Masterpiece': Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico*", (2003) offers a critical examination of West's travel narrative, positioning it as a reflection of her developed perspectives on Mexican race, religion, and culture. The article implicitly critiques West's potential subjective approach to history. By noting West's hesitations in discussing Aztec human sacrifice and her ambivalence regarding the causes for the downfall of the

indigenous population—whether due to Spanish exploitation or the oppressive climate—Schweizer subtly probes West’s potential complicity with colonialist perspectives. This present study seeks to expand upon Schweizer’s observations by examining the works of other female travel writers in twentieth-century Mexico, such as Rosa E. King and Sybille Bedford, to further explore how these authors navigated the complexities of intercultural representation in their travel narratives.

In his 2007 article, “The “Narrative is Travel” Metaphor: Between Spatial Sequence and Open Consequence” (2007) Kai Mikkonen argues that travel experiences have served as models for narrative construction. He analyzes Graham Greene’s travel narrative, *Journey Without Maps*, using narratology and narrative theory to understand how it narrativizes the flow of travel experience. Here Mikkonen suggests Greene’s deliberate flouting of literary conventions, such as deviating from a planned itinerary, creates gaps in the narrative that invite fictionalization. Furthermore, the inherent retrospection in travel narratives, due to the separation between the time of travel and the time of writing, allows for greater imaginative expansion.

Christina MacSweeney’s 2015 article, “Why the Comeback in Mexican Literature”, offers valuable insights into the renewed interest in Mexican literature, highlighting the crucial roles of translators and the proliferation of online literary platforms. She acknowledges the subversion of the colonial gaze in Mexican literature, as Mexican writers began to represent their own culture in response to the British writers interested in Mexico during the 1920s-1950s. However, she does not fully explore how the travels of these British writers specifically influenced their (native writers’) novels set in Mexico. It has been observed that foreign writers visiting Mexico often fashioned themselves as experts on all things Mexican, regardless of their actual knowledge of the country. A deeper analysis could reveal how these travel experiences shaped the narratives and perspectives presented in their fictional works.

Enrique Krauze’s insightful article “British Writers on Mexico’s ‘night’ of violence and ‘day’ of magical attraction” (2015) illuminates the dualistic portrayal of Mexico by European writers, highlighting both its allure and its repulsiveness. Krauze suggests that D. H. Lawrence, Graham Greene, and Malcolm Lowry depicted

the rampant political unrest and social upheavals in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution in a manner that cast a shadow over the lives of their characters and their own personas, a sentiment as echoed in the travelogues of Lawrence and Greene. Conversely, writers like Rebecca West, Frances Erskine Inglis, Rosa E. King, and Sybille Bedford chose to portray the “inviting and entrancing face” of Mexico, offering critiques of upper-class customs that oppressed Mexican-Indians, but ultimately celebrating life itself (Krauze “British Writers on Mexico’s ‘Night’ of Violence and ‘Day’ of Magical Attraction”).

While previous research has largely focused on travelogues by British male writers, the present study seeks to address the relative neglect of female travel writers who documented Mexico during the Mexican Revolution and the World Wars. The aim is to investigate the presence of fictional elements, personal memoirs, and autobiographical reflections within the travelogues of these women writers. It is worth noting that women entered public discourse in the early 20th century through travel narratives, as exemplified by Edith O’Shaughnessy (Wood 123).

Modern British writers such as Rosa E. King, Sybille Bedford, Rebecca West, Ralph Bates, and Graham Greene have made significant contributions to the British literary canon. However, the imaginative landscape of Mexico, which profoundly influenced their personal and artistic development, remains underexplored in critical scholarship. Existing secondary sources primarily focus on the interrelationships between their novels and the discernible influence of Mexican landscape, culture, or revolution. A critical gap exists in understanding how their travel experiences served as models for their fictional narratives set in Mexico.

Available literature reviews reveal that despite the emergence of a new literary genre advanced by writers such as Rosa E. King and D.H. Lawrence, scholarly attention has been largely confined to analyzing the influence of Mexico on modern British literature through the works of Lawrence, Huxley, Greene, and Lowry. While Ronald Walker identified Ralph Bates as another British author whose interest in Mexico during the late thirties inspired his novel, *The Fields of Paradise*, the role of Bates’s travel essay in shaping both this novel and his Mexican novella, *The Burning Corn*, has not been thoroughly examined. Similarly, Rebecca West’s travel narrative has been largely overlooked by fiction critics. West’s travel memoir

offers an objective analysis of Mexican culture, history, politics, and religion through a humanistic and socialist lens, inviting cultural studies to explore the reciprocal illumination of cultures and the examination of the human condition. Despite their contributions to Mexican travel narratives, Rosa King and Bedford have also suffered from critical neglect.

This study aims to address the existing research gap by focusing on Mexico as a crucial element in the creativity of eminent British novelists and travel writers. It will investigate how these writers construct imaginative fictions from their cross-cultural encounters, positioning Mexico as a crucible of interactions and interrelations. While British novelists writing on Mexico between 1915 and 1940 frequently deploy an outsider's gaze—romanticizing landscape, moralizing politics, or treating the Revolution as an exotic backdrop for personal drama—a contrapuntal reading demands that the reader hears the voices of those whom they largely silence. The Mexican writer Mariano Azuela's novel *Los de abajo* (1929) speaks from the trenches of peasant insurgency, portraying Demetrio Macías and his followers not as heroic archetypes but as collectively buffeted by forces beyond their control. Juan Rulfo's terse, haunting vignettes in *El llano en llamas* (1953) then extend Azuela's material realism into a psychic geography of drought-scorched plains, where memory and violence interpenetrate in an atemporal present. Finally, Montserrat Fontes's *Dreams of the Centaur* (1996), written from a Chicana perspective, rewrites revolutionary legacies through a mythopoetic, gendered lens, weaving indigenous myth and diaspora-memory to critique both British exoticism and Mexican machismo. By reading the British texts in dialogue with these native and transnational narratives, each of which centers peasant agency, vernacular speech, and thematic innovations in form the reader recovers the deeper harmonies of class struggle, gendered experience, and collective memory that the outsider novel too often elides.

In journeys from Britain to Mexico, British visitors undergo transformations, interrogating and critiquing their own world through contact with Mexican culture. This research contextualizes these textual encounters within the Mexican Revolution and Second World War, analyzing how these historical events influenced the interplay between both cultures. Mexico serves as a fulcrum for Westerners seeking

new experiences, with initial perceptions of decadence and malaise evolving into more affirmative engagements in their fictional works.

The primary research methodology involves a close-reading process and comparative analysis of primary sources. Given that the selected narratives are works of art, these will be analyzed through the lenses of cultural studies and postcolonialism. The application of cultural studies will incorporate textual analysis, an examination of the lived experiences of British travelers as documented in their travel writings, and an exploration of identity in relation to the writers' race and culture. It is within these critical and theoretical parameters such as masculine/feminine 'imperial rhetoric' (*Place Matters* (1996) by Susan Morgan), 'imagined community' by Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), concept of imaginative geographies in Edward Said's critique in *Orientalism* (1978) and repressive models of socio-politics and intellectual masculism opposed by feminist theorists such as Helene Cixous, Elaine Showalter and others that women's travel-writings, including their moments of critique, are to be employed as found critically relevant here. Further, the relevant books would be *Research Methods for Cultural Studies* (2008) edited by Michael Pickering, the relevant sources, and dimensions like "Encoding/Decoding" (1973) by Stuart Hall, appropriate aspects of Simon During's *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction* (2005) would be utilized to give just orientation to the research.

The perspective of post-colonialism is relevant because the British writers are departing from an imperial center and critically examining the political situation in Mexico; colonialism, therefore, becomes a cultural experience. The travel narratives serve as documents of the lived experiences of these British writers, reflecting the socio-political circumstances of Mexico at the time. The aim is to uncover how these experiences, as recorded in their travel narratives, find expression in their fictional works. The colonialist mentality in travel writing presumes travelers to be citizens of ex-colonial powers, while places like Mexico are passive recipients of their gazes.

The present study proposes six chapters to explore and examine the relevant aspects. In the first chapter, which would be the introduction, this study will establish a framework for understanding the context in which the five authors traveled to

Mexico, including the political, religious, and ideological motivations that underpinned their journeys. Furthermore, the introduction will contextualize the historical, cultural, and artistic developments in both Britain and Mexico during this period, enabling a proper situating of the authors' writings. This will involve an examination of the milieu in which these authors operated, considering the artistic movements and cultural shifts occurring at the time.

The second chapter, titled "Mexico as an Imaginative Crucible" will explore the contrasting perspectives between male and female British writers as they transform Mexico into an imaginative nexus in their travel-narratives and novels. While Graham Greene's travelogue documented the Cristero War of 1926-29, his novel emerging from this experience, portrays a triumph of martyrdom amidst religious persecution. Conversely, Ralph Bates's *The Fields of Paradise* challenges the masculinist mystification and exoticization of indigenous power prevalent in the works of D.H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley. Bates achieves this by creating a Mexican Indian protagonist, Felipe, akin to the whiskey-priest in Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, who incites Mexican Indian peasants to reclaim their lands from Spanish landowners. While male writers focused on the violence of the Mexican Revolution and its positive consequences, female travel writers often navigated intercultural encounters with a nuanced perspective, avoiding definitive conclusions. This approach may stem from their historical positioning on the "literary world's fringe", which has fostered greater openness to diverse viewpoints and a deeper understanding of the inherent challenges in cross-cultural representation (Pitman 107).

The third chapter, "Cultural Interface and Identity Formation" will explore how the interaction between Mexican and British cultures served as a pivotal moment for modern British writers, offering them an opportunity to understand Western culture through their engagement with Mexican society. Travel and extended stays in Mexico facilitated a reshaping of intellectual ideas, prompting a re-examination and re-composition of the ways in which travel narratives were transformed into subsequent works of fiction. The breadth of the travel narrative genre is exemplified by Rosa E. King's autobiographical memoir, *Tempest Over Mexico: A Personal Chronicle*. Her presence during the Mexican Revolution

provides a lens through which to examine Mexico between 1910 and 1920 from the perspective of a white European woman, raising questions about the accuracy of her portrayal of the political motivations of the time. This chapter will address postcolonial responses, the fluidity of cross-cultural identities among British writers, and the reformation of their worldviews as they navigated their art on Mexico, contrasting their experiences with domestic realities.

When discussing travel literature, it is important to consider the dichotomy between the tourist and traveler gaze. While tourists often seek curiosity and pleasure, the responsibility of providing a faithful, objective, and detached representation of a place, in this case, Mexico, before, during, and after the Mexican Revolution often falls on the white European traveler. This traveler aims to transform their curious gaze into knowledge, wielding the power to shape the narrative perpetuated by Europeans about Mexico to the rest of the world. Therefore, the fourth chapter, “Place as Living Culture beyond the Tourist Gaze” will analyze the life of Mexico, its vibrant richness, and complex life streams in these narratives, moving beyond traveler’s diaries and the superficial tourist gaze. To examine the function of Mexico as a living culture beyond the tourist perspective, it will be analyzed through textual analysis, the lived experiences of British travelers found in their travel writings, and post-colonialism. This involves looking at how travel discourse can position Mexican bodies, setting the stage for ambivalent views of Mexico.

The fifth chapter, “Outer-truths’ and ‘Inner-truths’: Truths, Lies, and Female Sensibilities” would enlighten the fact that travel writing involves not only the physical displacement of an author from their native place to another, but also an internal journey of experiencing and interpreting the trip. This process entails a subjective re-creation of travel experiences, influenced by the writer’s own culture, civilization, and socio-political context, which they may seek to investigate or escape. This chapter aims to explore the various reasons behind this artistic recapitulation or creative remolding of travel experiences in the travel narratives by female travel writers on Mexico, as well as the role played by the style of writing in the narrative structures of the travelogues. It will also examine the imprints of aspects not detected in male writings, and whether a ‘feminine’ style of writing can

be objective and emotional simultaneously, while engaging with a foreign culture. The chapter will address the question of veracity in the selected women travel writers with respect to style and language in their works.

The sixth chapter will be the conclusion that will provide a summary of the findings presented in the previous chapters.

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Chapter Two

Mexico as an Imaginative Crucible

Through the travel narratives and novels of British male and female authors, this chapter analyses the journey of the British authors as they encounter and recreate Mexico into a space of narrative negotiation as a result of their gendered perspectives. This chapter critically investigates Rosa E. King's *Tempest Over Mexico* (1935), Graham Greene's *The Lawless Roads* (1939), Ralph Bates's *The Fields of Paradise* (1941), Sybille Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio* (1953), and Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico* (2003) for the purpose of undertaking the analysis. Mexico has held immense fascination for writers, particularly those from Britain, by virtue of its rich tapestry of ancient civilizations, Spanish colonial legacy as well as the Mexican Revolution. The writers were drawn to the multiform identity of the nation and their exploration led them to project their own cultural anxieties onto its landscape and people. Mexico acted as a fertile ground for British literary imagination as the writers were not only allured by the socio-political turbulence of the post-colonial era, but also by the romance of the pre-Columbian civilizations that might act as an alternative to the political and cultural issues at home (Ramírez 34-45).

Hence the time periods during which they wrote along with a historical sensibility influenced their perceptions of Mexico transforming into works that promoted cultural interconnectedness or challenged the dynamics of power in varied ways. Writers such as D.H. Lawrence's Mexican voyage was an opportunity to explore ancient Mexican spirituality whereas Graham Greene's Mexico finds itself rife with political intrigue choke-holding religion. In the case of female British writers, Mexico's significance becomes more complex as a space that could question the political as well the patriarchal status-quo along the lines of gender, cultural difference, and the question of identity. It would be interesting for a reader to explore the similarities or contrasts in male and female British travel narratives in their representation of marginalized communities like the native Mexicans and the mestizo, the Mexican women along with the political and cultural landscape of Mexico in the twentieth century. This chapter will rely on the critical concepts such as resistance, hybridity, and ambiguity under the ambit of postcolonial studies and

cultural studies to address the complex interplay between indigenous traditions, colonial legacies, and representation of contemporary Mexican socio-political realities in British travel-narratives.

Rosa E. King's travel-memoir *Tempest Over Mexico: A Personal Chronicle* (1935), notes her as a British woman traveler who moved to Cuernavaca, Mexico in 1907, with the aim of venturing into business in-order to sustain her young children. Her memoir spans across the political scenario during which Porfirio Diaz governed Mexico (1877-1911) and the dissatisfaction during his rule that led to the turbulent Mexican Revolution- the reason for the forming of modern Mexico. King's narrative intertwines her present experiences with historical reflections on Cortes's palace in Cuernavaca. While acknowledging the conventional understanding of Cortes's "good taste" in selecting the location, King subtly critiques this view, suggesting that Cortes's choice was driven more by strategic vigilance and control over the conquered lands than aesthetic appreciation (King 13). Her satirical observation about Cortes's "lack of reverence for civilization" yet "love of space and elbowroom" hints at the violence inherent in the Spanish rule over indigenous populations, a theme King explores as she seeks economic independence in Cuernavaca (King 13). This layered interpretation reveals King's awareness of the complex power dynamics at play, positioning her as a critical observer of both the past and present colonial legacies in Mexico. The Spanish conquest in Mexico deeply transformed Mesoamerican civilizations (Santiago 68). The native population suffered a serious decline after the conquest of the New World (Sánchez-Albornoz 1984). And yet, it would have been impossible for the Spaniards to integrate themselves into the society, had they not allied themselves with the indigenous population.

King, on her part, became an active member of the local society by establishing several businesses like a tearoom and a curio shop, and by upgrading the Bella Vista Hotel with modern amenities such as thirty rooms each having a separate bath. During the Porfirio era in Mexico, while affluent landowners prospered, King's tearoom expanded into a successful pottery and curio business with substantial profits. Rosa King's status as a British woman can indeed be viewed as a form of 'cultural capital' that contributed to her survival in Mexico during the tumultuous

period of the Mexican Revolution. As a British expatriate, King initially held a certain social status that allowed her to navigate the complexities of Mexican society more effectively. She was often asked to arrange dinners for “a party of prominent Chicagoans” (King 32), she hosted the British Minister in her tea-room (24) and her connections with local elites and politicians, including the governor of Morelos, facilitated her entry into influential circles, which was crucial for her business ventures, particularly in establishing the Bella Vista Hotel.

During the Porfirio era, while affluent landowners prospered, King, a foreigner who also benefited from the regime, established her pottery factory in San Anton, a village in Morelos known for its skilled indigenous potters. Expressing empathy for these potters, whose earnings barely sustained them, King stated, “I made it a fixed rule never the haggle with the Indians” (King 30). This stance contrasted sharply with the colonial mindset of her well-to-do friends, who believed that the potters, and peones were unable to manage their money and spent all they got on getting drunk, reflecting a prejudiced view that indigenous people lacked the capacity for social mobility or self-improvement, living “like beasts because they had no capacity for anything better” (31). While King presented herself as an advocate for ethical business practices, she admitted to doubling the prices of her pottery, catering to the affluence of her American tourist clientele. This complexity suggests a nuanced position, where genuine concern for the potters coexisted with the economic realities of her business (Lipski 98). This situation highlights the economic disparities inherent in the Porfirian economic model, where foreign investment and modernization such as railways and industries disproportionately benefited the elite while marginalizing indigenous communities. King’s awareness of these disparities, coupled with her foreign identity positions her as a complex figure within the socio-economic landscape of the time.

While acknowledging the economic benefits of foreign capital and modernization under Don Porfirio’s regime, a critical examination of her perspective is warranted to ascertain whether she acknowledges or contests the regime’s dictatorial practices. During a conversation between an Eastern US professor and King regarding reports of rebellion among the indigenous people as well as the educated landowning class, King expresses her disbelief to a young American boy

when she says, “but such talk has been going on for years, and nothing ever comes of it” (King 43), that raises questions about her potential complicity in maintaining the status quo. The American boy provides his firm belief, a more informed perspective and understanding of the potential for social upheaval during the Don Porfirio’s rule. The year nineteen hundred ten would mark the hundredth anniversary of Mexican Independence from Spain, but the celebrations and splendor of Porfirio’s plans to make this a success disconcerts Willie Nevin, the Scottish manager to Rosa King. Willie believed that the regime under Don Porfirio must be in shambles, if he “has to put on a show like that to keep people’s minds off this Madero and the election” (King 53). King pays no heed to his wariness, ““Nonsense, Willie”, I scoffed. “Who cares about elections? They’re just a formality here”” (54). Again, Willie points out that the Mexican coffers must already be empty, if there has been no expense spared, and Madero, the presidential candidate against Porfirio in the coming election, had been briefly put to jail and released later. Yet King fails to hear the “blast of the bull’s horn and the drum call” that had now sounded “in the soul of the people” (King 44).

Drawing upon historical hindsight, King recounts receiving news that Porfirio Díaz was fleeing for his life, along with wealthy families, because Francisco I. Madero was marching on Mexico City from the north and Emiliano Zapata’s peones were in arms in Morelos. King recalls being “vexed than alarmed by the turn of affairs” (King 76). Zapata’s entrance into the town with his army, described as an unconventional assembly of men, lacking discipline, and bearing obsolete weaponry, evoked in her a sense of connection to Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a key figure in Mexican Independence. The music of that night, “riotous, harsh and discordant”, resonated with the historical suffering and the nascent pursuit of justice. However, King, identifying as an Englishwoman, expresses that she feels glad that it is not “her Revolution” (King 64). This sentiment perhaps highlights a sense of detachment or even a veiled critique, given the complex and often violent nature of the Mexican Revolution.

King observes the simultaneous events of Madero’s presidential inauguration and the retaliatory raids led by Zapata’s forces. Although Zapata played a key role in ousting Díaz, Madero’s decision to appoint Figueroa instead of Zapata as governor of Morelos fueled Zapata’s subsequent disillusionment and further radicalized his

movement. She criticizes Madero's "weak hand and a vacillating will", which led him to alienate both Zapata and General Victoriano Huerta (88). Yet, despite her self-professed reluctance to engage in Mexican politics, she shelters Madero and his wife under the protection of her British flag when his life is threatened by Huerta. She later concedes Madero's selflessness and sincerity, qualities respected by Zapata, who remained the sole leader in arms against Huerta following Madero's imprisonment. When Huerta betrays Madero and orders his assassination, King expresses concern for her life as Huerta knew she had sheltered Madero, citing the need to protect her property as the reason for her inability to leave Cuernavaca. In a chance encounter with President Huerta, she receives the traditional *abrazo*, a gesture of close companionship in the form of an embrace, and finds herself unexpectedly relieved, portraying a humanistic view of Huerta. She questions her own motivations for accepting the *abrazo* from a man she recognizes as having brought misery to the nation through his treachery. Moreover, Huerta's actions created powerful enemies abroad, as U.S. President Woodrow Wilson refused to recognize his administration, viewing him as having gained power through Madero's murder (King 126).

Rosa King's *Tempest Over Mexico* and Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico* offer distinct perspectives on Madero's downfall, diverging in narrative style and emotional investment. King's memoir emphasizes immediacy and emotional resonance, shaped by her personal interactions with revolutionary figures like General Felipe Angeles. Her account functions as both a personal testimony and a historical record, providing a ground-level perspective on events. In contrast, West employs a more analytical and theoretical approach in *Survivors in Mexico*, framing 1960s Mexico within broader global political contexts (Arcé 2020). While acknowledging Madero's shortcomings as a "weak liberal", West highlights his commitment to social welfare, noting his investment of personal wealth in housing, schools, clinics, and meals for his workers and their children (West 196). However, West lays the blame for Madero's downfall primarily on the United States ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson, likening his interference in Mexican affairs to Hitler's pre-war tactics just before his annexation of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. West accuses Wilson of spreading misinformation and instigating unrest, ultimately influencing the U.S. President to deploy troops to

the Mexican border, further undermining Madero's authority. She condemns Wilson's subsequent silence regarding the torture and murder of Madero's brother, Gustavo, suggesting a deliberate disregard for Madero's safety.

Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico* (published posthumously in 2003) showcases a dynamic, dialectical style that defines much of her later work in life. Her approach to ideas, cultures, and histories is never static: instead of offering simple answers, she pits opposing forces against each other, exploring tensions without rushing to resolve them. This method reflects a kind of Hegelian dialectic—thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, but West's version is less formulaic, embracing ambiguity and complexity rather than neat conclusions. Through this lens, *Survivors in Mexico* becomes not just a travel narrative but a deeply feminist and postcolonial meditation on Mexico's tangled identities. At the heart of West's style is her instinct for juxtaposition. Throughout *Survivors in Mexico*, she stages encounters between Mexico's indigenous past and its colonial scars, between revolutionary ideals and social realities. For instance, West begins by celebrating Rivera's revolutionary passion as "Nobody ever worked harder than Diego Rivera to give the Mexican people a seed bed for their pride by reconstituting the Indian past, and he succeeded because his patriotism was a real passion." Yet almost immediately she pivots: the very building he endowed "suggests a section cut out of Wandsworth Jail", and its "grey blocks of stone" feel stripped of the "gorgeousness they were designed to display" (West 8–9). So, the dialectical insight can be seen when she places the loving intent ("religious experience" for the driver) beside the building's "funerary portals", West exposes a gap between revolutionary fervor and its architectural realization. She doesn't condemn Rivera; instead, she lets the contradiction stand as a testament to "the massive and generous error of this museum" (12).

When West arrives at Frida Kahlo's home that has been turned into a museum, she finds walls "blue as gentians, red as poppies", a riot of color that "sang" against the city's greys. But through the window she also glimpses decay— the "vegetation seemed not so much growing as reeling"—and learns of Kahlo's personal suffering: "the poor woman had it not. She was in an accident, and her foot was crushed" (West 12). The Blue House dazzles with revolutionary artifice as West's Mexican driver proudly said: Kahlo "gave and gave and gave without stint."

However, behind the brilliant façade lay loss and physical pain- “a creeping corruption” that no pigment can hide. Hélène Cixous, in her crucial feminist essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975), invites women to “write the body”, to record its plurality, its tensions, its very contradictions, rather than suppress them beneath a uniform voice. West’s narrative stance champions this dialectical insight by hovering between admiration for Kahlo’s creative spectacle and compassion for her tragedy. By refusing to collapse these into a single moral, she honors the complexity of Kahlo’s life. Instead of presenting a clear-cut moral or political narrative, she invites readers into the unresolved messiness of cultural survival. In this, West’s method resonates with Susan Morgan’s *Place Matters: Gendered Geography in Victorian Women’s Travel Writing* (1996), which argues that women travelers often use physical landscapes to interrogate larger cultural forces. Like the Victorian women Morgan studies, West treats Mexico not simply as a backdrop but as an active agent in her narrative, embodying historical tensions rather than smoothing them into a picturesque frame. Place, too, shapes her dialectics in ways Susan Morgan would recognize. West treats the Mexican landscape such as its markets, ruins, and plazas, not merely as scenery but as a field where history’s competing narratives collide. Her method resists the colonial tradition of rendering foreign spaces passive or picturesque; instead, the places themselves provoke critical reflection.

In *Survivors in Mexico*, West’s method plays out vividly in her treatment of Mexican muralism. She first admires Rivera’s ambition to craft a national identity rooted in indigenous pride. Yet, her dialectical eye quickly complicates this admiration: she notes how the murals simultaneously glorify and simplify indigenous lives, suggesting that they risk becoming another form of colonization - this time by revolutionary myth-making. West refuses the neat arcs of Graham Greene’s *The Power and the Glory* (1940), which ultimately seeks a kind of Christian redemption for Mexico’s violence and suffering — a clear arc from guilt to grace or the arc of Ralph Bates’s *The Fields of Paradise* (1941) which is more politically dogmatic, focusing on ideological battles between good and evil. Her Mexico remains a place of ongoing conflict and creative survival.

In this, she resembles Sybille Bedford, whose *A Visit to Don Otavio* (1953) captures Mexico’s contradictions with a lighter, impressionistic style. However,

West's analysis cuts deeper, blending Bedford's sense of multiplicity with Elaine Showalter's framework from *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), where the *Female* phase of feminist writing marks an autonomous and intellectually rigorous voice. In contrast to memoirists like Rosa E. King who emphasized emotional journeys over historical critique, West's travel writing insists that personal impressions must engage seriously with political and cultural realities. Ultimately, West's dialectical style is a feminist act. By refusing to resolve tensions into a single narrative, she resists the patriarchal habit of closure — the need to conquer or explain away the “other.” Following Cixous's call to “write the body” in “The Laugh of the Medusa” (Cixous 878), West writes from her full experience, one that acknowledges conflict, uncertainty, and multiple truths.

King's memoir corroborates the presence of U.S. elements inciting animosity between the two nations, yet she strategically avoids naming Wilson, possibly to preserve diplomatic relations. However, she also acknowledges the positive contributions of American marines in Vera Cruz, highlighting the potential for cooperation between the two republics. The contrast between King's emotionally charged narrative and West's analytical approach underscores the diverse ways in which female travel authors engage with the historical complexities surrounding Madero's downfall (Brenner 71). While King focuses on personal experiences and immediate observations based on first-hand experience, West adopts a broader, more critical lens, examining the political and diplomatic forces at play.

King laments that the original aims of the revolution have become obscured, with Huerta, now in power, seemingly catering to unscrupulous individuals, much like Porfirio Díaz. Despite the constant flux of governors and troops and the persistent threat of Zapatista raids, Bella Vista serves as King's imaginative crucible for observing Mexico. She reflects, “it seems to me that all the important and talented and charming figures of the epoch that was just closing had lingered under my roof” (King 135).

Upon finally meeting Huerta at his presidential residence to request passage back to Cuernavaca, King views him not only as a commander who has committed a grave sin but also as a leader supremely respected by his troops, a man of high political standing, yet ultimately alone, a state that ultimately undermined his

resolve. This portrayal reflects a humanistic, yet diplomatic perspective on the leaders of the era. Knowing them personally, King's commentary on the complex political landscape of Mexico is somewhat subdued. Ultimately, Bella Vista remains central to King's imaginative understanding of Mexico, a perspective that is challenged within her own memoir.

By prioritizing personal anecdotes over systemic political inquiry, the narrative risks obscuring the deeper structural forces at play. However, this choice also allows for a more intimate portrayal of lived experience, enhanced by sensory details such as the smell of the countryside and sounds in the little cobbled lanes, potentially resonating with a broader audience seeking a humanistic perspective and emotional engagement over a politically driven discourse in travel-narratives. Subverting conventional expectations of revolutionary memoirs, the account incorporates details of personal business ventures, notably the Bella Vista Hotel's thirty bathrooms, thereby highlighting King's entrepreneurial agency. This departure from standard historical narratives, which typically prioritize military or political affairs, offers a nuanced perspective by foregrounding the domestic sphere. Carl Thompson's observation in his text, *Travel Writing* (2011) highlights a key aspect of women's travel writing: the emphasis on domestic details and everyday living arrangements. This focus provides a unique lens through which female authors explore the lives of women in different cultures, addressing social roles, legal status, and cultural practices. By foregrounding these elements, women writers engage in a dialogue with 'the other' that often contrasts with conventional male narratives (Clarke 106). Moreover, what introduces a dramatic counterpoint is referencing King's participation in a perilous military retreat- an element not immediately apparent from the memoir's title thereby augmenting its perceived historical depth.

King's complex relationship with Cuernavaca challenges a straightforward interpretation of her 'female gaze' as purely colonial. While her initial connection to the town was undeniably tied to her business interests, her willingness to remain even after the destruction of her hotel and the severing of those ties suggests a deeper, more nuanced attachment. Her choice to stay and integrate herself with the Mexicans indicates a transformation in her perspective, complicating any definitive judgment of her motivations. This ambiguity, her resistance to providing a sense of

finality can be interpreted as a reflection of the evolving relationship between Mexico, the U.S. and the foreign expatriates within it.

Thus, Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico* reveals a complex spiritual stance marked by metaphysical rebellion, skepticism, and humanistic vitality, but not a conventional transformation, as Bernard Schweizer highlights in his introduction. West critiques divine benevolence, depicting Aztec gods as "hideous" reflections of human suffering (West xxi), and rejects spiritual renewal narratives embraced by contemporaries like D.H. Lawrence, instead celebrating Mexico's secular "life force" in vibrant imagery of bustling streets and markets (xi–xii). Her dialectical engagement with paradox, seen in her conflicted view of Cortés and her conclusion that "we develop by misunderstanding" (xxi), underscores a refined uncertainty, while her dismissal of magic, like her witty rejection of a mystic visit as "D.H. Lawrenced", reinforces rational humanism. This work deepens her lifelong anti-theistic skepticism rather than signaling a new faith, with its optimistic tone suggesting a subtle evolution within her secular worldview, contrasting with the darker *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (West xii).

Sybille Bedford, much like Rebecca West, distinguished herself through incisive legal reportage alongside her works of fiction. Her text, *The Trial of Dr. Adams* (1958) known in England as *The Best We Can Do*, offers a compelling, day-by-day narrative of the Dr. John Bodkin Adams trial, a notable cause célèbre involving accusations of murdering elderly patients for their inheritances ("Life" 2023). Bedford's *The Faces of Justice* (1961) presents a collection of trial reports and anecdotes, exploring the legal systems of England, Germany, Switzerland, France, and Austria in the 1950s. Written with a touch of irony, it reflects the often-extravagant nature of legal proceedings, the book has been utilized in law schools as an introduction to comparative law ("Life" 2023). It is interesting to note Bedford's multifaceted literary career, encompassing travel writing alongside her novels, like Graham Greene and Rebecca West.

In the introduction to the New York Review Books new edition of the travel-memoir, *A Visit to Don Otavio*, by Sybille Bedford, Bruce Chatwin underscores the purpose of Mrs. Bedford's travel to Mexico in 1946-1947 for eight months, the primary purpose being travel as a means of escape from "being cooped up in the

United States to which she- born German, and married British solely for the purpose of obtaining a passport to avoid deportation to Germany before the war-had fled, along with many other European scholars and writers' (Rollmann "The Mexican Journey"). She wanted "to be in a country with a long nasty history in the past and as little present history as possible" (Bedford 10). Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio* is structured in four parts, commencing with "In Search of a Journey", detailing her motivations for traveling to Mexico and the quotidian challenges encountered en route. These included logistical setbacks, such as train malfunctions, bureaucratic hurdles at US immigration and Mexican passport control. Bedford acknowledges her familiarity with Mexican history, cultivated through extensive reading, particularly drawing on Fanny Calderón de la Barca's *Life in Mexico* (1843) and William H. Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843). In contrast to D.H. Lawrence, a contemporary British writer who also explored Mexico, Bedford offers a divergent perspective. While Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent*, set in Chapala, is characterized by a focus on fear and violence, Bedford consciously rejects this approach. As she notes, Lawrence's portrayal reflected his subjective experience rather than an objective reality of Mexico, "He had to loathe those crowds in the bull ring, he had to be awed by the native ritual. But the reality, for better or worse, was Lawrence's rather than Mexico's ... It seemed portentous without good reason" (Bedford 31). Bedford's rejection of what she perceived as a Lawrentian approach involves a deliberate shift in focus towards a broader spectrum of human experience (Mermann-Jozwiak 101). In contrast to Lawrence's somber portrayals of indigenous Mexicans, whom he often depicted as enigmatic figures embodying both malevolence and power, Bedford adopts a more subtly critical stance. She shares an anecdote of her experience at Customs Inspection: Certain American spinsters have come to visit Mexico with the intention of spending their dollars on a huge loot of native arts and handicrafts, along with Mexican baskets, she says with wry humor, the inspection of these benefactresses' luggage can have no other purpose than using power on the temporarily powerless by the temporarily powerful. This anecdote subtly critiques the dynamics of power and privilege inherent in interactions between tourists and the local population, hinting at the subtle exercise of authority within seemingly benign encounters. Again, in this excerpt from the conversation between the narrator and a

Mexican officer humorously illustrates the complexities of identity and nationality in the Americas. The exchange begins with the officer asking where the narrator is from, leading to a back-and-forth interaction that highlights how terms like “America”, “North America”, and “Yankee” are understood differently depending on geographical and cultural contexts. The dialogue continues to dissect the distinctions between “North America” and “the United States”, with the officer emphasizing that in Mexico, “Estados Unidos Mexicanos” refers specifically to Mexico. The humor in this exchange arises from the interplay between rigid definitions and the complexities inherent in national identity (Bedford 45). The officer’s assertion that only individuals from the northern U.S. states can be considered “Yankees” exemplifies a constricted, localized interpretation of identity. This narrow perspective contrasts with broader understandings of national belonging, even though the dialogues seem like a light-hearted banter, it draws attention to the arbitrariness of borders in U.S.-Mexico along with the nature of national identities which are often fluid in the region. It is also relevant to note the myriad ways in which identity can be interpreted across different cultures, both as a personal construct as well as a category that is imposed upon the reader by the society.

Bedford’s *A Visit to Don Otavio*, defies easy categorization as simply a travel-memoir or an autobiographical novel. Bedford’s narrative intertwines personal experiences with historical reflections on Mexico. In Chapter Eight, “Cuernavaca”, she delves into the political landscape of 1860s Mexico, highlighting President Juárez’s anti-clerical reforms amidst foreign debt (Bedford 81). Napoleon III’s ambition to expand French influence, supported by the US, led him to offer the Mexican throne to Austrian Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg after the French conquest of Puebla and Mexico City. Bedford critically examines Napoleon’s motivations, noting his disregard for the mounting casualties among French conscripts and his offering of a crown that was not legitimately his to bestow. She suggests that Napoleon’s choice of Maximilian stemmed from familial aspirations, Maximilian’s marriage to Charlotte of Belgium, perceived support from England, and even rumors of Maximilian’s possible lineage as an illegitimate grandson of Napoleon I. While acknowledging Maximilian’s initial good intentions to govern Mexico peacefully, Bedford laments his ultimate failure to comprehend the country, a

sentiment reciprocated by the Mexican populace. His reign culminated in his execution three years later. Bedford encapsulates this historical episode as “a tragedy of misunderstanding, of the abyss between man and man; pitiful, often squalid, extraordinary only in the baroque detail and the vanity of everybody’s wishes” (Bedford 84-86). Through this poignant observation, Bedford transcends a mere historical recounting, transforming the narrative into a philosophical meditation on the human condition.

In the third part of her text, within the chapter titled “The Emperor Maximilian at Queretaro” Bedford offers a nuanced psychological portrait of Maximilian. Despite arriving with colonial intentions, Maximilian displayed progressive ideals, rejecting despotism and advocating for a paternalistic relationship between ruler and subjects (Bedford 84). However, the withdrawal of French financial and military support precipitated a crisis. Instead of fleeing, Maximilian chose to remain and defend his position, while his wife sought aid in Europe. Meanwhile, Juárez mobilized a popular army, ultimately retaking Mexico (270). Bedford’s narrative style is characterized by its immersive detail and attempts at impartiality. She delves into Maximilian’s internal struggles during this tumultuous period, questioning his motivations for staying despite the overwhelming odds. Similarly, she probes the motivations of Juárez, exploring his reasons for denying clemency to Maximilian, despite international pressure to spare his life (Bedford 275). By examining the psychology of these key figures, Bedford invites readers to consider the broader implications of this historical drama on the Mexican psyche. What does this intricate interplay of motivations, decisions, and consequences reveal about the complexities of Mexican identity, political ideology, and the enduring legacy of colonialism? (268-277)

Turning the reader’s critical gaze to the chapter, “Money and Tarrascan Indians”, would uncover Bedford’s attempts to portray the native Indians of Tarrasco with sympathy. Even though it aims to subvert dominant colonial narratives, it ironically reinforces the very stereotypes it seeks to dismantle. She writes, they are “not acquisitive; their interest in power is sporadic and slight, their sense of identity undeveloped; they are not much attached to anything, including their own lives” (Bedford 115) and here the narrator inadvertently echoes colonial tropes that depict

indigenous people as lacking ambition, agency, and even a strong sense of identity. This seemingly sympathetic portrayal risks essentializing the Tarrascan people, reducing them to a set of supposedly inherent characteristics rather than acknowledging the complex social, economic, and historical factors that shape their lives. Bedford aimed to highlight the community's resistance to Western materialism, however it is impossible to negate her problematic narrative that exoticizes and would treat native Indians as infants. Bedford's reflections reveal a nascent engagement with themes that would later be central to post-colonial thought. Her questioning, "Is it a happy life?... It is ungracious to answer such questions for others", reflects a discomfort with imposing external judgments on another culture (Lipski 18). This sentiment, coupled with her admission, "In this encroached and interlocking world one has to ask, and perhaps not stay for the answers. What can I ever know about the Tarrascan Indians?" (Bedford 115) encapsulates the limitations of cross-cultural understanding and the ethical dilemmas inherent in representing the experiences of others (Mermann-Jozwiak 37). She acknowledges the power dynamics at play and the inherent difficulty in truly knowing or speaking for a group so different from herself. This questioning stance, framed within her "post-Victorian manner of speaking", foreshadows later critiques of colonial discourse and the complexities of intercultural encounters (Matthew and Oudijk 2008).

Bedford's imaginative engagement with Mexico takes shape through her encounters at Don Otavio's Hacienda San Pedro, situated on the shores of Lake Chapala. In Bedford's narrative, Don Otavio's family, having navigated the turbulent decades of wars and revolutions, maintains a precarious hold on their land and wealth. The extended family, depicted as ambitious and opportunistic, engages in Machiavellian schemes to transform their property into a modern hotel resort. This central plot is further complicated by the presence of a diverse cast of characters, including "arrogant, know-it-all British colonial ex-pats; iconoclastic German settlers; descendants of American Confederates", and local servants embroiled in adulterous affairs that frequently escalate into violence (Bedford 148-179). Don Otavio himself, a "gentle and generous host", seems more interested in the escapism of "American fashion magazines" than the familial intrigues surrounding him (Bedford 129-132). This section of Bedford's work evokes the atmosphere of a

novel, characterized by richly developed characters and humorously dramatic plotlines. Bedford and her companions shift between detached observation and active participation in the unfolding events. Bedford's approach to travel writing in this segment is reminiscent of an era before the world wars.

The chapter with its theme undertakes to examine the travelogue, *The Lawless Roads* (1939) and the novel, *The Power and the Glory* (1940) by Graham Greene from the lens of postcolonialism and cultural studies in order to know how Mexico informed his creative preoccupations. The concepts of otherness and identity in postcolonial theory and the notion of experience and lived life in cultural studies would be central to this chapter as the reader analyzes the impact of the writers' British identity on their representation of Mexican people and culture. Moreover, it would also draw attention to the British gaze, the authors are never without, as they construct Mexican characters in the travelogues and novels, along with their own creative and fictional personae. It would be crucial to study the authors' perception of the native Mexicans as they themselves grapple with a Eurocentric point of view as well as a subjective understanding of British and Mexican history, politics, and culture. Norman Sherry, the biographer of Graham Greene in his book *The Life of Graham Greene, Volume I, 1904-1939* (2004), writes, "as early as May 1936 he was considering another travel book, based this time in Mexico and dealing with the Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church" (Sherry 606). By December 1937, the magazine, *Night and Day*, for which Greene had been the literary editor, had sunk, and he had been battling a creative block as his novel, *Brighton Rock* was coming along. In this magazine, he had critically reviewed the film, 'Wee Willie Winkie' (1937), an adaptation of a story by Rudyard Kipling, which starred the child star Shirley Temple as she tried to broker peace between the Indian mutinous rebels and the British army in India. Greene made a controversial statement in this review, where he discussed the prurient appeal Miss Temple held over the middle-aged men in England, which led to 20th century Fox and Temple's lawyers to sue him for libel. Even though Norman Sherry denies the fact that traveling to Mexico was a way for Greene to escape a prison sentence, "the libel case did not come up until March 1938 and Greene left for Mexico at the end of January 1938" (Sherry 656), critics argue that he was forewarned of the imminent danger by friends and hence fled to Mexico

where there was no danger of being deported. Yet another major reason for the travel was to examine the effect of the socialist, state led persecution against religion in Mexico. Greene was a staunch, practicing Catholic and Mexico, still reeling from the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, provided a promising landscape to study the age-old theme of religion versus atheism (655). With the second world war looming large over Britain's horizon, the European political atmosphere grew grave with the rise of nazis in Germany and Mussolini in Italy. The journey to Mexico would not only provide him interesting subject material to act as an imaginative crucible, but also help him escape the unsettling atmosphere of tension in Europe, an 'other' place – in Casey Blanton's phrase, an "antidote" (Blanton 21) to the drabness of existence in England. This antidote seems to be found primarily in the Catholic faith. As a result of this trip to Mexico, Greene produced a travel book, namely, *Lawless Roads*, and a novel, *The Power and the Glory*, both of whom would be discussed in this chapter in the context of postcolonial criticism and cultural studies.

Even though Mexico had never been a colony of England, Mexico was a colony of Spain until its independence in 1821. In that regard, Greene's position as an observer and his colonial identity becomes imperative to the study with respect to his Eurocentric values. To deconstruct the colonial narrative, where the colonized is often relegated to the position of 'the other', the process of meaning making becomes all the more important as, not only the notion of assumed superiority needs to be challenged, but the marginalized narratives need to be recovered. Hence, the space where the genres of travel writing and postcolonial criticism overlap is critical to examine the power dynamics in the cross-cultural exchanges between the West and the non-Europeans in which language is often the tool of power at the hands of the West as it aims to demonize/exoticize 'the other'. Peter Barry identifies Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as one of the pioneer texts to introduce postcolonial criticism in which he defines Orientalism as "a particular and long-standing way of identifying the East as 'Other' and inferior to the West" (Barry 67). For the western explorers, colonial missionaries, or the authors and tourists, the decisions of oriental people are often influenced by their unconscious emotions, or a result of their race, rather than being governed by their reasoning faculties making it easier for the former to classify/represent the oriental people as just "anonymous masses rather

than individuals” with singular identities and perspectives (186-87). In a talk that was originally delivered at TED Global in July 2009, the Nigerian novelist and writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns against the dangers of presenting a single story regarding one country and its people in the narrative of a more powerful and wealthy country, that not only gives rise to and furthers stereotypical identity but also makes limits the multi-faceted nature of truth. She backs up her speech by confiding an instance where she was so taken in by the media coverage of the issue of immigration between Mexico and the United States that she was shocked to find people in Mexico, during a visit to Guadalajara, on any normal day, at work, smoking and laughing, rather than busy being the “abject immigrant” as they were portrayed to be (Adichie). The portrayal of Mexican individuals often hinges on their perceived group identity, a tendency less pronounced in representations of Spanish or English subjects. A critical point of divergence lies in the criteria applied to judge individuals from different cultural backgrounds. While transgressions by Spanish or European figures may be attributed to individual failings or framed as exceptions to a generalized collective image, similar deviations by Mexican individuals are frequently interpreted as symptomatic of broader social deficiencies or cultural malaise. This tendency to extrapolate from the individual to the collective, particularly in the context of perceived “deficiencies”, warrants careful interrogation when analyzing the perspective of the colonial traveler. Such a mode of analysis risks essentializing cultural identity and perpetuating skewed representations (Mustofa et al. 29). Amidst the broad crust of postcolonialism, the travel narratives and novels will be surveyed with the conceptual lenses of identity and otherness. In the preface to the book, *The Ethics of Identity* (2005), Kwame Anthony Appiah posits the concept of ‘self’ as it is responsible to create itself and the self that is formed as it encounters the communities around us, for Appiah, both cannot be separated from one another (Appiah 47). Thus, identities lie at the heart of the demanding struggle between our individual and collective identities.

Casey Blanton, in her 2002 text *Travel Writing and the Self*, deliberates on how travel writing is found on the “complex interplay between self and world” (Blanton 19); a harmonious balance allying them both was upended in the modern age that resulted in a relentless yet futile quest to reconstruct the fragmented, once

whole self. The onus was now upon the self to provide meaning to the world where the traveler was “freed from the essential certainties of self and other” (22). Nonetheless, the self, occupies a focal position in travel writing, and one of the capital issues in travel writing is interrelation between the self and the other. Hence the concept of otherness must be explored as the reader analyzes ‘his/her own self’, in particular the ‘Mexican otherness’ as is realized and rendered by Graham Greene through his perspective and memories in *The Lawless Roads* and *The Power and the Glory*.

In *Lawless Roads*, Greene details his journey to two states in Mexico in 1938, namely Tabasco and Chiapas, where the persecution of the church was at its strongest. This travel reportage in turn proved to be a decisive influence in developing his powerful Catholic novel, *The Power and the Glory*. Not only his motive was to study the apparent religious apathy in those states, but also as an acknowledgement of the same at his home country, England. Parsing through *The Lawless Roads* that begins with an epigraph from Cardinal Newman, the reader learns:

The corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle’s words, ‘having no hope, and without God in the world’ – all this is a vision to dizzy and appal; ... if there be a God, since there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. (Greene 19)

The race here refers to the whole western civilization, as it was the at the calamitous brink of yet another world war, losing its illusion of supremacy as a colonial power, was as if ‘without God in the world’. And by ‘the world’, he must mean the contemporary world where a religious corruption has taken over the modern western society. Hope could only come in the form of faith, not as a tool for surviving in after-life as it connotes for Newman, but as a mechanism to survive the present, worldly life (Dannatt 59).

In *The Lawless Roads*, it is important to note that the personality of Greene himself shines through his narration as a reporter in first person, the author is the protagonist of the work as he leads the readers on his Mexican voyage. On the other hand, in *The Power and the Glory*, the novel unfolds in the narrative voice of a

Mexican ‘whiskey priest’, a brilliantly evolved, yet flawed character who holds onto his religious duty toward the people as strongly as the forced secularization of the people by the state. The physical travails that Greene experiences during his journey in *The Lawless Roads* are described in a realistic detail along with his spiritual and moral turmoil as he comes to realize the division between the Catholic faith of the Mexican Indians and that of himself. In the violent, puritanical state of Mexico, in *The Lawless Roads*, he seeks awareness of his own modern self as much as he wants to document the state of faith in Mexico, is where he finds the characters which he would later flesh out in his profound work of fiction, *The Power and the Glory*. In *The Power and the Glory*, the indigenous priest is regularly in the habit of drinking and is conflicted in his faith toward God even as he performs his duty toward his fellow men. The only way to reconcile the love he feels for them both is to die, and his martyrdom, becomes a metaphor of championing Catholic faith at the face of Mexican military violence and religious inertness of the Western society. Even though *The Power and the Glory* does not have Greene as its narrator, “the author makes himself visible by slips of conscience that may be identified in the tone, perception, and point of view of the priest” (Krauer 23). His insights here would point relevantly to the narrator’s involved self and its exposure. After Greene returned from West Africa in 1937, he mentions in his biography *Ways of Escape* (1980), about the different formal ways in which he practiced Catholicism, he went to the Mass every Sunday, went to confession every month, and read a lot of theology (Greene 58-9). But, Greene’s 1938 journey to Mexico caused a crucial change in his perspective, and the perceived limitations of bourgeois Catholicism of his London suburb is expressed in *The Lawless Roads* as well in *The Power and the Glory*, “Mass in Chelsea seemed curiously fictitious: no peon knelt with his arms out in the attitude of the cross, no woman dragged herself up the aisle on her knees” (Greene *The Lawless Roads* 189). The 1930s is important historically for Greene, as he was a witness to the socialist persecution of religion in Mexico as well as General Franco’s attack on Republican Spain (Greene 22). By asserting that religion was inextricably linked to the contemporary existence, these events acted as a challenge to synthesize Greene’s personal faith and professional endeavors, a demand that would significantly shape his later works. In Mexico, Greene observed that

Catholicism was preserved through the suffering endured by the peasant class, who viewed their faith and allegiance to the priesthood as a means of experiencing God's active presence in their lives. This dynamic contributed to Greene's own spiritual transformation. Greene can witness the changes that were brought upon his body by Catholicism, yet he never severed his ties from Socialism. This serves two purposes: one, when he criticizes the shallow middle-class religiosity prevalent in Chelsea's Catholic community, he wishes to go beyond the moral boundaries of his marriage to Vivienne that would act confining. That resulted in Greene indulging in multiple affairs, and was separated from his wife and children even though he continued to attend Mass, but would not partake of Communion. *The Power and the Glory* may allude to this dynamic through Mr. Tench, the dentist's estrangement from his wife. Similarly, in *The Quiet American*, Fowler's troubled relationship with his Anglo-Catholic wife mirrors Greene's own marital experiences. The second point is that Greene the author's spiritual growth occurs when he realizes that one cannot always choose a side; he was a Catholic, yet he believed in socialism, and hence the creation of a Catholic Mexican Priest protagonist- Socialist Police Lieutenant (antagonist) would hinge on the fulcrum of an authorial balance where he would be on neither sides yet would be in each of them. The protagonist of *The Power and the Glory* embodies Greene's exploration of grace and redemption in a morally ambiguous modern world. The priest, burdened by both real and imagined sins, undertakes a journey of self-discovery in the novel, learning to temper judgment with compassion. His transformation, from a pompous young cleric to a man capable of extending kindness even in the face of death, reflects Greene's belief in the power of human connection and the enduring relevance of faith. Therefore, it can be safely said that something of Greene appears in the Whiskey Priest, as the only functioning priest, and in his executioner, the Police Lieutenant. Thus, an author's travel experiences act as an opportunity for self-discovery and a more profound comprehension of identity by discovering the ways in which power dynamics influence perceptions of self and the other (Juall 14).

As Greene offers his point of view on the Mexican landscape, the political scenario, the religious persecution in the travelogue, it is relevant to note that it is here the reader meets not only Greene the narrator but also Greene the colonial

observer. Through his feelings of wariness, apprehension, and even hatred, of the place and the people, the position of Mexican Indians as ‘the non-European other’ in his narrative becomes evident. Mexico has never been a colony of England, yet Greene betrays his colonial gaze as he finds the Mexicans’ character “duplicitous” (Greene 48) meaning Western through mimicry and indigenous by birth and soul. The Western hegemonic discourse is founded on highlighting the differences in the bodies of the colonizer and the colonized to stereotype the post-colonial subject as primitive, subordinate, ‘the negative other’. In the introduction to the part X, “The Body and Performance” of *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, which is a foundational study of postcolonialism evident in writings and documents by Bill Ashcroft, it is noted how the body of the oppressed is a symbol of subjugation and dominance over its culture and identity, and yet it paradoxically carries the power to challenge and dismantle the dominant colonial discourse. The authors observe: “The ‘*difference*’ of the post-colonial subject by which s/he can be ‘othered’ is felt most directly and immediately in the way in which the superficial differences of the body and voice (skin color, eye shape, hair, texture, body shape, language, dialect or accent) are read as indelible signs of the natural inferiority of their possessor” (Ashcroft et al.321). The post-colonial critic Franz Fanon talks about the same in his seminal work, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1968) and explores the relation between black and white man, by addressing the delusion of superiority entertained by the white men over the man of color, and the questionable fervor with which the black man wishes to prove his intellectual equality to the white man. The Antillean Negro rejects his native language, Creole, in favor of speaking French to assimilate himself with the civilized and cultured, white European man. His discomfiture with the color of his body, his dialect, and conscious denial of his Black identity lays bare, the outcome of the rupture that has occurred in his psyche. Fanon is conscious of the power of language and color, and terms this self-chosen alienation of the black man as an example of this rupture that has resulted in a neurotic behavior until he frees himself from the “arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment (Fanon 30). These aspects are also detectable in Greene’s description of the Mexicans.

In *The Lawless Roads*, Greene identifies Europeans as congenial and affable; despite losing her farm in the Revolution, an elderly Scotswoman he encountered in Mexico was hospitable, “independent, outspoken, Protestant, she was a pillar of common sense among wild, shifting fanaticisms” (Greene 46). As Greene lands in Tabasco, enroute to the capital Villahermosa on a stuffy boat, he meets an American character, Dr. Winter, who would go on to become Dr. Tench in Greene’s novel *The Power and the Glory*. The character was on his way to see a British man, Dr. Fitzpatrick, whom the reader has met in *The Lawless Roads* and Greene extols the family pride which has rescued Dr. Fitzpatrick from a complete assimilation with Mexico, where he has lived all his life. The opinion that he needs to be saved from being assimilated into Mexico, speaks of his suspicion of Mexicans. He also meets and develops an intense dislike of the chief of the police in Villahermosa, and his men, all of whom enhance the novel by being transformed as characters in it. On the other hand, a German farmer, and his sister he met, on his way out of seeing the ruins at Palenque, and another kind Norwegian woman at Yajalon, Fru Rasmussen, are all instances where Greene presents his fellow Europeans in a positive light. In comparison to “a land where you grow weary of black and oily hair and sentimental eyes”, Fru R.’s two daughters, “two thin little blonde girls” were “startlingly beautiful”, a welcome deviation. (Greene 151). As he arrives at Guadalupe to visit the eighteenth-century church of “The dark-skinned Indian Virgin” (86-90), he recounts the legend in which an Indian peasant, was disbelieved by the Spanish Bishop Zumarraga, when he recounted that the Goddess had presented herself before him. The incredulity was because the vision had appeared before the conquered Indian than one among the Spanish conquerors. This was in 1531, ten years since the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish Conquistador, Cortes. Examining the authorial attitude would lead us to note that the Indian peasant has no name, but a Spanish bishop is named, which could be a form of othering, where indigenous characters lack the depth given to colonizers or those in power, potentially reinforcing stereotypes.

And yet Greene, here challenges his own position as a colonial observer by subtly criticizing, an Old Spanish lady, Senora B’s skepticism as she was showing him around. Her inability to accept the vision was not because it appeared fantastical,

but because it appeared “to the conqueror and not to the peasant, to the grown mind and not to the child’s”. Drawing a parallel to the present- day Catholics who harbor skepticism of the vision because this was a dark-skinned Goddess, he subverts the Western hegemonic belief that “race is an attribute of the spirit as well as of the flesh” (Greene 88). Later, when he is visiting the ruins of Mitla, exhausted on muleback for four days and suffering from dysentery, he gives away the colonial gaze as his eyes scan the fresco work on walls laden with “gas-masks, tanks, and guns of a yet un-invented horror ... the underground burial chambers we held candles to faint traces of blood-red paint”, he says, “With whatever ferocity the Conquistadors fought, the faith they brought with them ... was more human than this (Greene 198). One could definitely argue that given the sickness, and the conditions of his travel and stay, must have had to contribute to the rancorous tone of the travel-book, because in the sixth chapter, “The Godless State”, he is waiting for a plane to fly to Salto, this is his last night in Villahermosa, and he confesses, he has never been more aware of hate all the time in any other country, where the embrace of friendship is not a warm gesture rather a mechanism to protect oneself from being gunned down by the other friend” (127), and hence to cope, he declares, “one did want, I found, an English book in this hating and hateful country” (128-29).

Helen Carr’s essay, “Modernism and Travel” (2002), that telescopes travel writing in the years 1880 to 1940, illuminates the aspect where the colonial subjects were often described using animal imagery in European travel narratives. Though her immediate frame of reference is how the same imagery is used for to portray “hapless American tourists” (Greene 45), it cannot be ignored that the original usage intended to fortress the cultural identity of the West by differentiating the exotic, sensual, the savage ‘other’ from the West. The sluggish train ride from Oaxaca to Puebla, amidst bouts of dysentery and evident boredom leads him to note “the hideous inexpressiveness of brown eyes” and when he is back in the Mexico City, a thin and dark Mexican waiter at his hotel, who tries to watch the author undress, is described as “a small vicious shadow waited, with the patience of a snake” (Greene 206); he goes on: General Cedillo “swelled out indignantly like a bull-frog”, the Mexican beggars are like “mangy animals in a neglected zoo”, “the animal faces of the men” in the police station in Villahermosa. Greene sees the capability of the

Mexicans to resort to violence often, but he also admits that the notion of cruelty exists in human nature, be it at “the Tottenham Court Road, in a London Park, at Huichapan” (63).

Greene in *Lawless Roads*, in the garb of a white, male modern author gazes with distrust and suspicion at “an untrustworthy mestizo face” (25), at “the brown impassive sentimental Mexican eyes” (207), on the ship to Frontera from Veracruz, he describes Doc Winter’s “mestizo wife and two blond washed-out little boys with transparent eyelids and heavy brown Mexican eyes”, (108) “dumb, brown eyes of Mexicans” (117), “dark, hostile gaze and unfriendly eyes of Mexican students” (188). The use of such epithets to define the physical appearance is reductive, it diminishes the native Mexican to a primal being, a mere body that is at the mercy of his instincts, and unable to restrain his emotions or betrayed none. Even if *The Power and the Glory* widens the imaginative scope of *The Lawless Roads*, it retains the perception evoked in the Englishman by the Mexican eyes which were a measure of their savagery, sensual nature, or fatalistic nature. Thus, instances are found where he underscores the “stupid, brown eyes” of a child who had come to fetch Dr. Tench for his ailing mother, that “expressed no emotion”, the men in the police were “small men with black secret Indian eyes”, the little girls to whom their Catholic mother read stories about a young martyr Juan, had “eyes large and brown and pious”, the eagerness and patience in the heavy brown eyes of a boy who stared sullenly back at the police lieutenant (Greene *Lawless Roads* 45, 78, 102). In postcolonial theory, the term ‘gaze’ highlights the existing power disparity in terms of colonial scrutiny on the object of the gaze, and the choice of representing the latter, to the point of altering how they are perceived by the rest of the globe. Gender relations are central to the postcolonial discourse as well; the colonial narrative achieves authorization and sustenance by determining and solidifying the distance between the white, male author and the native Mexican women. Greene in his travel journal, contrasts the white, “self-conscious young American girls” (in a meeting at San Antonio where a settlement was being discussed between workers and employers regarding wages) with the “dark sensual confident faces of the half-castes, who knew... all the beauty and the horror of the flesh” (Greene 28). Half-castes refer to the population of mestizos, or of the mixed parentage (Spanish-Indian). This constitutes hybridity in

postcolonialism, where hybrids are considered unworthy of trust or any responsibility they are offered. Little later he has been to visit the ruins at Palenque, and has dozed off from exhaustion due to the mule ride, as he finds his guide and an Indian looking down at him, troubled. The fact that his guide feels some responsibility toward Greene astonishes him because he essentializes the Mexicans as bereft of any sense of obligation. As they help him to a hut and a hammock, “a young Indian girl with big silver ear-rings and a happy sensual face began to make corn coffee (141-42). Such categorization of the Indian women as creatures of passion is what Edward Said refers to as the Western gaze in his groundbreaking text, *Orientalism* (Said 188). Said also puts light on the stereotypical presentation of the Arabs in modern Western cinema and literature as dishonest, lecherous, and violent. Greene divulges his belief in the Western cultural hegemony when he depicts the Mexicans as prone to violence and bestiality, an instance in his travelogue is the murder of little girl by the Orizaba police for attending a Sunday Mass, these “sudden inexplicable outbursts of brutality common in Mexico ... (as) some emanation from the evil Aztec soil (Greene 94). Another encounter with a bootblack boy, who was only partly Mexican, and had the look of a European by virtue of his blonde hair and transparent skin, causes him to pay double than what he usually does to a Mexican boy (Greene 122-123).

But what problematizes the reading of Greene as a colonial author is his attempt throughout the travelogue and novel, to acknowledge his limitations in perceiving Mexico as an English travel writer. One cannot refute his feelings of animosity toward the Mexicans in the discussed statements, but the reader also needs to keep in mind that his sickness during the journey and the hectic nature of the travel might have compounded it. His empathy with the Mexicans becomes evident in certain occurrences, he favors the reserved displays of affection by the lovers in a park at Monterrey, to the immodesty of performing acts of passion in public view at Hyde Park. Though one could argue that, Greene’s preference here is less an approval of the Mexicans’ social etiquette, than an endorsement of the Catholic religion where “the marriage bed was the accepted end” (Greene 41). On another instance when he visits the church of the Virgin of Guadalupe, he insists that the legend of the vision appearing to an Indian peasant instead of his Spanish conqueror, was not a story concocted by the Church as a means of controlling the Indian mind,

rather it was a proof that showed Indians are no less equal in the eyes of God, than their rulers. Surely it would have led to the creation of a much elaborate shrine, had it appeared before one of the Spanish adventurers, according to Greene, but they would not have been able to safeguard the shrine, as more pressing events such as politics or war would have taken hold over their minds. It was the Indians who fought for their altar when the forces of Garrido Canabal (the dictator of Tabasco) threatened to destroy it during the anti-clerical persecution, and the chapel stood resilient, that was not only a triumph of the Indians' simple faith, but also aided the downfall of the dictator (Greene 87).

This chapter aims to address the research gap in modern British writers and their imaginative engagement with Mexico, and it is telling to move our focal point to the novelist, Ralph Bates, who has been surprisingly undervalued. A brief glance into his early life history would arm us with the knowledge that during late 1920s, Bates was energetically involved in trade union activism in the docks of Catalonia. Apart from politics, what made him work as a seaman in Spain, was that his great grandfather had once owned a Spanish steamer and was buried at Cadiz. This is crucial in our understanding of his creative liaison with Mexico for twofold reasons: his long conversations with Spanish peasants and first-hand experience with Spanish working class would enthuse powerful realism into his oeuvre of his Spanish fiction and short story collections. Secondly, it is with the proficiency of Spanish language that he would visit Mexico, during the 1937 Spanish Civil War (between the Nationalists led by the fascist leader, General Franco, and the Spanish Republic when he was commissioned by the Communist Party to travel to the US to gather financial assistance for the Spanish Republican Army. He spent seven months in Mexico, traveling in the rural regions to the south of Mexico City, and would revisit the country in 1939 for seven months again, when Franco's army won against the Republic. During his two visits, he would write a Mexican novel, *The Fields of Paradise* (1941), a travel essay named "Conversations in Mexico", and a novella, *The Burning Corn* (1939).

Bates was conscious of the creative works of other British contemporary writers on Mexico, and it is impossible to study his Mexican works without considering his role as a privileged, white, colonial man. But his long stay in rural

Spain and his knowledge of the Spanish language provides him an opportunity to approach the situation of the landless, poor Indian peasants with more humaneness and empathy. While his British contemporaries were struck by “the remoteness or the intense sadness of the Indian face that has suggested to visitors that the race is mourning its overthrown splendors and its disgraced gods”, Bates construes the melancholy of the voice and the eyes as a repercussion of centuries of neglect, and betrayal, by the capitalists in the Diaz regime, “the gringo, the gachupin, and the inglés (who) were allowed to buy the country and build its major industries” (Bates 394-99). *The Fields of Paradise* is a testament to the spirit of revolution in the heart of Indian peasants in Mexico, at the wake of the land reform movement in Mexican Revolution by President Lázaro Cárdenas, who was in term from 1934-1940. The ‘ejido system’, or the communal farmlands distributed by the Mexican state to the Indian peasants, was for Bates, “the sign of new faith” for Mexico’s future, and, a symbol of hope, economic progress and social change. This new faith, was more challenging to deliver, than the old form of faith which consisted of the church and its leaders, because the new faith had “to animate, invigorate, and educate the dispirited and illiterate dispossessed” peasants, while the older one, had as its task “to practice charity and counsel resignation, and so to bring the Indians down to the valley lands which were not theirs” (Bates 400). In the travel essay, “Conversations in Mexico”, he expresses his dejection at the pathetic condition of the Mexican Indian peasants, a shepherd he asks guidance for, turns out to be an Indian beggar boy, another taken as a prisoner because he had shot a political leader, who used to drain salt water into the valley, being fully aware that it would ruin the peasant’s patch of land, the lack of basic health care facilities for an Indian peasant who had got in a terrible car accident, or yet another peasant who lay dead as other drivers drove by his corpse, hooting, but never stopping to call an ambulance. In the essay, “The Mexican Campaign of Ralph Bates”, by Ronald Walker, an earlier version of which had originally appeared as an appendix in his book, *Infernal Paradise: Mexico and the Modern English Novel* (1978), the scholar talks about how, “for Bates, the Indian—that crucial index to the foreign observer’s sensibility—is not an inscrutable being who embodies the nightmare of violent revenge for ancient wrongs, but a contemporary social problem” that is of stolen lands (Walker 351). In the above

essay, Walker also gives an insight as to the reasons that led Bates to his Mexican creative crucible, “In a letter to me, written in June 1976, Bates says that his “total dissent from the official Stalinist view of revolution and long conversations with Mexican and Spanish ‘peasantry’ [were] what prompted me to write *The Fields*. . . . [The novel was] an effort to make distinctions between a natural personal rebellion and revolutions proceeding according to doctrines and creeds” (Walker 457). *The Fields of Paradise* assesses the present-day circumstances in Mexico as Lazaro Cardenas is the President in the capital, Mexico City. The plot condenses the time from the Porfirio Diaz regime to the present day into a couple of months, as a sugarcane hacienda in a small sub-tropical village, San Lorenzo act as a microcosm of the social and economic conflicts at the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution. As the wealthy landowner, Epigmenio Rosas stays in the far away capital, the estate is run by his nephew, Sulpicio Rosas in a feudal manner where the laborers are bound to the patron through debt-peonage. Sulpicio Rosas is portrayed as reckless, and egotistical, and would run away at a faint whiff of rebellion among the villagers, had it not been for the domineering and ruthless, Braulio Acosta, who has had the rein of control over the peasants over the years as the judge, the president of the municipality, and commander of the Agrarian Reserve Forces. Acosta had led the army during the Revolution at the behest of Don Epigmenio when the revolutionaries joined hands to end the authoritarian rule of Diaz. If the Indians were to join their army, they would get their lands back after the Revolution was a success. The poor peasants mistook it as Don Epigmenio’s word, “into thinking they were serving the cause they were stupid enough to believe was theirs” and after Diaz was overthrown, Don Epigmenio gave a few useless fields away and left others without any land at all” (Bates 333). Instead of standing up for themselves, they went back to work on the hacienda as before. This sign of resignation, a want of will to put up a fight for what is rightfully theirs, is what concerns Bates,

They had been deceived so many times, yes. When during the long years of Acosta’s rule, they had murmured among themselves, sullenly thinking of liberation, their courage had failed them... glancing out of sullen eyes at other submissive eyes through the

canes, they had thought of their families and had been cowed, cheated of their manhood by their paternity. (Bates 171-72)

But their courage was not inexistent, they were not cowards. In his travel essay, "Conversations in Mexico", he shares such a real-life instance in a congress of peasants at Mexico City he had attended. The villagers from Penjamo, were facing dissent from the conservative peasants who preferred wage labor to the ejido initiative. All these peasants were strategically chosen to be a part of the Agrarian Reserve Forces, by "a local Cristero, or reactionary gunman, (who) had obtained the help of a corrupt military commander and had had himself made chief of the Agrarian Reserve" (Bates 405). One can trace the imaginative influence of the essay on the Mexican novel, this corrupt commander has been recreated as Braulio Acosta, who also removes any voice of protest against him by getting the rebels murdered or putting them into prison. Such a voice of protest is the protagonist of the novel, Felipe Mantanzas, who ignites the fire of rebellion in the hearts of his fellow prisoners, and later in San Lorenzo, when he is prisoned because he dared to have a laugh at the rulers of the village. A firework maker by profession, he is not local to the village though a native Mexican, lives as a nomad, is portrayed as a merry person, but if he is done any wrong, can as well seek vengeance.

The character of Felipe, is often compared to the nameless whiskey-priest in Graham Greene's Mexican novel, *The Power and the Glory*. Ronald Walker, in his research article, "The Mexican Campaign of Ralph Bates" (2021) contrasts *The Fields* with other contemporary British novels namely Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* and Greene's *The Power and the Glory*. The whiskey priest is also a native Mexican as Felipe and is sought by law, fleeing from justice (It is revealed at the beginning of the story that Felipe has murdered a ruthless supervisor in a fit of rage). That is unlike *The Plumed Serpent*, where Kate Leslie, an Irish woman acts as the main character to mediate between the happenings in Mexico and the reader of the novel. The creative placement of the love story between Felipe and an Indian girl, Candelaria, just as the rebellion begins in San Lorenzo coincides with the blooming of romance between Kate and the Mexican General, Don Cipriano, as the native Mexican Gods rise in Mexico overthrowing the Christian Gods in *The Plumed Serpent*. Another point of comparison is the prison scene in both Greene's *The Power*

and the Glory, and Bates' *The Fields of Paradise*, in the moral poverty, sin, and collective grief of men, do Felipe and the whiskey priest tap into the "a greater awareness on the (their) part of the essential bond between people entrapped in the world's prison-house" (Bates 203). But Bates disagrees with Greene on an ideological standpoint, regarding the Catholic Church and its approach to the Indians who resorted to violence during the Mexican Revolution. Greene's unnamed priest believes that the worldly suffering and poverty of the underprivileged would grant them humility as they receive God's grace, the humility bereft of which, and possessor of material wealth, would have made the poor arrogant and hence, unworthy of the genuine affection of God. Bates sees this romanticized faith as a flaw, and enquires the validity of such faith that would as well allow the poor to perish in poverty than attempting to help them find their voice and give them a cause to fight fair. Thus, he crafts a character arch of Canon Mendoza, a reactionary prelate from the state capital; though sympathetic to the hardships of the Indian peasants, he cannot see any point in an eye for an eye in the Revolution that would make the world go blind. Felipe has broken out of jail with his fellow prisoners, as the peasants have gathered at Church for Mass celebrating the year's harvest and a fight ensues during which Acosta and Sulpicio Rosas have taken shelter and held hostage in a tavern named 'I am Laughing'. As more and more peasants join in arms to surround the tavern, Felipe and his friend, Arturo seek the Church's support in which the well-to-do have sought refuge. Heated debates ensue, and Mendoza attempts to reconcile in his mind, the "abysm between the Revolution and the Faith", a connection "to lead men from one side to the other . . . [but] into a new land where the apposition did not exist" (Walker 343) but can see no way the gap could be bridged.

To provide a 'contrapuntal reading' of the British novels on Mexico, it is imperative to consider certain Mexican novels of the Revolution by native Mexican authors written around the same period of 1915-1940. In his seminal work, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said devises a novel way of reading texts by Western canonical authors, inspired from musical lines that act as each other's counterpoint while retaining their individuality. He opines, on re-reading, "what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented in such works. The contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes – that of imperialism and

that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded” (Said 78 - 9). A brief analysis of the Mexican novel, *The Underdogs* (1929) by Mariano Azuela and “They gave us the land” (first published in 1945, later included in a collection, *The Burning Plain and Other Stories*, published 1953), a short story, by Juan Rulfo along with Bates’s *The Fields of Paradise* is crucial for such a study. Rulfo’s stories pivot around the landscape of his native state, Jalisco and offer a searing criticism of the realization of the land reform movement at the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution. In “They gave us the land”, four peasants have been walking since dawn on a hot rocky plain where the only signs of life are a few lizards and dried up patches of grass. They were over twenty, but men started to fall off during the journey due to exhaustion, and it is suggested that they are dead. In the middle of the narrative, it is made known that the peasants have arrived at the reform office to claim the land, and are shocked to find that the arid desert is theirs to farm now. Their protest is met with satire as the government official says they were promised land, but not necessarily arable. The peasants are said that the rainy season will aid in the growth of crops, but as they were traveling through the plain, a single drop of water that fell on the dry plain only managed to create an illusion of rain. Moreover, the plain was too rocky for the plow to cut into the earth. But their voices go unheard as the official says to make a formal complaint instead of blaming the government. The eyes of the peasants wander toward the town, down the barranca, where the land is good and there is no dearth of green pastures and lush trees of casuarina, the land over which fly flocks of green chachalacas- the land they want. This picture evokes in us a sense of plenty, and fulfilment which Rulfo deliberately creates to contrast with the barren-ness and the desolation of the big plain land. In the article, “A Drop of Rain in the Desert: Something and Nothingness in Juan Rulfo’s ‘They’ve Given Us the Land’”, the author Julianne Burton argues that even though the peasants’ immediate destination is the plot by the river, but the plain is their destiny (Burton 58). Every symbol of hope such as a drop of rain, a peasant’s hen, the arable land that lies beyond the desert, is designed to be crushed- a single raindrop would not make the desert worth the good lands, the hen is the only earthly possession of Esteban for their rifles and horses have been taken away post Revolution, and the arable land they want will

never be theirs, “the land they’ve given us is back up yonder” (Rulfo 14). The desolation and the setting that is so void of life comes alive in the Rulfo-ian landscape where the peasants are stuck in a cul-de-sac, and the author offers no respite or even a possibility of it, continuing with the “disenchanted, pessimistic, negative, ironic-critical tone” of the novel of the Revolution (novels published from 1915-1940) (Huaco 56). The tradition Rulfo continues was set by Mariano Azuela in 1915 when he wrote *The Underdogs*, because of being influenced by his life experiences as a doctor in the army of Francisco Pancho Villa, the leader from the northern Mexico. The novel concerns with the rise of Demetrio Macias from being a rebel bandit to that of a revolutionary General in Villa’s faction, during 1913-15, at the height of the revolution’s armed phase, as he leads a group of poor, rebel peasants against the brutal, unjust federal forces and his downfall. Macias is forced to flee his home and family due to a personal enmity with a powerful native leader, and later consolidates an army of rebels to support the Mexican Revolution. But as the novel proceeds, his army’s guerilla warfare proves an insufficient match to a very organized and structured Federal Army. Macias’s growing disillusionment is evident as he fails to motivate his army and they wander from mountain to mountain, plunder, loot, and rape like their federal counterparts they sought out to defeat. As the loyalties inside the rebel army are found divided, Macias feels betrayed and loses sight of his reason to join the army in the first place. It is then the character of Luis Cervantes is introduced, the student of medicine and the personae of Azuela; treated unfairly by the federal army, he joins Macias and reminds him of his purpose, to reclaim the rights of the native Mexicans and their land. But to no avail, Macias’s beloved army is mercilessly killed one by one and toward the end, he stands injured and alone, pointing his rifle, point-blank, at the federales as they inch closer with every step. Azuela’s characterization of Demetrio Macias in *The Underdogs* serves as a poignant exploration of the psychological toll of revolutionary conflict. Macias’s initial pursuit of social justice is gradually eroded by the pervasive violence he witnesses, leading to disillusionment and a detachment from his original ideals. This trajectory stands in marked contrast to Ralph Bates’s character Felipe in *The Fields of Paradise*, who experiences a progressive clarification of purpose, culminating in a hopeful vision for the restoration of his community. His aspirations to restore the

'fields of paradise' to their village of San Antonio reflect an unwavering commitment to the revolutionary cause, highlighting a more optimistic perspective on the potential for change.

Ralph Bates's *The Fields of Paradise* is remnant of Azuela and Rulfo's realism, yet for Bates a pessimistic ending would not do. Felipe for a moment considers leaving San Lorenzo after the fight, though unsure of the role of leadership thrust upon him, he decides to stay because these peasants were his people now (Bates 231). During an argument with Juan Hinojosa, Felipe discovers that once in the fields of his friend Arturo, there grew fruit trees, "a bower of greenery, of abundance ... the Fields of Paradise". Even though the fields were now "treeless flats of baked earth" (Bates 238-39), Felipe begins to harbor a dream of rebuilding the orchard again for his village, this time with scientific methods of farming such as a wheel to lift the water and wooden troughs to spread it around. Felipe, unlike Arturo was hopeful that solutions would come up with each step, and they navigated the complexity of having to convince the peasants of San Lorenzo to invest in fruit trees than the unprofitable sugar crops, but even if the fruit trees would grow, it would be a while for the profits of the fruit orchards to come by. Felipe visits the nearby village of Santa Anita, which has grown prosperous with the peasants keeping bees, and notices the water canal built, the melons, figs, apricots, peaches, the orange trees that would give fruits in two years, and this substantiates his optimism of remaking the fields of paradise, which leads him to exclaim in the end, "Come, let us set it all in order" (Bates 342).

To conclude this chapter, British women travel writers, unlike some of their male counterparts, often demonstrate a reluctance toward definitive judgments and embrace ambiguity when representing Mexico. While male travel writers, such as Greene, might use their travel experiences to create novels that impose order and meaning onto a complex reality, exemplified by the 'unholy saint' in *The Power and the Glory*, or, like Bates, conclude with a call to action to "set it all in order" (Bates 342), women travel writers tend to navigate the complexities of intercultural encounters without seeking a sense of finality. This difference may stem from their own historical position on the "literary world's fringe" which fostered a greater openness to nuanced perspectives and an understanding of the challenges inherent in

cross-cultural representation (Pitman 107). This divergence suggests a potentially colonial bent of mind in some male writers, who prioritize order and resolution in their portrayals, while female writers are more comfortable with the inherent ambiguities and complexities of representing Mexico. While King acknowledgment of herself as a citizen who belongs to Mexico now, and stayed back until her death to reconstruct Mexico after the revolution acts as a sign to show her transformation, like Graham Greene's character the whiskey priest helps Greene in coming to terms with him as a tourist, Bates's emphasis on the indigenous land reform movements gave the agency back to the Indians acts as a symbol of the writer's growth in identity, Bedford and West chose a dialectical style which suggests that they adopted a spiritual stance of radical uncertainty, resisting dogmatic answers. While not a transformation in the traditional sense, it marks a refined articulation of their lifelong wrestle with meaning, prioritizing inquiry over resolution. This is in a significant way that Mexico as a crucible to uncover the writer's hidden nature.

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Chapter Three

Cultural Interface and Identity Formation

Cultural encounters profoundly influence a travel writer's identity. The British writers embark on journeys intending to experience cross-cultural interactions, and the novelty of a culture or place challenges their established perspectives. The travels undertaken by *Rosa E. King's* in *Tempest Over Mexico* (1935), Graham Greene in *The Lawless Roads* (1939), Ralph Bates in *The Fields of Paradise* (1941), Sybille Bedford in *A Visit to Don Otavio* (1953), and Rebecca West in *Survivors in Mexico* (2003) involves interactions between different cultures, that can be seen as catalysts for the emergence and evolution of their respective cultural identities. This chapter seeks to comprehend the transformative impact of intercultural dialogues and whether these British authors undergo such transformations. It also attempts to analyze whether the new insights gained by the writers lead them to comprehend a more universal vision of humanity or reinforce their own cultural prejudices and assumptions. Encounters with cultures different from one's own can initially be bewildering due to unfamiliar traditions, languages, and perspectives. However, they also offer the possibility for writers to critically examine their own biases and assumptions, leading to a more profound understanding of themselves and their relationship to the world. The intricate tapestry of cultural interfaces and identity formation woven throughout the travel narratives provides a compelling lens through which this chapter aims to uncover whether the British writers in Mexico relied on or rejected culturally exploitative models in a space where two foreign cultures meet.

Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone" in her work *Arts of Contact Zone* (1990) is indeed crucial for understanding cultural encounters in travel writing. Pratt defines the contact zone as a liminal space where cultures meet, interact, and often clash amidst unequal power dynamics. This transcultural space is pivotal for cultural transformation, fostering interaction between distinct cultural entities and facilitating a profound encounter between the traveler and the world they engage with (Pratt 37). The traveler's identity, shaped by these encounters, is dynamic and fluid, continuously evolving through interactions with the landscape and native populations encountered during their journey (Lipski 6-7). Pratt emphasizes that the self of the traveler is not an isolated entity but a composite shaped by complex

engagements with foreignness. These engagements enable transculturation, a process where cultural elements are exchanged and hybridized while simultaneously prompting critical self-reflection. This reflexivity is significant for travelers who approach these interactions with openness, allowing for a transformative questioning of their own identity and assumptions when confronting unfamiliar cultures. In this context, the contact zone emerges as a site of both conflict and possibility, where linguistic, cultural, and ideological boundaries are negotiated, creating opportunities for mutual understanding and the reconfiguration of identities.

In her autobiographical memoir, *Tempest Over Mexico*, Rosa E. King provides a first-hand account of a travel writer's experiences in Cuernavaca, Mexico, during the Mexican Revolution. Her work has had lasting influence, even inspiring fictional representations such as the character of Grace Knight in Lucia St. Clair Robson's historical novel, *Last Train from Cuernavaca* (2010). Her portrayal of the Mexican citizens' struggle for independence from Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship captures the nuances of a society undergoing profound transformation. King's memoir illuminates the experiences of both foreign nationals and the Mexican elite, revealing how their privileged positions were challenged and overturned by the tumultuous social and political changes of the era. King's move to Cuernavaca was motivated by economic necessity. Having previously visited Cuernavaca in 1905 with her husband, she returned to Cuernavaca in 1907 following her husband's death and establishing an English tea shop was a means of earning a livelihood to support her two young children.

King's narration in *Tempest Over Mexico* adopts a retrospective voice, a common characteristic of memoirs that distinguishes them from realistic novels due to their intimate and reflective nature (Benzon 93). Memoirs often unveil buried aspects of the writer, offering a personal and subjective perspective that allows for a deeper exploration of the author's inner world and motivations. In *Writing the Memoir: From Truth to Art* (1997), author Judith Barrington emphasizes the delicate equilibrium between being authentic and vulnerable while relying on the complexity of memories that are fragmented, changeable as well as selective. Barrington's seminal text encourages memoir writers to transform individual experiences and personal truths into narratives that resonate with a universal audience. King's

business endeavors commenced during the Porfiriato, a period characterized by relative peace and economic prosperity fueled by foreign investments from British and American companies. This chapter aims to explore whether Rosa E. King's memoir, *Tempest Over Mexico*, achieves that universality despite her primary economic motivations for residing in Mexico, whether her experiences challenge her worldview, potentially opening a window for personal transformation.

As her quaint English tea café expanded with a steady tourist traffic, Mrs. King capitalized on it as she tapped into her entrepreneurial pursuits, by diversifying into the sale of Mexican pottery and leather crafts. She established a small pottery factory at the village San Anton and employed potters devoted to the craft, sold them in her cafe; that played a pivotal role in fostering the growth of a small artisan factory in a nearby village. Her model for business was characterized by ethical sourcing practices, ensuring fair compensation for the artisans, and granting them autonomy over production choices, including designs and techniques. This approach fostered a reciprocal relationship between Mrs. King's enterprise and the native Mexicans artisan community. She stood firm on her policy of no bargaining at all and paid the Indian potters as much as they asked for, despite her friends' reprimand (King 31). It is worth noting here that by paying those artisans their fair share, she mentions she "was going contrary to the established custom of the country", even though King's friends were kind and considerate to their house servants, they believed that "the Indians know no better, the peones toiled all day in the fields and sugar mills for a few cents, and got drunk on pulque... lived like beasts because they had no capacity for anything better" (King 31). Before Mexico's independence from Spain, and persisting afterward among British and American businessmen, Indigenous peoples were often perceived as lacking the capacity for meaningful achievement due to their perceived inherent nature. Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak terms this attitude "Mexicanism", a concept rooted in colonial imagination that ascribes primitivist characteristics to Mexican culture, reflecting colonial attitudes towards race (Mermann-Jozwiak 98-99). Drawing an analogy to Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, she defines "Mexicanism" as the representation of Mexico through Euro-American perceptions, positioning it as civilization's "other", embodying the exotic, primitive, and premodern. This perspective places Mexico in a

central position within the Anglo-American cultural imagination as civilization's Other, representing the exotic, primitive, and premodern (Mermann-Jozwiak 99). Demonstrating a willingness and ability to change through this inter-cultural exchange can be seen as a way of challenging the concept of "Mexicanism", which, as Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak argues, often imposes a fixed, primitivist view of Mexico based on colonial attitudes. In a conversation with an Eastern United States Professor who was a scholar of the Spanish Conquest; Mrs. King portrays awareness of the greed of the wealthy hacendados (Spanish American term for wealthy landowners) for the lands that legally belonged to the Indians to plant sugarcane, "It seems a wicked thing to me, this taking the land by force from those who work it with their hands and love it" (King 42). It is important to emphasize that land for Mexican Indigenous communities transcends mere symbolic value; it is intrinsically linked to their existence, embodying their ancestral heritage and defining their identity as individuals. Land is a tangible element that shapes their reality and sense of self (Berg 75). By showing openness to change and adaptation, King potentially disrupts these preconceived notions and transcends the limitations of a purely Euro-American perspective. This active engagement with Mexican culture can be interpreted as a move away from the exoticizing gaze associated with "Mexicanism".

Her narrative juxtaposes the past and the present of Mexico and she regales her guests with the story of a Frenchman named Josephe de la Borde, who came to Mexico when he was sixteen and became enormously wealthy in the gold and silver mines. King's admiration for Frenchman Borda's "generosity" warrants a more critical examination (King 57). By framing Borda as a benevolent figure, King potentially overlooks the inherent power imbalances of colonialism and her own complicity within those structures. Borda's lavish lifestyle, built upon the extraction of wealth from Mexican mines and the labor of Indigenous people, is a direct consequence of colonial exploitation (Ruiz 201). Therefore, King's praise, without acknowledging the exploitative foundations of Borda's wealth, can be interpreted as a form of tacit approval of the colonial structures, reinforcing the status quo. This reinforces the idea that colonial narratives often romanticize the realities of exploitation, perpetuating a skewed understanding of history. It is valid to ask whether Borda's generosity was contingent on his economic success within Mexico

and whether a less affluent Borda would have exhibited the same behavior. King's focus on Díaz's extravagance while seemingly overlooking Borda's exploitative practices does complicate her position within a postcolonial discourse. By criticizing Díaz for spending public funds on a lavish celebration while indigenous people were in poverty, King highlights the inequalities within Mexican society (King 58). However, her relative silence on Borda's accumulation of wealth through the exploitation of Mexican mines creates a blind spot in her analysis. This silence can be interpreted as a form of complicity with the colonial power structures that enabled Borda's enrichment at the expense of the Mexican people. King, as a foreign observer, occupies a privileged position within this dynamic, and her selective critique raises questions about her own role in perpetuating colonial ideologies (Lipski 108).

When the Revolution began in King's town of Cuernavaca, and Zapata marched through the streets with his army, dismantling every fortification in his path, King expressed relief at being a "foreign woman who had nothing to fear from either side" and maintained that "as an Englishwoman (it) was not her revolution" (King 62-64). However, the threat posed to her business interests compelled her to engage with both the revolutionaries and the Federals. In these early interactions, her identity as an Englishwoman played a pivotal role in shaping her perspective and actions. During the period when General Huerta betrayed Madero and declared himself President, the escalating conflict between Zapata's forces and the federal army intensified. King admits that she did not feel fear because she had always treated the Indians fairly; yet, her confidence primarily stemmed from her assertion: "I am an Englishwoman; I am outside this revolution. My worry was that in the course of the fighting accidental damage might be done to my property", for her the revolution was "a temporary interruption", "years of excitement" (King 122-132). This attitude is indefensible, as it reveals a prioritization of business interests and wealth accumulation over genuine empathy or solidarity. King's detachment from the plight of the native population suggests that she never truly identified with their struggles. Her sense of national identity appears to have created a psychological and spiritual divide between herself and the Indians. Consequently, her interactions with them expose a deeper dimension of colonial identity, one where casual reference to

empathy serve as a facade for the European colonizer's lack of genuine compassion (Delgadillo-Feliciano and Lopez-Figueroa 24). This dynamic echo historical patterns of exploitation, highlighting how self-interest was often cloaked in moral rhetoric by the colonizers.

King's reliance on individuals educated in the United States or Europe, such as General Asunsolo and Don Pablo Escandon, suggests a preference for those familiar with Western norms and values (King 33- 36). This inclination extends to her expressed comfort in having a fellow "man of my own people" nearby when her Scottish manager, Willie Nevin departs (King 95). These instances underscore the importance of her British identity and imply a sense of cultural affinity that positions Mexico as a temporary sojourn rather than a permanent home. While King's hotel functioned as a "neutral ground", accommodating various factions during the revolution, her admitted lack of Spanish language proficiency and subsequent relief at not being tempted to "stick her finger in the pie" implies a detachment from the core principles of the Mexican Revolution (King 179).

The narrative in *Tempest Over Mexico* employs elements of mystery and suspense as well, akin to works of fiction. Memoirist Susan Cheever, renowned for her work *Home Before Dark* (1984) articulates the evolving significance of the memoir genre by asserting, "I believe that the memoir is the novel of the 21st century; it is an extraordinary literary form that remains largely untapped. We are merely at the beginning stages of understanding its structure and defining its conventions" (Cheever 78). The inclusion of dramatic elements in the memoir can be interpreted as a strategic narrative choice to enhance its appeal to a home audience, suggesting a deliberate effort to create a work worthy of publication. Furthermore, the title, *Tempest Over Mexico: A Personal Chronicle*, resonates with a broader trend in late early twentieth century women's travel writing that challenged traditional notions of objective truth, particularly as codified in the authoritative guidebooks of male figures like Thomas Cook and Karl Baedeker. In this context, the personal and subjective experience gains prominence. As an illustration of this trend, American novelist Lilian Bell, in her travelogue *As Seen by Me* (1900) includes an 'Author's Apology' where she humbly asks her readers to "fasten the blame of all inaccuracies, if such there be, upon myself" (Brister 61). This statement underscores the emphasis

on personal, subjective experience characteristic of much women's travel writing of the period (Brister 61-62). King introduces the character of Helene Pontipirani as a sophisticated young beauty, "dark and fascinating", who was later found out to be a Rumanian spy working for Pancho Villa, the leader from the North during the Revolution (King 142-146). The memoir vividly recounts General Victoriano Huerta's encounter with Pontipirani, who was "overbred, perhaps-that calls up a fleeting impression of a high-strung race horse" highlighting the spy's allure, who worked under the ruse of a daily correspondent for two or three French newspapers (King 142). This sets the stage for the reporter's deliberate cultivation of a friendship with Rosa King to obtain information for Villa. The memoir then details the destruction of the rail line to Mexico City, leaving Cuernavaca at the mercy of Zapata, and the subsequent siege in May 1914 as a result of the information that was passed on furtively by Pontipirani. King describes the consequence of her blunder that caused the complete wreckage of the train line that connected Cuernavaca to Mexico City, hence the town was cut off, resulting in a rationing of food and King's slow, yet dignified starvation. Scene after scene of escape to a place of safety follows this, with gory details of being ambushed, like scenes from a movie, she even recounts the horror of seeing a woman who was shot at the back of her head but had to keep walking, as the mules on which they were traveling were shot (King 216). These elements suggest that travel narratives can incorporate fictional techniques to enhance storytelling, even when based on real events and people (Robinson 95). King's assessment of Pontipirani, however can be analyzed through the lens of essentialism, her statement, attributing Pontipirani's allegiance to Pancho Villa to something "decadent" and a fascination with "brutal, primitive strength", can be interpreted as an essentialist perspective (King 166-170). Essentialism, in this context, involves attributing certain innate, fixed features to individuals based on their race or cultural background (Lee and Anderson 2009). King's words suggest a belief that Pontipirani, as a European woman, would be drawn to the "primitive" nature of the Mexican Revolution due to some innate, perhaps unconscious, desire. These essentialist views are challenged within the post-colonial discourse, arguing that identity is not fixed but rather fluid, constructed, and negotiated within specific historical and social contexts (Bhabha 24). Attributing Pontipirani's actions to a

fascination with ‘primitive strength’ risks overlooking the complex factors that might have motivated her, such as fulfilment of political ideals, a desire for risk-taking, or disillusionment with her own society. By framing Pontipirani’s choice because of some inherent quality, Here King reinforces a colonial power dynamic that positions Europeans as inherently different from and, perhaps, superior to the “illiterate, half-clothed Indians” whom she chose to support (King 166).

However, King’s depiction of women in her memoir extends beyond figures like Pontipirani, encompassing the bold and resilient soldaderas, the native Indian women who accompanied the soldiers, whom she compares with “howling Furies as they snatched the guns from the falling and passed them on to those still on their feet” (King 229) highlighting their compassion, patience, and bravery, who made sure the soldiers had always food, whether borrowed or taken by force. These women embody both strength and nurturing qualities, she says about them, “Mexican woman of this class despised by the women of indolent wealth ignorantly proud of their uselessness”, these women were helpers and constructionists, doing their part in laying the foundation of this liberal government today. (King 183). This portrayal invites a comparison to the novel in *Dreams of the Centaur* (1997) by Montserrat Fontes, a Mexican-American writer, the novel is set between 1885 and 1900, and portrays the Durcal family in Sonora, Northwestern Mexico, as they become enmeshed in the Yaqui Indians’ resistance to enslavement under the Díaz regime. Unlike Graham Greene’s 1938 journey to Mexico to evade legal issues in England, Alejo, the protagonist, undertakes a reverse migration, traveling from Mexico to the U.S. to escape prosecution. This subverts the conventional trope of Mexico as an exotic escape from the burdens of modernity. Furthermore, while the title’s “centaur” may allude to the character José as an embodiment of “mythic Mexican masculinity”, it is his wife Felipa who challenges the traditional association of “Mexicanness” with masculinity by disrupting established gender norms (Mermann-Jozwiak 34). She acknowledges the influence of men’s dreams on her life but resists being reduced to essentialist characteristics and displays immense pragmatism. King similarly acknowledges the strength and resolve of the women who participated in the Mexican Revolution which is incomparable to yet echoing in a way her own stratagems to navigate through the conflict, through her pragmatism and will-power.

As a foreign observer, her diplomacy was rooted in a need for survival and economic stability as a widowed mother, potentially overshadowing a deeper engagement with the socio-political transformations unfolding around her in Mexico.

After the overthrow of the Díaz government by the revolutionaries, Francisco Madero assumed the presidency of Mexico. However, his diplomatic missteps soon plunged the country into civil war among the rebels. One significant error was Madero's decision to appoint a landowning governor to Morelos, overlooking Emiliano Zapata, the leader of the peasant communities in the region. This slight deeply offended Zapata, who retaliated by initiating widespread destruction. He began to "destroy crops and millions of dollars' worth [of] machinery imported from England and the United States" (King 75). The government sent a series of generals, including General Victoriano Huerta, to suppress Zapata and his forces, but they failed. Frustrated by these defeats, the Federals launched a brutal campaign against the Zapatistas. Farmers working on their 'milpas' (plots of land) were often caught unaware and executed. Captured rebels were hanged from trees, their mummified bodies left swinging as grim warnings to others. Observing this violence, King lamented that "the revolutionaries had forgotten that they had started off in the same team, for a common cause to fight for a republic. The rebels also looted, destroyed property, and killed Federals in retaliation. King noted that these acts were responses to Federal cruelty and sympathized with the Zapatistas' plight: "If I had been one of those ignorant, hounded people, I think I should have acted as they did" (King 94). King recognized Zapata's tactical brilliance in targeting the wealth and power of the oppressive classes by destroying crops, raiding towns, and cutting off food and transport supplies. At the same time, she criticized Madero's lack of political acumen and misjudgment, which exacerbated divisions among the revolutionaries: "The acts were retaliation for the cruelty of the Federals who should have known better as they were more educated than the poor farmers who were fighting for their ancestral lands" (King 112). King's autobiographical memoir serves in many ways, a tribute to Zapata, the Indian leader and his army composed largely of peasants fighting for their land, and offers a critique of her own initial perspective. Her narrative reveals a transformation in her understanding of the Zapatistas. She challenges their portrayal as cowards and emphasizes their limited opportunities: "poor bonded farmers" who

had “no opportunity to learn anything but subterfuge, duplicity, and hatred” because the Federals in the name of the revolutionary government often resorted to mindless cruelty and stole the corn planted by the farmers (King 89). King further defends those from the Federal army who joined Zapata’s ranks: “Who shall blame them for deserting to the ranks of Zapata, true as steel to the Revolution?” (King 181). She also highlights Zapata’s commitment to supporting his soldiers and their families with resources he acquired during raids. This realization led her to conclude that she and others had been “on the wrong side” of the revolution (King 206). Camayd-Freixas, in the essay “Primitivism and Identity in Latin America” elucidates the connection between national consciousness and anti-colonialism. Latin American indigenism, in this framework, positions itself as “the returning gaze of the colonized, a reappropriation of identity” aimed at validating the nation’s pre-conquest heritage (Camayd-Freixas X). This engenders a paradox: the reconstruction of national identity relies on acknowledging the role of peasants, the idyllic rural landscapes featuring volcanoes, mountains, festivities, vibrant colors, and Aztec temples as the quintessence of Mexico. However, these very representations simultaneously contribute to the perpetuation of an exoticized image of Mexico within the Western gaze. This tension highlights the complexities inherent in constructing a national identity that both celebrates indigenous heritage and resists colonial stereotypes.

King’s reflection on leaving her hotel Bella Vista before fleeing Cuernavaca, encapsulated in the statement “For the first time I had the feeling that I was leaving my home ... Now, in the moment of losing it, I found my home”, presents a paradox worthy of scholarly examination. This declaration suggests a nuanced relationship between physical space, personal identity, and the construction of memory (Lipski 114). The protagonist’s detachment from the house throughout her life contrasts with the real heart pangs experienced upon her impending departure, potentially indicating an embodiment of the hotel as her home wherein lies all the belongings she had brought from England, thus signifying a transformation rooted in a ‘possession-and-deprivation syndrome’. Prior to dispossession, the colonial writer arguably occupies a position of privilege, observing others from a vantage point. However, the impending loss of this ‘safe location’ precipitates a realization of her social status,

potentially aligning her with the marginalized Indians, “we were more like animals than people, foul-smelling, indistinguishable, all the niceties of breeding and sentiment, all the fastidious habits that made us ourselves, rubbed out” (King 246). This event raises the question of whether the protagonist is caught between conflicting realms- her political stance and her newfound empathy. Towards the end of her account, the author reflects on her evolving perspective, stating, “I was no longer the woman, who because she was a foreigner, thought this was not her Revolution” (289).

Sybille Bedford’s portrayal of Mexico in *A Visit to Don Otavio* through the lens of cultural interface and identity formation refers to the analysis of Bedford’s British/European cultural heritage interacting with Mexican culture and whether it leads to a transformation in her identity. Bedford brings both inquisitiveness and pre-existing cultural stereotypes to Mexico which allows her to get to know local customs at some level while maintaining certain boundaries. Through her daily experiences with Mexican culture Bedford develops connections by visiting markets along with creating a misunderstanding with hotel workers over tubes (Bedford 42-43). She participated in Mexican customs through contact with locals which allowed her to interact with blessings given to children and normal hospitality practices even though her encounters often felt clumsy. She forms the engagement through her European perspective. The romantic longing she felt for pre-war Europe along with her colonial way of thinking about things resulted in her exoticizing Mexico through her focus on stimulating sights and tastes (9). Throughout her encounters Bedford provides more insight into her European perspective rather than the characteristics of Mexican nationalism. She perceives the Purépecha as an unchanging group yet fails to recognize their ability to influence Mexico’s evolving identity combining indigenous and colonial aspects through mestizaje. Her sensory focus and colonial preferences prevent her from understanding the true narrative of Mexico because she prefers to create her own picturesque image based on European advantage rather than authentic Mexican experience. While Bedford attempts sincere participation in Mexican customs she fails to perceive Mexico’s identity development because of her European worldview and colonial mindset. Although she engages with Mexican customs, she envisions Mexico as an everlasting exotic land instead of an actively

developing nation which reflects the difficulties for privileged parties trying to connect with different cultures while holding preconceived notions about them. Sybille Bedford's pragmatic decision to travel to Mexico, driven by its affordability within her travel budget, contrasts with Rebecca West's intellectual devotion to left-wing humanism in *Survivors in Mexico*.

West's *Survivors in Mexico* closely interacted with Mexico's societal background and historical elements especially its revolutionary situation during the late 1960s era. West takes an analytical approach to survey Mexico by placing its revolutionary history within global and historical frameworks. The travelogue explores how Mexican national heritage combines with Spanish colonial rule and modern socialist movements along with connecting the nation's challenges to worldwide socio-political shifts. When describing Aztec taxation systems West draws parallels between Aztec measures and English tax records from the British Inland Revenue while equating rich Aztec merchants to British middle-class citizens (West xvi) to show how she views Mexican situations through Western frameworks. Through this comparative analysis, during the cultural encounter at Mexico, western values regarding progress and spiritual governance become central to West's analysis. Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo are important figures in West's work because she sees their art as emblems of national pride with the modernist perspective which shows Mexico's search for identity after the Conquest.

The relationship between West and her treatment of Mexican revolutionaries in the narrative remains complex even though she pursues it with her trademark subjective approach to history (Schweizer xiv). Her portrayal of Leon Trotsky's fear for the life of his son, and guilt because of his subsequent disappearance, and his feeling of alienation and a sense of purposelessness because of his confinement in Mexico that restricted any kind of engagement with the political affairs of Mexico, creates a humanistic portrait of Trotsky. However, her chapter on Leon Trotsky is wanting in an explicit discussion of the human cost of communism, in which she idealizes him as a man of heroic intellect "bearing the weight of a world's betrayal" and exiles him in Mexico. This portrayal of Trotsky's "vision of a classless society" (West 132-137) neglects to take into account the larger social price exacted through the terror caused by enforceable collectivization and anti-clerical campaigns that

characterized Mexico's revolutionary period. West constructs a sanitized narrative of Trotsky's intellectual martyrdom and the "noble struggle against Stalin's tyranny" that fits her leftist humanism but, ignoring the estimates of 90,000 deaths during the Cristero War, failed to focus on the sacrifices of the ordinary Mexicans (West 140). The silence she achieved, by driving her intellectual ambition to concretize revolutionary mythology, distorts the ways communism is defined and how historically accurate her account of Mexico's revolutionary experience can be, which ethically displaces her narration of Mexico's revolutionary crisis.

Rebecca West challenges the romanticized notion of religious martyrdom that Graham Greene imposes on Mexico's religious struggles in his travelogue and novel on Mexico, rejecting his inclination to interpret political and social turmoil through the lens of divine grace and spiritual sacrifice. Instead, she analyzes Mexican Catholicism through her anti-colonial viewpoint because she sees this religion as an imposition which brings confusion to native identity (West 14). Bernard Schweizer notes that Rebecca West demonstrates discernment in analyzing cultural synthesis, maintaining a neutral stance on the origins of native decline, whether stemming from Spanish colonial control or environmental degradation. This neutrality, however, mirrors colonial thinking, even though West expresses a desire to take progressive steps (Schweizer 60). *Survivors in Mexico* was written by West while she was in her seventies, and that proved essential to her development both as a writer and intellectual.

While Rosa King cultivated an emotional connection with revolutionary figures through her extended stay in Mexico and Sybille Bedford approached the country intermittently for aesthetic exploration, West engaged with Mexico from the vantage point of her established reputation as a leftist intellectual and feminist. Her travelogue shows her strategic attempt to insert herself within changing feminist and postcolonial travel writing by fighting against the gendered boundaries as analyzed by Susan Bassnett in her critical essay "Travel Writing and Gender" (2002). The Mexican territory serves as a setting in West's writing because Western narratives have traditionally gendered Mexico as masculine and exotic yet she uses this space to challenge domestic feminine stereotypes through a logical humanistic approach. Her chapter on "Dona Marina" in her travelogue provides one such compelling argument.

Dona Marina was born sometime around 1500 to a noble Nahua family, Doña Marina or La Malinche, was a key figure in the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Rebecca West describes her as a “princess” given over to the Tabascans and then to Hernán Cortés as a “prize of war” (West 124). West takes a humanistic and personal approach to Doña Marina as a resilient, agentive woman whose linguistic and cultural mediation in part shaped Cortés’s conquest. Abandoning her usual analytical tone, West writes that Marina is “beautiful; her manners candid, her wit ready” (West 127), emphasizing her charisma and agency as a “marvelous double being” along with Marina’s sensuality and loyal comrade partnership in the context of the Spanish conquest. West restores Marina to a new position by highlighting her role as an interpreter: the “adventure would have been accomplished only through her efficiency” (120-123) and her reconciliation with her family where she “dried their tears saying that she forgave them” (West 127), which brings her into line with Susan Bassnett’s feminist reading of the subversive women’s travel writing (Bassnett 202). It humanizes Marina in a way that celebrates her contentment and a sense of agency in oppressive structures. Marina’s hybrid identity provides a cultural interface with Mexico, and allows West’s identity as a postcolonial and feminist observer to turn in on itself. This recognition of Mexico’s sophistication on the part of both Marina, as it builds West’s feminist commitment to female agency, and on the part of her in “a society just as sophisticated as their own” (West 117) reinforces her critique of imperialism. Nevertheless, West’s dependence on Bernal Díaz and his idealization of Marina’s contentment erase the coercion of her function as “a prize of war” (West 124), which, besides, manifests Eurocentric bias and restricts her postcolonial criticism. West’s identity formation is a matter of the transformative yet constrained impact of Mexico’s cultural landscape.

The complex dynamics between intellectual possession and appreciation help West shape her personal identity since Mexico serves as an instrument she uses to analyze her own beliefs and prejudices. The Mexican Revolution reveals itself to West through Rivera and Kahlo's perspectives that intensify her critique against Western imperialism while making her socialist views stronger. The travelogue analyzes Mexico's heritage mixture of indigenous, Spanish and modern cultures which forces West to challenge Eurocentric beliefs about racial and cultural purity. In

her descriptions of Mexican markets coupled with native rituals she shows increased affirmation toward native cultural endurance as she writes in a humanist vein. The complex dynamics between intellectual possession and appreciation help West shape her personal identity since Mexico serves as an instrument she uses to question her previously held beliefs and prejudices.

The Lawless Roads is a 1938 account of a journey Graham Greene made into Tabasco, and Chiapas, the two states of Mexico, with the aim of documenting the state of the people in the aftermath of the brutal anti-clerical purges of President Plutarco Calles. While conceived as a travel narrative, the text incorporates autobiographical elements, and this chapter explores whether the journey to Mexico precipitates a spiritual transformation in the author's life and creative work, examining the cultural interface and its role in identity formation. The novel that grew as out of the travelogue, *The Power and the Glory* (1940), narrates the plight of an unnamed 'whisky priest' evading authorities in the post-revolutionary Mexico of the 1930s, and engages with themes such as faith, doubt, and redemption against a backdrop of persecution of the catholic church by the state, although the novel's publication coincided with a period of relative easing in tensions between the Church and the Mexican state under President Cárdenas (Butler "The Power and the Glory by Graham Greene (2003)"). Central to the novel's critical significance is the deeply flawed protagonist, an unnamed priest, who struggles with alcoholism, despair, and even fatherhood outside of his vows. Yet, it is within this struggle, this refusal to abandon his calling despite his failings, that Greene constructs a compelling image of spiritual resilience.

The inter-war era in Europe witnessed profound transformations, driven not only by rapid modernization and socio-political shifts but also by evolving perceptions of selfhood within the modern milieu (Davis and Fussell 1981). These changes reverberated through travel literature, as writers engaged with the shifting identity of the modern individual amidst encounters with 'the other'. Consequently, the inter-war travel writer diverges significantly from their nineteenth-century predecessors, as the optimism of the adventurer yields to the uncertainty and apprehension characteristic of the modern self. Graham Greene's travelogue, *Lawless Roads* provides a nuanced examination of this fragmented modern self, intertwining

physical journeys with psychological exploration, resulting in “a dual plane work with a strong realistic surface, which is yet a parable” (Hynes 228). This ‘dual plane’ signifies the parallel inner, introspective voyage that accompanies the external, geographical one. Drawing upon Cardinal Newman’s epigraph in the beginning of his travelogue, Greene highlights the Apostle’s depiction of a bleak and hopeless irreligion, characterized by being “without hope, and without God in the world”, accompanied by a litany of societal disorders (Greene 87). Graham Greene opens with a personal prologue split into two sections: ‘The Anarchists’ and ‘The Faith’, and in the section “The Anarchists”, Greene paints a picture of his domestic world, steeped in a pervasive restlessness that he equates with anarchy. He weaves together vignettes from his life—childhood through adulthood—to illustrate this unease: at school, he perceives “fear and hate, a kind of lawlessness” (Greene 14), while later he grapples with “a dim conception of the appalling mysteries of love moving through a ravaged world”, a place where “nobody was responsible for anyone else” (Greene 15). Greene portrays the modern world as an obstacle to pure faith, suggesting that faith, regardless of its form, serves as a bedrock for personal identity. When this faith fractures amid the chaos of the surrounding world, it destabilizes one’s sense of self, prompting profound questions about an identity now at risk. In contrast, his quest for true faith leads him to the persecuted Catholic underground of Mexico’s Tabasco and Chiapas, where religious suppression has forced belief into hiding, supposedly preserving its purity as discussed in the second part of the prologue.

In her article, “The Grass Is Always Greener” (2015), Lorna Kirkby analyzes Greene’s travelogue on Liberia, *Journey Without Maps* (1936) where in depicting the self-consciousness that defines modern man, Greene reinforces his pursuit of objectivity, suggesting that a journey backward through both his personal memories and the collective memory of humanity serves as his remedy for the ailments of the contemporary human condition. However Kirkby argues that *The Lawless Roads* is deeply molded by Greene’s subjective perspective and his awareness of it, in contrast to *Journey Without Maps* where Greene seeks an objectivity to detach himself from his travels. In *The Lawless Roads*, Graham Greene manifests a distinctly colonial perspective, characterizing Mexicans as “duplicitous” (Greene 48) while depicting

Europeans as congenial and affable, a sentiment reminiscent of King's expressed relief in the company of fellow English nationals. Nevertheless, Greene demonstrates an acute awareness of his narrative's subjectivity, frequently calling attention to it: "I mention this because strained eyes may have been one cause of my growing depression, the almost pathological hatred I began to feel for Mexico" (Greene 145). This self-reflexivity, paired with his pronounced subjective engagement, suggests a departure from the pursuit of objectivity that defined his earlier work, *Journey Without Maps*. Rather, the text implies that religion has become so intricately bound to the narrator's identity that any attempt to reframe it to the extent envisioned in his prior travel narrative would prove exceedingly challenging, if not untenable. Greene's alienation extends to his critique of Anglicanism in England. Greene lived in proximity to his school as his father was the headmaster at Berkhamsted and that blurred the boundaries between the familial and institutional spaces, leaving Greene feeling like a citizen of both yet belonging to neither, he also describes his childhood home as lacking spiritual intimacy: "The Anglican Church could not supply the same intimate symbols for heaven; only a big brass eagle, an organ voluntary... the Irish servant girls crept out of back doors in the early dark, they would return with the milk in a stranger's car" so he says: "I called this home, but it had no real hold" (Greene 14-16). For Greene, this absence of religious resonance rendered home lawless, a place devoid of peace or spiritual succor. These experiences deepen Greene's reliance on binaries: heaven exists because hell exists; light is defined by darkness. He writes in the prologue, "I began to believe in heaven because I believed in hell" (Greene 14). In *The Lawless Roads*, Greene employs the border as a potent metaphor, suggesting that traversing it sparks transformation or challenges ingrained preconceptions. He asserts, "The border means more than a customs house, a passport officer, a man with a gun. Over there everything is going to be different; life is never going to be quite the same again... it is like starting all over again" (Greene 23). Greene's anticipation of encountering a realm of presumed authenticity of faith abroad is juxtaposed with the absence of spiritual resonance at home in England, and that reveals a preconceived notion, a romanticized binary view that risks oversimplifying or misinterpreting the complexities of Mexican religious life. Greene's reliance on this dichotomy may also color his observations, framing them

more as confirmation of his own existential struggles than as an objective account of faith in Mexico. What is particularly compelling in *The Lawless Roads* is Greene's apparent awareness of subjectivity, not just in retrospect but even early on, in the prologue, he questions, "...and why Mexico? Did I really expect to find there what I hadn't found here? 'Why, this is hell,' Mephistopheles told Faustus, 'Nor am I out of it.'" (Greene 17) Subsequently, shortly after crossing the border and spending his first night in Mexico, Greene observes that "The world is all of a piece, of course; it is engaged everywhere in the same subterranean struggle, lying like a tiny neutral state, with whom no one ever observes his treaties, between the two eternities of pain and – God knows the opposite of pain, not we" (Greene 29). Here, he acknowledges that such binaries—pleasure/pain, anarchy/faith, home/not-home—fail to capture the nuances of human experience. Greene suggests that while opposites may exist, they do not fundamentally alter the value or meaning of one's lived reality. That view is problematic because it is pointless to undertake travel at all, if the narrator has assumed that, the journey would in no way lead to one's growth or development, though it is still unclear whether Greene added this in hindsight after coming back to England. Greene's abandonment of binary thinking is reflected in his nuanced portrayal of Mexico. On one hand, he employs a colonial gaze in *The Lawless Roads*, describing Mexicans as "duplicitous" (Greene 48) and mistrusting "an untrustworthy mestizo face" (25), while attributing acts of violence, such as the murder of a girl by Orizaba police, to "some emanation from the evil Aztec soil" (Greene 94). However, Greene counters these views with affirming observations of quiet beauty, such as couples in Mexico courting in a flower-scented square—a stark contrast to England's perceived lecherousness (Greene 40-41). Greene admits to taking a "tourist view", acknowledging the limitations of his perspective while also juxtaposing Mexico's cruelty with universal suffering, noting that brutality exists globally, from London parks to Paris fortifications (Greene 71). Greene's reflections on the church of Virgin of Guadalupe as a "liberating, not an enslaving legend" force for indigenous people, offering them self-respect and a means to assert agency against their Spanish conquerors (Greene 102-103), aligns with postcolonial theory, particularly Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, which focuses on the various ways in which the colonized people challenge the notion of an essential cultural identity with the help

of certain cultural symbols that resists domination while creating new meanings. Hybridity, as defined by Bhabha, emerges in the 'Third Space', an interstitial site where elements of colonizer and colonized cultures are interwoven, creating new identities that challenge essentialist notions of cultural purity and hierarchical binaries. The Virgin of Guadalupe, who is herself a mestiza, acts as a cultural symbol that acts as a counter-narrative to the colonial gaze, that blends together the indigenous and European Catholic traditions to form a transcultural symbol, and at the same time it is also subversive because it speaks of the influences the Indian culture has on the Spanish and vice versa, rather than creating a cultural hierarchy, hence Greene says, Virgin's legend "gave [the Indian] self-respect; it gave him a hold over his conqueror" (Greene 102-103), hence the virgin's symbol acts as the third space where the differences in the culture empower the hybrid marginalized community rather than reducing it to a singular, passive acceptance.

However, towards the end of the travelogue, Greene claims to not have found the kind of faith he sought in Mexico. Greene acknowledges that the indigenous expression of Catholicism can appear simpler and truer: "a peon knelt with his arms out in the attitude of the cross, woman dragged herself up the aisle on her knees" as opposed to the Mass in Chelsea after his return which seemed "fictitious" (Greene 289), yet he is unable to connect with it, describing the Indians as "little primeval figures of an older day", and the Indian religion a "dark, tormented, magic cult" in the face of tall black crosses that stood at all angles (Greene 214-216). The term 'magic' here signifies something frightening and beyond human comprehension. Greene characterizes it as "something simple and strange and uncomplicated, a way of life we have hopelessly lost but can never quite forget" (Greene 215). This attempt to grasp the intangible through the tangible, a perpetual reaching out, and yearning for something unattainable for a modern-day man, proves ultimately futile, a realization Greene arrives at by the conclusion of his second journey in Mexico. The impossibility of escaping the modern self, along with Greene's desires, is captured in the figure of the German character encountered on the return journey, presented as "the escapist":

he was what we call now an escapist (...) this man who had come from one prison and was probably going to another, for he had once deserted from a

German shop and he never for a moment disguised his opinion of National Socialism. (Greene 220)

The escape of the man is then, ultimately fruitless as the character reveals that be it the Mexican prison or the German, they were only points in an unending cycle of escapes leading to re-imprisonment. This cyclical nature of imprisonment acts as a symbol for Greene's quest which invariably brought him back to the modern self, created by the twentieth century Britain. Interestingly, the character's ultimate wish was to be settled on the Amazon ...and you knew he was away in a land where a man could live on nothing, without violence or hate, and there was nothing to worry about any more for-ever" (Greene 39). This far reaching, idealistic place appears to be as unattainable as Greene's transformation. Cultures in interaction produce some ground for new insights into identity formation, however Greene's experiences in Mexico does not result in defense of an insight against his own land, it only manages to call into question his own established perspectives, a realization that is summed up at the end of *The Lawless Roads* in the line "Mexico is a state of mind" (Greene 224).

However, the fictional form of Greene's Mexican novel, *The Power and the Glory*, published two years later, offers Greene another chance to dramatize Mexico's tensions through vivid characters and events, distills Mexico's revolutionary fervor into a powerful, imaginative crucible. In an introduction to the novel *The Power and the Glory*, written by John Updike, the transformation in the tone of Greene "the exasperated tourist" is noted. The character of the native Mexican whiskey priest, whose rank and livelihood has been snatched away from him, replaces Greene the tourist who "hated Mexican food, manners, hotels, rats, mosquitoes, mule rides...all querulousness has vanished, swallowed by matters of life and death and beyond" (Greene xi). Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* transcends a mere reflection of the complex relationship between religious and secular thought in post-revolutionary Mexico, a period marked by the state's efforts to delineate boundaries between citizenship and faith. Even though the novel ends in the whisky priest's imprisonment and impending execution, the creation of the character highlights a key facet of the narrative: the pursuit of spiritual redemption. Rather than a black and white focus on the mundane vices of the priest, Greene the novelist emphasizes on an

internal transformation giving rise to a radical exploration of faith. Greene's novel is an imaginative reworking of the travelogue in aspects that the ideas and characters explored first-hand in the travelogue are fleshed out later in the novel. In the research article, "Is There Anybody There" (1982), Sheryl Pearson engages with the idea that as Greene traveled in Mexico, he was repulsed by the empty ideals offered by the Revolution, meaning, a never-ending pursuit of material abundance in the lives of Mexicans post the Revolution. Greene continues to draw comparisons between the "institutionalized "emptiness" which the Revolution promises" (Pearson 286) and the Western culture where the materialist culture has already been proved inadequate and has failed leading to where "it was all drugstore and the coca-cola, the hamburger, the sinless graceless chromium world" (Greene 184). He criticized Americans through characters such as the loud Texan ("Fake kindness and superficial truth, a Metro-Goldwyn philosophy") (Greene 16), an American bar girl named Sally who had no energy (92). The character of the mono-minded Lieutenant in the novel *The Power and the Glory* was the epitome of such vacancy, of the emptiness of the material world, after he has taken down every church, every priest with verve and finally takes down the whiskey priest, "He felt without a purpose, as if life had drained out of the world" (Greene 279).

Beyond its temporal setting, *The Power and the Glory* also portrays Mexican identity and the legacy of colonialism. The character of the mestizo Judas, who betrays the priest, has been interpreted as perpetuating hierarchical stereotypes about mixed-race individuals. This, coupled with the recurring presence of British and German characters occupying positions of relative power and privilege, further complicates the novel's depiction of Mexican society.

While Greene may have envisioned a universal Christian parable, the text also demonstrates an awareness of the Mexican Church's response to persecution. The whisky priest, stripped of traditional religious elements, embodies this spiritual shift. His abandonment of his breviary and altar stone, coupled with his barefoot pilgrimage to perform Mass in a humble dwelling, reflects a move towards a more integrated, experience-based faith. That is because all the churches have been destroyed, the priest, must confront his inner struggles and when he does so, he exposes the church as the symbol of all his own faults. He realizes the world needs a

God who embraces even the flawed and apathetic, “It was too easy to die for what was good or beautiful”, the priest reflects, the world “needed a God to die for the half-hearted and the corrupt”. It is the novel’s empathy for “the half-hearted and the corrupt” (Greene 234) that arose because of Greene’s belief that good and evil lay in the primeval nature of all mankind; and his personal vision of the workings of the human heart possessed universal validity. Man must be portrayed as the mixture of good and evil which he has been found to be. For that reason, Greene adamantly demands an artist’s right to his own expression even at the expense of disloyalty to church, state, and society. That must have led Greene to announce disloyalty to be the literary artist’s prime function. In a series of letters on “Why Do I Write” which he, Elizabeth Bowen, and V. S. Pritchett exchanged in 1948, he wrote: “Loyalty confines us to accepted opinions: loyalty forbids us to comprehend sympathetically our dissident fellows; but disloyalty encourages us to roam experimentally through any human mind: it gives to the novelist the extra dimension of sympathy” (Greene 34). As a novelist interested in the conflict of good and evil he saves most of his disloyalty for the church. Man is an imperfect combination of good and evil, those who are more evil than good commit acts of treachery and are damned; those who are better than evil sacrifice themselves because of love to suffer the treachery and are saved. But Greene does not believe that because the evil is treacherous they call for no sympathy from the novelist. On the contrary, they call for more. To preserve his sympathy and imagination from failure to understand even his most evil characters, Graham Greene practices the sense of disloyalty.

In the beginning, the priest introduces himself as a “quack” to the English dentist living in Mexico, Mr. Tench, which highlights his want of belief in his authority as a priest (Greene 4). Even though he meant to escape Mexico on a boat, he decides to stay back after a little boy requests him to attend his dying mother who has asked for a priest, and this reveals a schism that exists between an instinctual duty and his self-deprecation that acts as the first stage of his transformative journey. As the priest journeys through Mexico, evading capture, his experiences serve as a catalyst for profound self-discovery, fostered by a growing sense of compassion and an acceptance of his own human failings. In Greene’s narrative, the priest initially perceives himself as inherently flawed, his conscience amplifying his perceived sins.

He is tormented by his pride, which he believes led him to remain in danger, and by actions such as taking a cube of sugar from a dead child's mouth and competing with a dying dog for a bone. The love he feels for his daughter, rather than for all humanity, overwhelms him with guilt. As he laments, "there isn't a duty I haven't neglected; I have been guilty of pride, lack of charity... this was the love he should have felt for every soul in the world... he tried to turn his brain away towards the half-caste, the lieutenant, even a dentist... however he knew it was for her only that he prayed. Another failure" (Greene 206). Imprisoned for possessing alcohol, the priest confronts his fear of death and acknowledges his numerous sins in the prison. This acknowledgment fosters empathy for both the pious woman and the lustful couple in the jail. He reflects, "'Saints talk about the beauty of suffering. Well, we are not saints, you and I. Suffering to us is just ugly'" (Greene 53). While saints might judge those enslaved by sensory pleasures, the priest refrains from judgment, recognizing his own imperfections. As he grapples with his priestly duties and personal failings, he challenges the pious woman's uncharitable faith, asserting, "We're all fellow prisoners" (Greene 57). Seeing his own flaws mirrored in others, the jail transforms into a microcosm of the world, a metaphysical prison where kindness offers the only escape. This realization humbles him, and his growing compassion signals a shift in his self-perception.

The priest's self-discovery culminates in his decision to return with the mestizo to hear the confession of the dying American, James Calver, knowing it is a trap. He dismisses the need for mules, gives the mestizo forty pesos, and forgives his likely betrayal, echoing Christ's forgiveness of Judas. This choice, prioritizing sacrificial duty over self-preservation, is further emphasized in his final debate with the lieutenant. He articulates the Church's resilience, transcending individual worth over temporal power: "Within the priest rests the power of Rome, even though he himself is, as a man, nameless and a sinner ... The Church, he argues, does not depend on any one person" (Greene 139). The priest's evolved perspective helps him rise above self-pity, and his shifting identity could be read as a reflection of Greene's changing view of Mexico, from initial disdain to a deeper appreciation of its people's resilience and faith "when you saw the lines at the corners of the eyes, the shape of the mouth, how the hair grew, it was impossible to hate. Hate was just a failure of

imagination” (Greene 109). This culmination underscores Greene’s theme: identity arises not from perfection, but from the struggle to reconcile one’s broken self with a higher purpose, a journey that resonates with universal human experience (Torre 67).

Ralph Bates’s oeuvre on Mexico, particularly his novel *The Fields of Paradise* (1941), serves as the primary text for this study. As an English observer of Mexico, Bates is notable for rejecting exploitative models of colonization in Mexican culture and society. This argument will be supported by an analysis of his two other works on Mexico: the travel essay “Conversations in Mexico” (1939) and the novella *The Burning Corn* (1939).

Set in rural Mexico during a period of revolutionary conflict of agrarian reform, *The Burning Corn* follows the odyssey of the protagonist Nacho, a revolutionary as well as a painter, and his wife Elena as they travel through a treacherous jungle to reach the village of Quetzaltotomatlan. At the story’s outset, the peones have already killed seventy-four-year-old Don Atanasio, the landowner, and set his hacienda ablaze, which could be read as a postcolonial act of retaliation. Don Atanasio’s “inordinate pride in his collection of spurs from the early colonial period” (Bates 576) and his torture of the revolutionary Nájera, finds a parallel in Don Braulio Acosta, the judge of San Lorenzo in *The Fields of Paradise*. Acosta’s killing of Pedro’s son, a violin player, for the theft of water from the old irrigation channel called as the Yellow Ditch, a resource Braulio and his head man, Hinojosa, had appropriated, presents a similar dynamic. Furthermore, Braulio’s calculated torment of Pedro, marked by the incremental disposal of his late son’s possessions, highlights a deliberate cruelty. This is further echoed in the character of Don Hinojosa, Acosta’s head man, whose mastery of horsemanship was weaponized against revolutionaries, enabling him to “pick off the cowards, isolate the determined ones, divide them, prevent them from being one mind” (Bates *The Fields of Paradise* 143). Collectively, these characters and their actions can be interpreted as symbolic representations of the historical dominance wielded by colonizers, where physical control, exemplified by spurs and horsemanship, served as instruments of power over both the land and its inhabitants. Beyond physical dominance, colonizers also exerted power over the minds of the colonized. In *The Burning Corn*, some villagers still believed that Atanasio’s ghost “rides about on his horse at night (Bates 578),

mirroring Pedro in *The Fields of Paradise*, who, after prolonged imprisonment and the loss of his son and sanity, repeatedly stated that “it’s better in the dark” (Bates *The Fields of Paradise* 271), unsure of what to do after Felipe helped them escape from the prison. This illustrates the psychological grip of colonial power; a phenomenon Frantz Fanon explores in *The Wretched of the Earth* describing suggesting that colonial trauma persists (Fanon 65). This internalization makes for a crucial reading in the characters of the British authors because this feeling of inferiority could lead to a disruption of the colonized subject’s identity. When Felipe is thrown into the prison for playing a joke with the rulers of the village, it draws a parallel with the scene of the whiskey priest in the prison in Greene’s *The Power and the Glory*, “both the scenes amount to an immersion in collective human suffering, and the result in each case is a greater awareness on the protagonist’s part of the essential bond between people entrapped in the world’s prison-house” (Walker 214). Bates explores the lingering influence of Spanish rule through various means. Candelaria, the Indian girl in the novel, mimics Hinojosa’s manner of speech and gravity of tone, while Negrito, who worked for Acosta, Rosas, and Hinojosa, admits, “There’s lots of things I wish I could do as well as Juan Hinojosa” (Bates 94). When Felipe is imprisoned, Bates appears to essentialize when he observes, “then little by little his thoughts and emotions gathered round his native intelligence, the instinctive core of the man...”, this statement risks reducing Felipe’s complex experience to a simplistic notion of inherent, unchanging “native intelligence” and risks perpetuating colonial stereotypes (Bates 99). However, Bates challenges his own views in the novel- Felipe’s sneers at the mindless mimicry of Hinojosa, and in *The Burning Corn*, Nacho’s contempt for “rubbishy watercolors and ridiculous portraits for American tourists” to make his living (Bates 606) can be noted as a critique of the commodification of Mexican culture by neocolonial forces, augmenting Fanon’s call to stand against one culture assimilating with the other. Nacho’s struggle to find a balance between the western influence and his native identity, is noted in the inspiration he finds in European painters such as Raphael and Giotto, while at the same time working on his painting (a vision of Notehueltiuh- a painting inspired by an indigenous girl’s distress) that would be true to native Mexican heritage (Bates 608).

In the novel, the burning of Sulpicio Rosas's hacienda by the peasants, who violently clash with counterrevolutionaries seeking to maintain the hacienda system, can be interpreted as a postcolonial act of reclaiming land that rightfully belonged to them. This parallels the villagers in *The Burning Corn* who defend their school and milpas (land) against attacks from enemies following the hacienda's destruction. The enemies in *The Burning Corn* aim to financially cripple the village by burning their corn crop, attempting to reassert their dominance, but Nacho and Elena fiercely resist through a violent fight, mirroring Felipe and his fellow prisoners' struggle to reclaim their agency. Fire emerges as a critical symbol in Bates's work as Felipe, in *The Fields of Paradise*, is a firework maker, and the burning of Rosas's hacienda and the corn in the novella can be seen as a destruction of the old colonial order. However, the villagers' subsequent discouragement reflects the reality that revolution is rarely a clean break; uncertainty and disillusionment are valid experiences in the midst of conflict as reflected in Nacho's thoughts, "The burning of the corn, more than the killing of six of them, had deprived them of courage, and they were once more a submissive and broken race" (Bates *The Burning Corn* 619). Nacho's disillusionment is also evident when he states, "I get bored with the revolution, because I lose my belief in it", and when questioned about whether he believes again, he replies only in "an innocent, believing way not childish but in a childlike way" (Bates 606-08). This nuanced portrayal suggests that while revolution can destroy existing power structures, the psychological and emotional aftermath can be a messy and ongoing process of decolonization. "We have as yet no faith in the future. We raise what can be raised without enslaving ourselves to the soil." "You do not wish to enslave yourselves?" "We have no confidence as yet. So many times, we have been given land and it has been taken from us. Who knows what two years may do to us (Bates "Conversations in Mexico" 400). An instance in *The Burning Corn* is Montes, the school headmaster's act of cruelty, when he wounds an enemy during the fight, because of his hatred of Don Atanasio which is rooted the latter's torture of Nájera, a revolutionary. Even though it was a way of reacting to centuries of colonial dominance, yet the cruelty in a way mirrors the tools of violence once perpetrated by the colonizer. Bates elaborates more on this idea in *The Fields of Paradise*, Arturo's is conflicted in resorting to violence in order to counter the cruelty of their exploiters,

however this irresolution on Arturo's part is noted by Felipe as a consequence of the long years of confinement which had destroyed his will to action.

Bates differs from his contemporary British authors because he doesn't simply observe the fatalistic attitude of the Indians, like King does, like Bedford does in a political context but situates the loss of their lands as a contemporary social problem that has broken their will to live, "The gringo, the gachupin, and the inglés were allowed to buy the country and build its major industries, It is these spineless and unbelievably corrupt people and their forebears who have nearly destroyed the Indian's will" (Bates "Conversations" 399). What had actually unnerved Arturo had not been a lack of courage, his years in prison acted as a symbolic confinement of the Indians' stolen lands, when it is perceived that the Indians have a fatalistic attitude, it suggests that they are born with it and cannot outgrow it, it is in their nature, however Bates' argument contextualizes Indians who have been at the receiving end of a systemic failure resulting in a distrust, an inaction. Hence Felipe speaks for Bates when he says, "The good to be achieved by struggle was never unmixed with evil. Every protest against evil had brought fresh pain into the village... The distinction between good and evil had already been lost" (Bates 165).

The growth of the character of Felipe, from that of a wanderer, who has no home, no brother, no sister, who comes to the village with the intention to sell fireworks, but he falls in love, and then in the scene of prison, he connects with the prisoners over their shared hatred of Rosas, even after the scene of fight, Felipe says "what is there I can do, companero? I don't live here, this isn't my town. I don't know what there is to do" (Bates *The Fields of Paradise* 194). Again, he mistakenly informs the crowd who killed the man in the stocks, he is yet to recognize that whoever was killed was killed by everybody (208). Pedro goes into prison again and while talking about Pedro's son, Felipe slowly starts to understand the speaker, that it is not that they were ignorant or foolish, their thoughts were gathering words quietly yet firmly while they suffered from exploitation, "A town such as this, Felipe thought... is appearance and reality. Behind the silence of mud walls and the muteness of paint, there is brooding thought" (211). Bates slowly unravels the apparent passivity of Indians and understands the fact that their tolerance is not their

impassivity, they have comprehension, thought, language which comes to the fore when the colonial rule is vanquished.

The argument between Felipe, and Juan Hinojosa forms the crux of the novel. When Felipe criticizes Hinojosa for abandoning Acosta and Rosas in time of need, Hinojosa accuses Felipe of running away from the village after starting a fight. Hinojosa replies that he ran away because not only Rosas insulted his 'race', but also he had no wish to govern the foolish Indians who barely had enough for their living yet offered their crops to the Virgin. He believed that there was no wit in outwitting the people felt a sensation of physical pleasure in their abasement" that puts them in a holy daze" (Bates 230). To bolster his argument, Hinojosa gives the instance of a man who was whipped by him not a week before, and the man giggled and grinned with pleasure when Hinojosa asked him for a match to light his cigarette. Juan perceived that there was no ambition in reigning over such people who felt such joy in servility, however Felipe's counterargument was that Hinojosa ran away not because he no longer cared to dominate "these submissive animals but because[he] knew that at last they had risen against you, because they were insubmissive" (231) and Hinojosa had in the beginning accepted that but later denied it. Bates says something very fascinating here, that Hinojosa had ridden away because the years of conquest had degraded him, and he had no companionship: genuine and affectionate that would bind him to the people.

Hinojosa, despite valuing Candelaria's companionship, was driven by a deeper need for dominance, as seen when he ordered a subordinate, Miraflores to enter a church amidst a dangerous fight, risking his life. This act, Hinojosa confessed, stemmed from his "thirst of command, the strength and weakness of all Spaniards" (Bates 232). Felipe argues that Hinojosa's refusal to fight, supposedly due to disgust at the villagers' submission, masks a deeper truth: ruling an obedient village would bore him, as he craved the challenge of subduing the ungovernable, like "troops of wild horses in the Caribbean" never before tamed (232). Felipe exposes the paradox in Hinojosa's stance, showing that the conquistador is perpetually dissatisfied—yearning to dominate those who resist yet scorning the submissive as "cowards" and "animals with no spine." This reveals, as Felipe notes, that "the futility of domination is self-evident. Either it is an undignified boredom, or

it is impossible” (233). Frederick Cooper’s analysis of colonial power illuminates this tension, highlighting how colonizers simultaneously seek to impose order on structured societies while being drawn to the conquest of the ‘untamed,’ a contradiction inherent to colonial ambition (Cooper 205).

When Hinojosa says that he believes that there are gentle conquistadors and is not convinced that giving lands to peasants would make any real difference because those who have it are by means way off better, Felipe mirrors the notion of every Indian when he says that it is impossible to have a thirst for power and have a companionship for people at the same time, because if there were such a thing as a just ruler, then he would no need to command in the first place, he says further, “I’d rather starve on my own land than on another man’s” (Bates 236) and clarifies that he has decided to stay for the sake of his fellow revolutionaries in San Lorenzo. Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of hybridity where colonial and indigenous cultures intermingle, creating new identities is evident in the characters’ lives. Elena, a revolutionary and Nacho’s wife in *The Burning Corn*, with “half her blood” from indigenous roots (Bates 567), exemplifies this blend. Her patience, likened to that of the Indians, and her revolutionary work teaching sewing machines fuse indigenous resilience with modern progress, challenging the colonial narrative of indigenous inferiority. Her beauty, described with “black hair, a purple tinge in it from the coppery sun” (569), merges indigenous physicality with a poetic vibrancy, subverting the Spanish ideal of European whiteness. Elena’s role amplifies this resistance. Her leadership in the hospital and promise to bring sewing machines empower the women, countering the colonial gender hierarchy that marginalized indigenous women doubly—by race and sex. Her plea to Nacho, “Only be a little kinder” (Bates 672), asserts her voice within their marriage, resisting the patriarchal residue of Spanish machismo that Nacho intermittently embodies. Montes and Rodríguez, though flawed, resist through education and land reform. Montes’ school, built without “a centavo of official money”, defies colonial neglect of indigenous education, while Rodríguez’s push for more fields reclaims the land stolen by Spanish settlers. Yet, their rivalry and Montes’ possessiveness echo colonial power struggles, suggesting that resistance is incomplete without dismantling internalized hierarchies. Postcolonial narratives often resist tidy resolutions, and *The Burning*

Corn reflects this ambivalence. Nacho and Elena's fragile reconciliation mirrors Mexico's uneasy transition from colonial rule to revolutionary promise, progress is made, but scars remain. The novella's strength lies in its refusal to romanticize this struggle, revolution burns away much, but not all, of the colonial past. This duality isn't romanticized or softened; it's starkly real, a lived experience for Nacho and Elena.

"Conversations in Mexico" is a travel-essay, it compiles Bates' observations from nine months in Mexico, structured as vignettes—encounters with a shepherd boy, prisoners, ejido commissars, and peasants. Its reflective, conversational tone (e.g., dialogue with the Pátzcuaro commissar) prioritizes socio-political analysis over narrative momentum. In "Conversations in Mexico", Ralph Bates celebrates the Yaqui Indians' resilience, noting their economic success under the Cárdenas Land Reform: "The Yaquis were never completely conquered", preserving communal customs that fueled prosperity (Bates 404). He sees their collective strength—embodied in "El Pueblo" as a judicial voice—as a socialist triumph, framing Mexico as a land of revolutionary promise. Conversely, Montserrat Fontes's *Dreams of the Centaur* historicizes the Yaquis' trauma, detailing their persecution and deportation under Díaz, who targeted their resource-rich lands, as they "refused allegiance to Mexico" until 1928. Fontes rejects romanticized views, portraying a multicultural Mexico: "We have Lebanese, Arabs, Sephardic Jews, Marranos, French, German, Irish, Japanese, Chinese and Mexicans"—tied to global trade and migration (Fontes 4). While Bates's hopeful lens highlights Yaqui agency, Fontes's sobering narrative grounds their resistance in colonial violence, revealing complementary truths about Mexico's complex identity. The landscape- jungle, gorge, and milpas- is a contested space, reflecting Gayatri Spivak's idea of land as a site of colonial inscription and decolonial struggle. The puma hunt pits Nacho against a natural force, paralleling the colonizer's conquest of the wild, yet his empathy for the lost cub rejects that dominance. The milpas, burned by the enemy, are the heart of indigenous sustenance, their destruction a colonial tactic to subjugate through starvation, as Don Atanasio's forebears did. The villagers' refusal to bury Sebastián with their dead and their plan to expand fields reclaim the land symbolically and practically, asserting sovereignty over a space once owned by Spanish descendants. Postcolonial narratives often resist

tidy resolutions, and *The Burning Corn* reflects this ambivalence. Nacho and Elena's fragile reconciliation mirrors Mexico's uneasy transition from colonial rule to revolutionary promise—progress is made, but scars remain. The novella's strength lies in its refusal to romanticize this struggle—revolution burns away much, but not all, of the colonial past. This duality isn't romanticized or softened; it's starkly real, a lived experience for Nacho and Elena. Bates immerses us in the Mexican perspective via Nacho and Elena. This aligns with his leftist sympathies and firsthand experience in revolutionary struggles, grounding *The Burning Corn* in a tangible, resolute vision. From a cultural studies view, this clarity resists the colonial trope of the 'inscrutable native', aligning with Hall's idea of representation as a site of agency, not just domination (Hall *The Work* 15).

Montserrat Fontes, a chicana author, her novel, *Dreams of the Centaur* can be read alongside Bates's "Conversations in Mexico", a travel essay for a comparative analysis. Fontes has traveled extensively in Mexico and frequently uses Mexican characters and settings in her work and in her novel, *Dreams of the Centaur*, she historicizes Mexican Indians and counteracts the image of Mexico as an ancient, rural landscape. Montserrat Fontes's *Dreams of the Centaur* and Ralph Bates's *Conversation in Mexico* offer contrasting yet complementary perspectives on Mexico's living culture, historicizing its multicultural identity and the struggles of its indigenous populations. Fontes, a Chicana author, grounds her novel in the late 19th to early 20th-century Sonora, focusing on the Yaqui Indians' resistance and persecution under Porfirio Díaz's regime. Bates, a British communist writer, reflects on 1930s Mexico through dialogues with diverse figures, capturing the post-revolutionary social landscape. Both works challenge reductive views of Mexico as an ancient, rural idyll, emphasizing its global connections and historical contradictions, though Fontes's fictional narrative provides a more visceral critique of indigenous oppression, while Bates's essay offers a broader, empathetic snapshot of cultural hybridity. *Dreams of the Centaur* historicizes the Yaqui's fierce resistance to Mexican authorities, countering romanticized images of Mexico as a timeless landscape. Set during Díaz's dictatorship (1876–1911), the novel traces the Durcal family's entanglement in the Yaqui deportation to Yucatán's henequen plantations, a policy that depleted Sonora's agricultural labor force (Jozwiak-Mermann 14). Fontes

delineates the historical contradictions faced by Mexico's Indians: the Yaqui, renowned for resisting all invaders until 1928, were targeted for their resource-rich lands, viewed as obstacles to progress in export agriculture and mining. Rather than idealizing indigenous life, Fontes exposes their enslavement and genocide, with up to 15,000 Yaquis deported by 1908, prompting hacendados to protest labor shortages. Her Mexico is a vibrant, multiracial society—Moorish, Spanish, Indian, African-American, Lebanese, Chinese, and more—connected globally through trade and migration (Fontes 4). This multiculturalism, as Fontes asserts, defies a singular essence, aligning with the emphasis on a complex network of relationships. "Conversations in Mexico" captures Mexico's living culture through Bates's dialogues with peasants, intellectuals, and workers in the 1930s, a period of post-revolutionary reform under Lázaro Cárdenas. Unlike Fontes's focus on a specific historical moment, Bates offers a panoramic view, engaging with Mexico's mestizo identity and labor struggles. His empathetic gaze aligns with the travel-writer as the 'critical insider' who appreciates local values. Bates highlights Mexico's global connections—e.g., its role in international socialism—while acknowledging indigenous contributions, though less explicitly than Fontes. His portrayal of communal life, such as village discussions, reflects a hybrid society shaped by Spanish, Indian, and modern influences, akin to Fontes's multiculturalism but with a focus on ideological solidarity rather than racial diversity. Bates's travel essay, while less visceral, counters rural stereotypes by emphasizing Mexico's dynamic social movements, complementing Fontes's globalized vision.

Both authors engage Mexico's living culture, but their approaches differ. Fontes's novel immerses readers in the Yaqui's lived experience, using Alejo's perspective to expose systemic violence and cultural erasure. Her detailed depiction of ranch life, Yaqui rituals, and plantation horrors grounds the narrative in historical specificity. Bates, conversely, engages through observation and dialogue, capturing the vitality of post-revolutionary communities but lacking Fontes's depth on indigenous oppression. While Fontes foregrounds the Yaqui's resistance and multicultural influences, Bates emphasizes broader social dynamics, making his engagement less focused but more inclusive of diverse voices. Both challenge the tourist gaze's Eurocentrism—Fontes through Chicana insider-outsider critique, Bates

through socialist empathy—yet Fontes’s narrative is more grounded in the material consequences of colonial policies. Both situate Mexico in a global community: Fontes through migration and trade (e.g., Yucatán’s henequen economy) Bates through internationalist ideals. Fontes’s multiculturalism—integrating Moorish, African-American, and Asian influences—offers a richer racial tapestry than Bates’s focus on mestizo and class dynamics, aligning closely with a multiracial society.

Fontes’s *Dreams of the Centaur* and Bates’s “Conversations in Mexico” both counteract static images of Mexico, presenting it as a global, multicultural society. Fontes’s novel excels in historicizing Yaqui oppression and celebrating Mexico’s racial diversity, offering a visceral critique of colonial violence. Bates’s essay, while less focused on indigenous struggles, captures post-revolutionary vitality through empathetic dialogue, emphasizing ideological connections. Fontes’s Chicana perspective and Bates’s socialist lens complement each other, with Fontes providing deeper engagement with indigenous lived experiences and Bates offering a broader cultural snapshot. Together, they affirm Mexico’s complex, interconnected identity, resonating with the vision of travel writing as a bridge to living cultures. However, Bates’ the inclusion of the mythical story of Xicucu comes close to romanticizing Mexico, and Juan Hinojosa’s claim as the protector of Indian girl, along with the firing of Rosa’s hacienda by Juan because he hated Rosas and having to work for him problematizes Bates’ works on Mexico as a foreign author.

To conclude, Bates’s Mexican writings position him as a politically engaged traveler who seeks to connect with Mexico’s living culture through a lens of leftist solidarity. His emphasis on land reform and indigenous resilience reflects an attempt to affirm subaltern agency; however, his English perspective occasionally flattens cultural nuance, risking reductive portrayals. In contrast, Fontes’s *Dreams of the Centaur* offers an embodied, Chicana perspective that foregrounds Yaqui resistance and the complexities of Mexico’s multiracial, transnational identity. Her narrative, rooted in lived experience, critiques colonial legacies with emotional immediacy and cultural depth. Together, Bates and Fontes navigate the cultural interface between self and other, insider and outsider, articulating identities shaped by political struggle and historical memory. While Bates’s analytic scope contrasts with Fontes’s affective intensity, both disrupt dominant colonial narratives. Their shared emphasis on

marginalized voices stands in stark opposition to Greene's existential detachment, Bedford's romanticized nostalgia, and West's cerebral distance—revealing how cultural identity is not merely observed but actively negotiated through cross-cultural engagement.

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Chapter Four

Place as Living Culture Beyond the Tourist Gaze

This chapter examines Mexico as a dynamic cultural entity characterized by a complex network of relationships, histories, and values, rather than a static object shaped by tourist expectations. British travel writers may harbor certain preconceived notions regarding Mexico, due to the media representations, historical narratives rooted in a colonial legacy, or commodification reinforced by the tourism industry. Due to the cultural distance and unfamiliarity with the cultural frameworks, an author remains in danger of projecting his/her assumptions by relying on stereotypes to bridge the gap, rather than engaging with the lived realities of Mexico. This chapter analyzes how such perspectives can be transcended, positing the gazer as a participant who engages with the place's living culture. By doing so, the gazer adopts a critical insider's perspective, attentive to the interconnected elements that define Mexico's cultural landscape. The discussion will explore how this approach challenges reductive views, offering a more nuanced understanding of Mexico as a vibrant, relational place in *Tempest Over Mexico* (1935) by Rosa King, *The Lawless Roads* (1939) by Graham Greene, *The Fields of Paradise* (1941) by Ralph Bates, *A Visit to Don Otavio* (1953) by Sybille Bedford, and *Survivors in Mexico* (2003) by Rebecca West.

Travel writing serves as a vital bridge between cultures, enabling writers to navigate the complex interplay between a place's lived reality and the curated images often crafted for tourism marketing. In exploring Mexico as a living culture, travel writers focus on the role of indigenous communities in shaping tourism that avoids superficial representations and fosters a deeper understanding of local histories and experiences. Equipped with place-based knowledge, writers can honor native cultures and critically examine how tourism influences the evolving identities and behaviors of indigenous communities. Through this lens, travel writing becomes a tool for exploring intercultural dynamics and the tourist's role within them, encouraging authentic engagement with Mexican culture. By relying on creative observation and reflection, rather than technological crutches, writers cultivate a transnational identity, weaving their own perspectives into a broader, interconnected narrative that transcends cultural boundaries and enriches global

understanding. Even though scholars of tourism have employed complex theories to travel narratives, the role of a place and the experience it invokes in various ways with respect to memory and past, belongingness, and affective responses to place have been neglected. A thorough analysis of travelogues along with the novels by modern British authors in this chapter aims to bridge the gap in research by reading between the lived life experiences, images, and narratives that serve as critical tools to grasp at real and imagined tourism.

Sybille Bedford had lost her charm of America and was conscious to not choose Europe after the post-war violence, the author sought instead, a travel destination that offered a hope of distraction and novelty. She aimed for a place that would not be devastated by the world wars and yet would have a rich historical context. Sybille Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio* vividly depicts the border-crossing experience at Nuevo Laredo in the chapter "New York to Nuevo Laredo" and reveals a crucial point of view on tourism. She opines on the disconnect between the romanticized portrayals and lived realities of Mexico as propagated by the tourism industry, "the literature of the travel bureaux: a smiling Mexican in a cartwheel hat holding up a piece of pottery; a smiling brown boy in the surf at Acapulco holding up a speared fish; a smiling woman in a rebozo holding up a rebozo" (Bedford 19). These portrayals shaped by marketing are not only reductive and stereotypical in nature, but also neglect the harsh realities a tourist might face in any cross-cultural encounter such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, and mutual prejudices, "there is not a smile to the square league" (20). This critique aligns with the notion of the 'tourist gaze' that highlights not the passive, rather the active role of observation in shaping the tourist experiences; the dynamics of power inbuilt in the gaze, based on the discursive, sensory, and social elements, determine the worth of tourist destinations for visual consumption (Driever 8-9). Thus, it is imperative to mention that the tourist gaze is immanently discriminating. Bedford's portrayal is suggestive of the fact that the gaze, aided by marketing, gives rise to unrealistic expectations and superficial engagement with the destination. When she says that she was "coaxed into this by the literature of the travel bureaux" it suggests that her desires were manipulated by carefully presented fantasies rather than an active preparation for dealing with cultural complexities (Bedford 19). Bedford's account of the Mexican

Passport Control and Customs inspection further reveal the bureaucratic hostility at the border that is informed by the power dynamics inherent in tourism, where tourists and locals are pitted against each other in an atmosphere of mutual distrust. The dining car in the narrative takes “the aspect of a court martial” with “hostile” officials in military uniforms and armed guards which presents a sharp contrast with the “paths smoothed for the advertised-at tourist” (19). Bedford’s observation also illuminates the prejudices in cultural encounters and cultural misunderstandings, “no one trusts anyone a millimeter” and the Mexicans are shocked to discover that the “great, enormous women” travel “without hats or escorts” (Bedford 20). This reflects a conflict between Mexican expectations of gendered behavior and the tourists’ perceived rudeness and independence. Bedford’s nuanced portrayal attempts to expose the mutual incomprehension exacerbated by the tourism industry, however the description of the native Indian officials as “Red Indian Pygmies, male and female, dig[ging] into our bags in the manner of so many terriers burrowing down a hole”, and Mexican officials as “underpaid, the brutish and the ignorant” (Bedford 20-21) during customs inspection is derogatory. Even though it might attempt to underscore her frustration of the process that is more a show of power than having a practical purpose, it exposes the colonial gaze of Bedford. Her immediate comparison of the inefficiency of the system at Mexico with the British passport officials who attempt a show of their power on the elderly refugees, however, along with the corruption mirrored in “the Balkans or the East” can be read as a broader critique of bureaucratic systems across the world rather than something that is peculiar to Mexico. Her reference to tourists as “benefactresses” eager to spend “their dollars on a huge loot of native arts and crafts” (Bedford 20-21) acknowledges their economic contribution to Mexico, yet her tone hints at irony, critiquing the commodification of culture.

Bedford’s narration of her first meal on the train to Mexico reveals a tourist captivated by Mexico’s sensory allure. It makes for the reading of specific foods that can evoke a sense of pleasure, disruptive of norms, and yet activates five senses at the same time, reminiscent of Barthes’s *jouissance*, she writes, “I had got us some tins of tunny fish, a jar of smoked roe, a hunk of salami and a hunk of provolone; some rye bread, and some black bread in cellophane that keeps. That first night we

had fresh food. A chicken ... still gently warm; a few slices of that American wonder, Virginia ham; marble-sized, dark red tomatoes from the market” (Bedford 9). Shortly after her arrival, she goes on a shopping spree in the marketplace which has both foreign goods and local produces. Her decision to experiment with the local produce initially suggests her openness to know more about the cultural landscape of Mexico, however it raises question on whether she genuinely was inquisitive as a participant in the social fabric of Mexico, because she mentions that the imported alcohol were not cheap, moreover she also expresses suspicion which suggests a distance between her and Mexico, suggesting they must prove themselves against European standards, “And a bottle of Mexican brandy. The name of this unknown quantity is appropriate, Cinco Equis, Five X’s. It costs nine pesos and has three stars. We shall see” (42). Her conversion of pesos to shillings indicates an attempt to contextualize costs for herself and her Western readers, bridging the foreign and familiar and at the same time suggest her inquisitiveness of the state of the Mexican market after the second world war. As she finds the local products cheaper with relation to the western market, she expresses her giddiness and she does not haggle ever which illuminates on the Mexican market catering to foreign tourists with disposable income. Even though she had subtly criticized the ‘benefactresses’ from the west who were eager to spend dollars on native crafts, she herself here can be read as a tourist with a consumerist gaze who is more fascinated by acquiring objects rather and it also reflects the economic disparity between her and the local vendors. Twentieth century saw the rise of mass tourism, greatly aided by developments in transportation facilities, the impact of which can be seen in the change of travel habits, the ways of experience or the tourist-gaze, and determine the effects of tourism on the regional communities. Several professional associations were involved in the representation and marketing of tourist destinations and they understood that they could only thrive if they illuminate the cross-cultural differences, thus the boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary were constantly in a state of flux. Varied cultural and political factors are at play as tourism finds expression as an act across the world. After the second world war, tourism came to define the notions of identity along with the status of an individual in society. A surge in options of tourist destinations and income led to a rejection of conventional holiday package deals to that of a more

heterogenous form of tourism, or more consumer specific. As the older tourist destinations struggled to meet the demands of the new consumers, this opened vistas for the places previously unconsidered, and they began developing ideas of leisure, and visual appeal they can provide to allure tourists, investment, as well as skilled workers. Technological progress took away the exclusivity of sea and beaches as television could offer a visual lens at people's own home to look at the seaside, thereby loosening the grip of these once-in-a-lifetime touristic experiences.

Bedford's detailed accounts of prices, reminiscent of *Terry's Guide*, stand in contrast to her admission that she didn't take notes while in Mexico, relying instead on postcards and memory. As an economically privileged western traveler, this reliance on memory becomes significant, suggesting the potential for a purposeful reshaping of her experiences. This invites scrutiny of how her narrative may be constructed to reinforce perspectives that maintain the power dynamics. *A Visit to Don Otavio* centers on her extended stay at Hacienda San Pedro, located on the shores of Lake Chapala, under the stewardship of the eponymous charismatic Don Otavio. Described as a ruined aristocrat supported by seventeen servants, Don Otavio's family navigated the economic and social upheavals of Mexico's wars and revolutions, retaining relative prosperity compared to their peers. In the article, "The Mexican Journey That Made Sybille Bedford One of the 20th Century's Finest Writers" (2016), Rhea Rollman elucidates on how this part of the travel narrative reads like a novel, Don Otavio's scheming, mafia-like family plots to transform their land into a modern hotel resort, driven by get-rich-quick ambitions. The family members' bickering leads to chaos, moreover the characters are richly formed, pompous British ex-pats, eccentric German settlers, and descendants of Confederate exiles. Otavio's servants have scandalous affairs which often spark blood feuds and near-murders. Meanwhile, gentle Don Otavio, a gracious host, prefers flipping through fashion magazines with his sister-in-law, oblivious to the drama (Rollman "The Mexican Journey").

Bedford's longing of the inter-war years invites the reader's crucial attention because of their nostalgic recollection of a romanticized era of travel before World War I and during the inter-war years. This is problematic because it was the colonial privilege that allowed seamless, leisurely exploration of Europe, "a time in Europe when one

could still travel in comfort and have a part of good things without being rich or ruined... a time when hotels and restaurant meals and a second-class ticket to Florence were still within the means of everyone of moderate means; and a young man who'd got hold of a couple of hundred pounds might have his year in Paris" (Bedford 59). This finds echo in anthropologist Renato Rosaldo's influential 1989 essay titled "Imperialist Nostalgia" which describes how colonial agents mourn the loss of cultures and lifestyles they themselves disrupted. The concept refers to an idealized longing for the past when the colonial power was at its peak, often a romantic remembrance of the apparent positives of the rule such as stable economy and order (Rosaldo 59). Bedford and her companions embody this paradox as their wistful reference of dining at a French inn for a shilling and traveling without passports evokes a time when British imperial wealth and geopolitical dominance granted unfettered mobility and access. This nostalgia glosses over the colonial exploitation, economic extraction, and cultural erasure, that enabled such lifestyles, aligning with Rosaldo's observation that colonizers lament the passing of what they transformed or destroyed. The focus on a lost "golden age" of travel ignores the violence and inequities of the imperial project, such as the subjugation of colonized peoples whose labor and resources subsidized European affluence.

Further limitations of her perspective are betrayed when she introduces the idea that gifts from the West cannot be just dropped onto another culture. The influence of the West is depicted as intrusive, rather a devastating force that throws indigenous societies into disarray. Such analogies are not well-formed, for she simultaneously reinforces the discourse of Western superiority that fuels exploitation of the indigenous native Mexicans. Her assertion that "the anthill cannot be added to from outside" idealizes indigenous cultures as static and unchanging, denying their agency and capacity for adaptation (Bedford 81). Ultimately, Bedford's critical analysis reveals a paternalistic concern for the "Tarrascan Indians" (now known, with reverence as Purépecha people) that avoids any sincere confrontation with the power imbalances inherent in her own position as a Western observer (92).

In the market, she interacts with the local children, vendors, and later with the hotel staff which challenges the reader's notion of restricting her identity to that of a

colonial observer. As her hands are full from all that she had shopped, she encounters a small child who offers her to help carry her parcels but she does with a certain air of dignity. Even though she does not want to be fetched so, she eventually gives in to a local custom of service and purchases some “sweets for the porters” rather than giving “plain money to children” who display a remarkable self-possession “like well-bred guests at an Edwardian dinner party” (Bates 42). This expression of surprise is restrictive, however her appreciation of the children’s way of conducting themselves suggests an attempt to reevaluate her prejudiced perspectives with the aim to honor the complex network of relationships in Mexico’s living culture.

Bedford does however adopt a tone where she is not only finding herself in comic cultural misunderstandings but also does not shy to laugh at her own expense. The children, who distribute parcels express formal blessings to the author (“que Dios la proteja”) (Bedford 80). Bedford’s giddiness at the relative inexpensiveness of flowers in the market lead her to buy a bunch of tuberose for her room, unaware of the fact that her hotel provides fresh flowers every day. The housekeeper mistakenly interprets that Bedford is dissatisfied with the hospitality and is unable to comprehend when Bedford states her ignorance. A hotel boy is called immediately to fetch away the existing lilac and narcissus and the rest of the day, fresh tuberose are sent to her room for all her days of stay. The housekeeper’s disbelief highlights a gap in cultural communication and underscores the challenges of cross-cultural interactions. However, when she says she is delighted for the tuberose sent to her every-day, that signifies a resolution, where her appreciation for Mexican hospitality bridges the initial misunderstanding. Again, her self-aware humor, that is likening herself to “the Pied Piper” (42) suggests a critical reflection on her role, aligning with her attempt to move beyond the superficial tourist gaze toward an empathetic understanding.

Her vivid description of locals’ complexions: “café-au-lait, chestnut, glowing copper, or milky mauve and dirty yellow” and attire, from “skin-tight... pistachio and rich chocolate” suits to “sleezy material in blood orange, emerald, chrome yellow, azure” (Bedford 75), is reminiscent of Rebecca West’s comparison of the locals’ skin-tone to the color of her favorite beverage, that is a blend of coffee, milk, and cocoa in *Survivors in Mexico*. However West’s apparent exoticization is followed

by her awareness of Mexico's inclusive social reality for the mestizo majority population, "Here, if a white man and a man of mixed blood quarrel, it is simply as if a dark man has fallen out with his brother who takes after the other side of the family and is fair: no more than that" (West 45) Bedford, on the other hand reduces the population to a binary where either they are completely stunning or "too monstrous to be true" (Bedford 39). This judgment is reflective of the tourist tendency to usurp the individuality of a native and restrict them to an object of a visual curiosity. At X's restaurant, her frustration with the Santo Tomas wine that is seemingly "cheap ink dosed with prune juice and industrial alcohol, as harsh on the tongue as a carrot-grater" and insistence on Spanish claret anchors her tourist gaze and reveals her reliance on familiar European standards, dismissing local products with disdain (Bedford 49). Bedford's works hold casual, elliptical references to wine as part of her style. Even though she does not provide a context and instead invites the readers to attempt an understanding in impressions, a close reading of Bedford's personal and autobiographical work, *Jigsaw* (1989) may provide an aid where she revisited her upbringing. Her father's meticulous nature to preserve his standard of living which was dwindling, while cooking or appreciation of fine wine, belonged to an earlier historical period than the beginning of the twentieth century (Bedford *Jigsaw* 26). The culinary references in Bedford's travel narrative are noteworthy, as they highlight her engagement with local cuisines and invite analysis of her comparative framework. These references raise questions about whether she evaluates native foods against a presumed superiority of European culinary standards or demonstrates adaptability and cultural sensitivity to the evolving socio-historical context of the post-colonial period, "this attention to fine wine is indicative of a society that knows how to look after itself, even if it increasingly lacks the money to do so. It also shows a society too concerned with maintaining their old standards to move with the times" (Gaughan and Hanna 65).

Yet Bedford exhibits critical insider moments, engaging Mexico's complexities with her awareness on the contemporary rate of literacy, "one quarter of the people cannot read... there are still two million Mexicans who speak only one of sixty different pre-Columbian tribal dialects" (Bedford 54) which demonstrates that she is aware of the linguistic diversity and the challenges in the sector of education,

however she does not engage with the social reality of the people who cannot read on a deeper level. Her disorientation during her travel reveals her vulnerability, as she claimed to not know who she was, every bit of information that escaped her knowledge seemed immediately paramount, suggesting openness to Mexico's potential for a transformation in her beliefs. The Coyoacán tea party (Chapter Six) captures this shift. The dialogue begins with the host's assumption:

You found? You came by taxi, yes? E. explained that I had prevented her from doing so. The company seemed favorably impressed. And you walked after tramway? That is good. The tourists are so helpless. Be charitable, I said, call us travelers. (Bedford 60)

Bedford's plea to be identified as a traveler in Mexico by walking than taking a taxi suggest her intention to engage deeply with the Mexican culture. However, when asked how long she wishes to stay, her vague "about a year" and ironic glance reveal tourist ambivalence (61). Her deepest insider moment is her analysis of Maximilian's tragedy, dissected as "a tragedy of misunderstanding... pitiful, often squalid", rooted in European miscalculations: "not one of them knew the first thing about Mexico" (Bedford 75-80). Describing Maximilian as "liberal in a sheltered way, high-minded, serious and romantic" yet "incapable of finding anything anomalous" in colonial rule (78), contextualizes his failure within global politics, leading Bedford to engage with Mexico's historical agency (Bedford 75-80). However, Bedford's insider perspective is limited by Eurocentric biases such as her exoticization of the skin tone of locals, relying on expatriates for travel guidance, and using terms like "semi barbarous" (69), keeping her tethered to the tourist gaze. Her tension lies in her aspiration to attain the status of a critical insider as she navigates Mexico's cultural complexity, poised for deeper understanding but not fully transcending her outsider lens. Bedford's own position as a travel writer allows her to navigate this tension, blending fact and fiction to critique the commodification of Mexico while seeking a deeper understanding of its culture.

Graham Greene's travel-narrative *The Lawless Roads* was born out of his commission to report on the persecution of the Catholic Church in 1938, hence his tourism is in danger of being inseparable from his spiritual curiosity that shapes his

interactions with Mexico's people and landscape, "By the time I left for Mexico, Calles had been gone some years.... exile by his rival, Cardenas. The anti-religious laws were still enforced except in one state, San Luis Potosi, but the pressure from the Catholic population was beginning to make itself felt" (Greene 13). His purpose was to seek out traces of a suppressed faith that was beginning to make itself felt; hence his visits to clandestine Masses and meeting persecuted priests, were seen in his account of a secret service in Tabasco: "The priest came out of the darkness... and began to say Mass rapidly in a low voice" (Greene 72). This focus on investigating the state of religion with a journalistic precision is crucial as it distinguishes him from the tourists drawn to Mexico's marketed images, often conventional such as beaches, ruins, or pottery, as the reader is aware in the critiques of Bedford. However, Greene is tourist is always traveling side by side with Greene the journalist-writer with a moral agenda. As he plans his itinerary, he had already noticed the gap between the American advertisements and social realities that one can only realize when one travels, "And yet, though this is the tourist railroad from Laredo to Mexico City, I have seen no references anywhere in the blithe optimistic American books to the squalor of Huichapan station. The whole long platform was given up to beggars not the friendly or the impassive beggars, worse the "get-rich-quick beggars, scrambling and whining and snarling with impatience" (Greene 70). As he prepares to leave for Tabasco and Chiapas on the pretext of visiting the ruins of Palenque, the two states "left where Catholics cannot receive the Sacraments of their faith except secretly" (Greene 75), he begins to plan and go down the lane of a tourist for an itinerary "There are no railways in Tabasco and, as far as I could make out, no roads.... one must travel by water to Villahermosa, the capital, and then somehow by water again to Montecristo on the other side of the state" (79).

Yet, Greene rarely displays the same resilience that he had traveled to find in Mexico, the beggars during his meal times irk him as much as the fact of selling lottery tickets in the cathedral, his amusement is evident as he sees the audience get up to leave watching a film half way that showed a black, seedy clothed priest but only settled down when they realized that the priests and the concept of heaven were to be treated frivolously. Furthermore, Greene recounts the university's opening, noting the traditional "rag" during which dye is put into the water, potentially ruining

clothing. He dismissively concludes, “It is this boyishness, this immaturity, which gets most on the nerves in Mexico” (Greene 78). Greene’s expressed disapproval of this local custom warrants attention as it reveals a critical perspective that may be interpreted as condescending towards the cultural practices of the natives. The selective and often judgmental nature of his engagement is further revealed in his depiction of food, “Lunch was awful, like the food you eat in a dream, tasteless in a positive way, so that the very absence of taste is repellent. All Mexican food is like that: if it isn’t hot with sauces, it’s nothing at all, just a multitude of plates planked down on the table...pieces of anonymous meat ... fish from which the taste of the sea has long been squeezed away” (Greene 33). While traveling from San Antonio to Monterrey, he expresses a sense of comfort in the familiar aspects of American culture, such as food and hotels. However, Greene’s observations of other tourists and his commentary on local customs reveal potential biases. His critique of a fellow American tourist from Wisconsin as full of spiritual vacuity, who claims he did not believe in any God at all, highlights the influence of Greene’s religious convictions on his perceptions in the travelogue. Furthermore, Greene’s characterization of tequila as “a rather inferior schnapps” (36) suggests a Eurocentric bias that potentially limits his appreciation for local traditions. This perspective contrasts with Bedford’s sensory immersion in Mexico City’s her curiosity to try the food and drinks, and demonstrates Greene’s tendency to filter Mexico through a Eurocentric, Catholic lens. His focus on themes of decay and loss, while offering a critical viewpoint, may also reflect a tourist gaze that remains discriminatory, prioritizing his worldview over local realities. In his portrayal of San Luis Potosi, the juxtaposition of the aesthetic appeal of the city with the social and political challenges faced in the city such as lack of adequate water and administrative issues problematizes Greene’s openness to adapt to the lived culture of Mexico. Greene’s grim description of the markets in Mexico stand in stark contrast to Bedford’s vibrant and bustling portrayal, his observation of second-hand revolvers lying among the vegetables that allows an easy access to taking lives of other people underscores the violence pervasive in the city.

Greene’s complex relationship with faith finds its strongest expression in his description of the Indian religion, the mortification he perceives in the theme of

mortification of the peasants' actions: kneeling for extended periods, struggling on their knees, and lying prostrate on the stone floor. He observes a paradox which is that the life of these peasants is as difficult as it can get, however like saints they seek happiness in their suffering, their pain of making themselves suffer provides them pleasure. He sees something beyond the surface, even finding "human goodness" in the faces of those who suffer (Greene 98). This perspective separates him from a typical tourist seeking only pleasure and novelty (Maoz 89). There is a violence to that, he admits. Greene seems both fascinated and repulsed by this display of religious fervor, suggested further he says on the Indian religion, "This was the Indian religion—a dark, tormented, magic cult" (Greene 217). Lest it be analyzed as a colonial way of looking down on the Indian religion, he corroborates the resilience of the Indians' religion that has the Catholics might be "dying out like dogs", but here, in the mountainous strange world of Father Las Casas, Christianity went on its own frightening way" (217). It persists. This juxtaposition highlights the syncretism and hybridity of religious practices in Mexico, where indigenous beliefs have often been integrated with or have existed alongside Christianity. Greene what he does by pointing out the "magic element in Christianity" he blurs the distinction between what is considered mainstream religion and what is often disapproved as "magic cult" of the native Indians in Mexico (Greene 220). Additionally, Greene argues that Christianity itself relies on the miraculous—sacramental wine, exorcisms, resurrection—and therefore rather than distancing himself from such practices, he participates in these acts of mortification from the deeper truths of the faith and the motivations behind them. This perspective complicates the idea of Greene as a conventional tourist, instead it is one characterized by a more nuanced and empathetic contact with local religious culture. At Monterrey, Greene contrasts the perceived restraint and "demurest sensuality" of the Mexican couples with the "ugly passion" he associates with couples in Hyde Park and immediately contradicts himself, "And again if only I'd known it, I was taking the tourist view on the strength of one prosperous town on the high way, on the strength of a happy mood, I was ready to think of Mexico in terms of quiet and gentleness and devotion" (Greene 39-41). Greene's self-awareness in acknowledging his potential to project personal longings onto Mexico is indeed a crucial aspect of his travel writing. Rather than

presenting a definitive portrait of the country, he offers a glimpse into his own evolving understanding, colored by his preconceptions and emotional responses. Debbie Lisle argues that Greene's pioneering self-reflexivity in travel writing invites a deeper introspection, in examining his own biases and the impact of their presence on the cultures he encounters, thus moving beyond mere observation to a critical examination of the cross-cultural exchange. This emphasizes the active role of the travel writer in shaping the narrative and acknowledges the ethical considerations involved in representing other cultures (98). Furthermore, his empathy for the faithful and his admiration for the Indians' resilience can be seen as a genuine attempt to move beyond the superficial gaze. He engages with the spiritual struggles of the Mexican people, delving into the complexities of their faith and their resistance to persecution. By doing so, he offers a more profound and humanistic portrayal of Mexico than a purely detached, objective account could provide.

Ronald G. Walker's critique in *Infernal Paradise* (1978) casts a discerning eye on Greene's portrayal of Catholicism and poverty in Mexico. Walker posits that Greene, unlike his contemporary Ralph Bates, overlooked the potential for the Church to resonate with the populace by actively addressing their material hardships. Bates, through his character Canon Mendoza in *The Fields of Paradise*, envisioned a "metaphysical bridge" between revolutionary ideals and religious faith, yet ultimately conceded that only the "plain and simple man" could feign ignorance of their fundamental discord (19). Walker's analysis underscores the complexity of the Church's role, torn between spiritual guidance and tangible assistance in a society grappling with stark inequalities, a nuance that Walker argues was missing in Greene's perspective.

Greene's interactions with locals further reveal this ambivalence. He often portrays Mexicans as inscrutable or hostile, such as the "suspicious" villagers in Tabasco (Greene 67). Unlike Bedford, who navigates cultural misunderstandings with humor and adaptation, for instance the tuberose incident, Greene remains detached, rarely bridging the cultural gap. His limited Spanish and reliance on guides reinforce his outsider status, as a British writer in a post-revolutionary Mexico, he occupies a privileged position, evident in his ability to travel freely despite local restrictions and his access to resources like boats and mules. His complaints about

Mexico's infrastructure: "the roads were tracks, the hotels filthy" (Greene 34) echo Bedford's frustrations at Nuevo Laredo but carry a stronger tone of superiority. Greene's depiction of Mexicans as "lazy" or "corrupt" (e.g., officials in Villahermosa, Greene 65) reflects a colonial mindset, aligning with the critique of Bedford's Eurocentric biases.

Yet, Greene's self-awareness tempers this critique. He acknowledges his own discomfort and prejudice, admitting, "I hated Mexico" (Greene 13), and reflects on his alienation: "I was a stranger, and I was afraid" (Greene 76). This introspection, rare among conventional tourists, positions him as a reflective observer, akin to the 'critical insider' though his religious agenda limits his cultural integration compared to Bedford.

Greene's narrative style—introspective, brooding, and deliberately fragmented—mirrors the unease of a traveler confronting the moral and spiritual contradictions embedded in the landscape he traverses. Eschewing romanticized depictions, he focuses instead on stark realities: corrupt officials, impoverished villages, and a persecuted faith. This narrative stance aligns with the post-war shift in tourism, which, as Drier observes, moved away from "conventional holiday package deals" toward more "heterogeneous" and immersive experiences (Drier 11). However, unlike the consumer-oriented tourist, Greene's journey is driven by intellectual inquiry and spiritual introspection, positioning him as a morally engaged observer rather than a passive visitor.

In contrast, Sybille Bedford's approach to travel is more leisurely and culturally immersive. While Greene is motivated by a search for religious and existential meaning, Bedford is drawn to the sensual and social fabric of place. Her writing emphasizes aesthetic appreciation and interpersonal encounters, reflecting a deeper engagement with Mexico's living culture. Both authors, however, grapple with the legacy of Mexico's post-revolutionary transformation—Greene through the lens of Catholic persecution, and Bedford through the country's growing appeal to European tourists.

Yet their modes of engagement reveal significant differences. Greene's tone reinforces a certain colonial detachment, marked by a contemplative distance shaped by his religious worldview. Bedford, although writing from a position of privilege,

seeks cultural connection through nuanced observation and openness to difference. Her lively and adaptive narrative style contrasts sharply with Greene's somber introspection. While Greene remains tethered to a fixed Catholic perspective, Bedford's fluid, cosmopolitan outlook enables a more transnational sensibility—one that resists simplistic representations and embraces cultural hybridity.

Ralph Bates's travels to Mexico in the 1930s resulted in a travel essay "Conversations in Mexico" (1937), a novella *The Burning Corn* (1937), and the novel *The Fields of Paradise* (1941). Taken together these texts portray him as both a critical insider, deeply entwined with Mexico's living culture, while occasionally being limited by Eurocentric biases. In "Conversations in Mexico", Ralph Bates opens with a critical reflection on the dispossession of Indigenous lands, a modern tragedy that saps their "will to live ... the remoteness of his gaze has no mystical origin (Bates 395). He rejects his British peers' fatalistic stereotypes, arguing that the despair of the Indians' stem from relentless deception by colonial powers and revolutionary betrayals, not an inherent flaw. *The Burning Corn* vividly captures this pain, as peones in a 1930s village torch Don Atanasio's hacienda, a fiery act of defiance to reclaim their stolen power. Similarly, *The Fields of Paradise* telescopes the Mexican Revolution's thirty years into a few months in San Lorenzo, where peasants, ensnared in debt-peonage by hacienda owner Epigmenio Rosas and tyrant Braulio Acosta, rise up. Sparked by Felipe Mantanzas's jailbreak, their siege of Acosta's tavern-fortress marks a desperate bid for freedom, yet Bates critiques the daunting task of forging a sustainable ejido under Lázaro Cárdenas's distant reforms, exposing the gap between revolutionary dreams and enduring oppression.

Bates's approach to documenting Mexico's post-revolutionary struggles, can be effectively analyzed through Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model (Hall 1980). Hall's model moves beyond a linear sender-message-receiver concept of communication, emphasizing the active role of both the encoder (producer) and decoder (audience) in creating meaning. Hall's model also emphasizes the role of power and ideology in shaping the encoding and decoding processes. He argues that dominant ideologies often influence the 'preferred reading' of a text, but that audiences can resist these dominant interpretations in the form of negotiated and oppositional readings can be actively constructed by the audience. Even though he

had declared himself to be separated from Communism due to the sectarian infighting among the communist factions in Spain and invasion of Finland by the Soviet Union in 1939, his political beliefs while he was writing *The Fields of Paradise* were stirred not by any creed, rather by the personal revolt of the Indians for their lawful lands (Walker 251). Thus, Bates' encoding is influenced by his political beliefs, and a clear sense of social justice which is evident in his dialogues with the Pátzcuaro commissar, the shepherd boy, and the Yaqui farmers. In "Conversations", he exposes the "gachupin's greed [that] broke the Indian's will, but it stirs again" (Bates 399), linking historical exploitation to contemporary resistance. *The Burning Corn's* Nacho and *The Fields of Paradise's* Felipe embody this defiance, their actions encoded as symbols of Mexico's revolutionary spirit, akin to Fontes's Yaqui focus in *Dreams of the Centaur*. Hall's model illuminates diverse decodings: "When the viewer takes the connoted meaning... full and straight... the viewer is operating inside the dominant code" (Hall 59). A reader adopting a preferred reading would likely accept Bates's critical stance towards those who exploit or neglect the Mexican people. They would see his work as a valuable contribution to understanding the complexities of post-revolutionary Mexico. On the other hand, a reader focused on a negotiated reading might acknowledge the challenges of poverty in Bates's encounter with the shepherd boy who begged, but might consider the role of social structures, individual choices, and economic factors in contributing to the boy's situation. A reader adopting an oppositional reading might question Bates's leftist ideology, arguing that it biases his portrayal of Mexico. This reader might interpret Bates's descriptions of poverty and struggle as evidence of the failure of revolutionary ideals, rather than as the result of ongoing exploitation or neglect. They might emphasize the need for stronger leadership, greater economic growth, or more integration into the global economy. When Bates says "I am not one to deduce disaster or salvation from columns of figures; the condition of man to me is more evident in encountering him, in his conversation and behavior" (Bates 296), a reader with an oppositional reading may see this a rejection of empirical data in favor of anecdotal accounts.

However, Bates's privileged mobility as a British observer is evident in his access to ejido leaders: "I walked where few foreigners tread". His romanticization

of ejido resistance, particularly in *The Fields of Paradise*'s idyllic festivals, may gloss over the "slow, uneven" reform process (Bates 399), contrasting with a Mexican American writer, Montserrat Fontes's unflinching depiction of Yaqui genocide. In *The Burning Corn*, the sensational violence of Sebastián's flaying may captivate Western readers, reinforcing colonial fascination with Mexico's "savagery", as Bates notes: "The blood was a spectacle, but the cause was just" (Bates 609). This framing risks shaping Mexico for Western consumption, aligning with the tourist gaze's power dynamics.

Rosa E. King, an English woman who settled in Cuernavaca in 1907, chronicled her experiences during the Mexican Revolution in *Tempest Over Mexico: A Personal Chronicle* (1935). As a hotelier and entrepreneur, King navigates her identity as both a tourist, shaped by her British colonial lens, and a critical insider, transformed by her immersion in Mexico's revolutionary struggles. King's English identity and initial detachment mark her as a tourist, constrained by colonial biases. Her early optimism: "Here I shall make my home, where all is peace and beauty, and nothing has ever changed" reflects a romanticized view, aligning with the tourist gaze. Her tearoom and hotel catered to Western tourists, reinforcing her outsider status: "My worry was that... accidental damage might be done to my property" (King 122). This prioritization of business interests over revolutionary empathy contrasts with Bates's ideological commitment and Fontes's insider perspective. King's admiration for Josephe de la Borde's "generosity" (King 57), without critiquing his wealth from exploitative mining, reveals a blind spot. Her limited Spanish proficiency: "I was relieved not to stick my finger in the pie" (King 179) and initial view of the revolution as "a temporary interruption" (King 122) also echo the tourist gaze than that of a critical insider.

King's portrayal of 'soldaderas' can be analyzed with Elaine Showalter's feminist critique which depicts how women are portrayed in literature. Soldaderas were the resilient women who supported revolutionary soldiers, they were "howling Furies as they snatched the guns from the falling and passed them on to those still on their feet", King's portrayal celebrates their agency, challenging the "indolent wealth" of elite women who "despised" them (King 183). Her soldaderas parallel Fontes's Felipa, reflecting Showalter's feminist phase, but her early "Mexicanism"

contrasts with Bates's ideological depth and Fontes's nuance. Showalter's lens underscores King's shift from feminine detachment to feminist agency, yet her colonial blind spots temper her insider status.

King's ethical business practices, paying artisans fairly: "I paid the Indian potters as much as they asked for" (King 31) and fostering a pottery factory in San Anton, reflect a reciprocal relationship with the indigenous community, akin to Bates's celebration of ejido solidarity in *The Fields of Paradise*. King's transformation is evident in her evolving empathy for the Zapatistas, whom she initially viewed as distant: "I was an Englishwoman; this was not my revolution" (King 122). By the memoir's end, she confesses, "I was no longer the woman, who because she was a foreigner, thought this was not her revolution" (King 246), aligning with Showalter's feminist phase of self-discovery and transformation. Her vivid siege narrative: "We starved with dignity" and relief efforts during the revolution mirror Bates's vignettes in "Conversations" and Bedford's sensory immersion in *A Visit to Don Otavio* (Bedford 42), forging a connection with Mexico's communal resilience.

Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico* is a posthumously published travelogue that offers a rich, textured account of West's journeys in 1966 and 1969 through post-revolutionary Mexico. Her travelogue navigates between the gaze of a tourist that is superficial and the critical insider's attempt at a deeper appreciation of Mexico's people, history, and the effect of the past on the present day. The editor of the travelogue, Bernard Schweizer, notes her text's major driving principle: doubts about divine benevolence, as a sustained and forceful expression that acts as a stark contrast to the other British writers' view of Mexico as a site of spiritual renewal. In contrast to Kate Leslie in D. H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* who was enchanted by the "primitive" life-force of pagan myths associated with the revival of a new religion in Mexico, Greene's novel *The Power and the Glory* is a Christian allegory of unconditional faith and a celebration of martyrdom in the face of religious persecution (West xxii). This is crucial to note because West's lens in the travelogue: a spiritual rebellion against the perceived tyranny of God, or what Camus says as the metaphysical rebellion, is for viewing the Mexican culture that is deeply religious.

In the chapter, “Anthropological Museum I”, she describes with sensuous imagery the museum’s stone walls that evokes a near mythical world, “pale grey, storm grey, violet-grey, violet, grey-blue, blue, rose-grey, rose”, noting how they “shimmer as if alive and breathing” (West 55). Using poetic language, she likens the act of crossing the courtyard and coming across the fountain in the museum as better than emptying a glass of wine which could refer to the fact that as a tourist her gaze is selective and rather than analyzing the effect of the museum on the modern Mexican society, she focuses her gaze on the aesthetic appeal of the museum. West is also fascinated with the pre-Columbian Mexican civilizations such as the Aztecs, Maya, and Olmecs, as she describes the artifacts she says, “the expressions of Indian genius in its purity, unaffected by Europe ... not a mill of the European kind, not a loom, not a fingerprint of our kind of craftsmanship” (West 56). As she emphasizes the distinction of indigenous Mexican cultures from European influence, she reflects a classic trope of the tourist gaze: the search for authenticity in a culture perceived as untouched by modernity or colonialism. However, her critical reflection is evident when she notes how the artifacts caricature the human body by creating a deliberate imbalance and places them in a hypothetical western frame of reference. She enquires what if the art in Europe were dominated by the grotesque visions of Hieronymus Bosch or the satire of Daumier. West’s interaction with Mexican art transcends a simple tourist perspective. Instead of exoticizing indigenous art, she grounds it in a universal human context, while still recognizing its unique character. Her observation that art reflects an “honest recognition that human beings are often made hideous by what the gods do to them” (60) reveals an analytical gaze alongside her fascination. This analysis moves beyond surface-level distinctions, engaging with the culture through a philosophical worldview.

Her cultural analysis extends to the tension between the indigenous past and Spanish heritage. West’s awareness of Cortes’ conquest, which led to a rupture in the impressive indigenous civilization, complicates her tourist gaze, moving beyond aesthetic immersion to a sensitive awareness of the historical trauma resulting from the encounter between colonizer and colonized. This nuanced perspective is further highlighted in her interactions with Mexican officials of Spanish descent. In one such conversation, the first official responds with “moderate enthusiasm” to her

admiration for the museum, subtly noting that it was founded by a Spanish viceroy. He dismisses the notion of a continuous Aztec tradition, arguing that the Spanish destroyed the elite who carried it (West 115). This subtle exchange illuminates the complexities of West's position as a foreign observer navigating local identities and historical narratives.

However, West disagrees with the idea, as she perceives if the elite did indeed carry the tradition, they must have found a way to imprint it on the masses. The second official explains that the first official's family was Spanish, and they did leave Mexico after its independence, however as it was where their home was, they came back to Mexico yet could not rise above their contempt of the indigenous Mexican civilization. He opined that the first official indeed supported the reclamation of the indigenous roots of modern-day Mexico by going against the views of his family, yet could not express his opinions freely as by doing so he would have sacrificed his integrity. West's frustration with the paradox reflects her struggle to reconcile the layered identities and historical grievances she encounters. This negotiation of colonial and indigenous legacies aligns with Urry's idea that the tourist gaze is not static but shaped by the tourist's preconceptions and interactions with the host culture. West's gaze is self-aware, recognizing the limitations of her outsider perspective (Urry 12). Her admission that "the past is so complicated that it is practically impossible to make a clear statement about the present" underscores her awareness of the intoxicating power of history, which she compares to "pulque and mescal" (West 89). By likening Mexico's embrace of its Aztec past to the Serbs' memory of their medieval greatness, she universalizes the phenomenon of historical memory while acknowledging its specific resonance in Mexico's post-colonial context.

In the chapter "Anthropological Museum II", the perceived darkness of the artifacts as is reflected in the gravity of the forms leads West to connect the suffering embedded in the rigid class structures of the pre-Columbian cultures that produced them. Her observation that "the woe of one class seeps through the whole" (West 102) suggests a sensitivity to the human cost behind the art, complicating her romantic gaze with an anthropological awareness of social inequities. As she is fascinated by the Aztecs' ability to build a city of a million inhabitants on Lake

Texcoco in less than two centuries, she is also critically aware of the exploitation of its inhabitants with the aid of various “brilliant military and diplomatic techniques” (110). Her comparison of the Aztec state to an efficient Fascist dictatorship that strictly followed the rules is yet again an attempt to contextualize their governance within a Western framework, revealing both admiration for their organizational genius and a critical awareness of their authoritarianism. She also observes that during the period of 1325-1521, when England was deep in the crisis of the civil war, the Aztecs, even in the absence of a script, livestock and minerals, literature on Plato or Machiavelli to rely on, created a state that did not exempt taxes from the people yet never failed to feed them while there was a famine.

West’s comparison of the modern Mexicans moving across the museum as if in a church elevates the museum to a sacred space for Mexicans, contrasting with the tourists who treat it as a mere museum. West’s observation that Mexicans favor the Aztec section- a connection to their proud pre-Columbian past, particularly the model of Tenochtitlán, over the aesthetically superior Mayan rooms reveals her awareness of the museum’s role in shaping national identity. However, the disapproving tone betrays her as a privileged outsider who fails to comprehend the importance of patriotic feelings over aesthetic judgement. Her description of the Mexicans’ “complexions warmed, their hands and feet refined by their heritage of Indian blood” romanticizes their indigenous ancestry, while her note that their “European strain” converts them from “pessimism to optimism” introduces a problematic binary (West 120). This characterization reflects a colonial lens, suggesting that indigenous heritage is inherently melancholic and European influence is uplifting, a perspective that aligns with the tourist gaze’s tendency to stereotype and essentialize host cultures. Towards the end of the chapter, West herself gets a letter from the Inland Revenue about a tax issue involving a former secretary, Mrs. Clarkson- this is a crucial shift in her narrative, as this mundane affair impedes her ability to fully engage with the museum. This moment highlights the fragility of the tourist gaze, which relies on a suspension of everyday concerns to maintain its romantic immersion. The museum, with its promise of “a new heaven and a new hell and a new earth”, represents an escape into a foreign world, but the tax letter anchors

her back to her “sole self” (West 121) underscoring the tension between the tourist’s desire for transcendence and the inescapable pull of personal identity.

West’s privileged position as a Western visitor is apparent in her ability to navigate the museum and park with ease, unencumbered by the economic constraints faced by locals. Her distraction by a letter from the Inland Revenue underscores her detachment, as personal concerns momentarily overshadow her experience, a luxury not afforded to the “living Mexicans” she observes. Her Eurocentric lens surfaces in her aesthetic judgment that the Mayan rooms are superior “by aesthetic standards” (West 75), implying a Western metric of beauty. This discriminatory gaze, which is described as power-laden, positions her as a tourist who interprets Mexico through a colonial framework, similar to Greene’s generalizations.

In the chapter “Chapultepec II”, the Chapultepec Park, and the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe act as paradoxical spaces in her narrative, symbolic of the point of convergence of the native Indians’ reverence for their indigenous past (in the form of Aztec Gods) as well as their simultaneous devotion to Catholicism. Her recognition of the infliction of Cortes’s historical trauma in the form of the destruction of the Aztec religion results her in framing the indigenous people as exiles, who have found refuge in Christianity, yet have held on to their own Gods. West grapples with the syncretic nature of Mexican spirituality, particularly her comparison of the suffering Christ to a “defeated king” (West 151) clothed by the Indians which reflects the insight of an insider who attempts to understand the ways in which colonized peoples adapt and reinterpret imposed religions. By linking this to the broader experience of exiles globally, West universalizes the Mexican experience, suggesting a shared human resilience that transcends cultural boundaries. Further instances can be seen in her detailed descriptions of the fountains, the mosaic Tlaloc (Aztec God of rain and storm), and the Aztec-inspired architecture as symbols of the Aztec cultural revival. Her acknowledgement of the government’s efforts to reimagine its past and thus curate Mexico’s cultural identity places her as a traveler who is aware of Mexico’s complexity beyond an exoticized narrative. Moreover, her critique of the alienation between parents and children in the western societies who are influenced by modern psychiatry suggests West’s ability to hold a mirror to her own culture, using Mexico as a foil to highlight its deficiencies. West’s observation

of harmonious family gatherings in Mexican parks risks oversimplifying Mexican culture by presenting an idealized view of familial unity while ignoring the complexities and challenges within Mexican social structures. While she admires the warmth and amity of these interactions, her commentary also carries an analytical tone, reflecting a nuanced appreciation for cultural differences.

A comparative analysis of Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico* and Graham Greene's *The Lawless Roads* reveals both authors' complex engagements with the syncretic religious practices of Mexico's indigenous populations, as well as their evolving perspectives on faith, shaped by their encounters with cultural difference. Both writers, as Western observers, initially approach Mexican religious practices with a degree of discomfort, reflecting their own cultural norms, yet ultimately undergo transformative shifts in their understanding, acknowledging the depth and resilience of indigenous spirituality. West highlights the enduring syncretic faith of Mexico's indigenous peoples, emphasizing their ability to weave Aztec heritage with Catholic devotion despite historical traumas. She observes the exiles from the Aztec Empire finding solace in Christianity, clothing the suffering Christ as a defeated king in a gesture of cultural continuity and resilience. Similarly, Greene notes the persistence of Catholic faith in Mexico's mountainous regions, where, despite the persecution of priests during the anti-clerical campaigns of the 1930s, indigenous communities maintain their spiritual practices with a fervor that he finds both unsettling and compelling. This shared recognition of indigenous resilience underscores both authors' appreciation for the adaptive strength of Mexican spirituality in the face of adversity.

However, both West and Greene occasionally risk reductive portrayals of indigenous people, reflecting Western biases. West's description of the animal vigor and restraint of the Indian population, though intended as praise, verges on essentializing them as a monolithic, primal force, stripping away their complexity of being an individual. Similarly, Greene's depiction of penitents at San Luis Potosí, crawling on their knees in acts of devotion, attributes a certain violence to their practices, framing them as intense and alien to his sensibilities. These characterizations reveal an initial discomfort with rituals that diverge from Western norms, betraying the authors' positions as outsiders navigating unfamiliar cultural

terrain. Despite these initial reactions, both West and Greene undergo significant transformations in their perspectives on religion by the conclusions of their narratives. West, reflecting on the penitents at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, moves beyond her initial judgment that such acts “seem a gross idea of pleasing God” (West 213). She ultimately perceives them as expressions of “not brutish superstition but rather oversensitivity”, recognizing the “propriety” of these extraordinary acts in a place imbued with profound historical and spiritual significance. This shift reflects her growing respect for the agency and intentionality of indigenous worshippers, who “know their own business best” (220). Similarly, Greene, after returning to England and attending a Mass in Chelsea, senses a spiritual emptiness in the ritual, lacking the visceral devotion he witnessed in Mexico. He muses, “Perhaps we are in need of violence” (Greene 289), suggesting that the intense, embodied faith of Mexico’s indigenous Catholics holds a vitality absent in the more sanitized Western practice. This acknowledgment marks a profound reorientation, as Greene begins to value the raw, transformative power of Mexican spirituality over the complacency he perceives in his own cultural context. In their respective journeys, West and Greene move from discomfort to a humanistic appreciation of Mexico’s syncretic faith, challenging their initial ethnocentric assumptions. Their transformations highlight the capacity of cross-cultural encounters to foster empathy and self-reflection, as both authors come to see the indigenous practices not as foreign or primitive but as profound expressions of human resilience and spiritual depth. This comparative analysis underscores the shared arc of their narratives: a movement toward recognizing the universal human need for meaning, even as it is expressed through culturally distinct forms.

West’s interactions with locals, though limited by language, are less hostile than Greene’s and more reflective than Bedford’s market exchanges (Bedford 42-43). Her observation of penitents’ “propriety” (84) and families’ “good nature” (80) reflects an attempt to honor Mexico’s living culture, though her Eurocentric framework prevents full integration into the “critical insider” role. Hence, it could be said that West engages intellectually, appreciating cultural hybridity but remaining more analytical than immersive.

Benedict Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities* (1983) that “nations aren’t ancient communities that are held together by a common history, blood, language, culture or territory conquered by nationalism, as nationalists claim, but a modern invention into which practitioners of nationalism imagine their people’s membership in one big, original community that is shaped by nationalism” (Anderson 45). He describes the nation as “an imagined political community imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” where people “imagine that they have a relationship with all other members of the nation across time and space” even if they will never meet most of them (67). This second wave of popular imagination constructed over cultural practices, history, and stories have built upon indigenous and colonial roots to define the post-revolutionary identity of Mexico. Analyzing through Anderson’s lens entails the study of the ways in which British authors participate on the common reflection, query, or renovation of Mexico’s imagined community, while acknowledging their limitations as an outsider. In *A Visit to Don Otavio*, Bedford explores Mexico’s every-day life which she views as an imagined community. Her market adventures and the tuberose mix-up where she encounters kids blessing her with ‘que Dios la proteja’ show her brushing up against the cultural habits that help Mexicans feel united. Anderson points out how “the development and spread of common ideas” (45) through things like media can build this sense of togetherness, and for Bedford, it’s these lived moments that give a hint of Mexico’s spirit. But her colonial lens by calling officials “Red Indian Pygmies” (Bedford 32), and longing for pre-war Europe pull her away. She sees Mexico as a colorful escape rather than a nation with a shared post-revolutionary story, missing that “deep and horizontal fraternity” Anderson talks about, where people connect “across age, class, color, creed, gender and race irrespective of actually existing divisions” (98).

One of the defining features of Mexico’s imagined community lies in its syncretic religious identity, which Greene observes in *The Lawless Roads* through the blending of Catholicism and indigenous practices, particularly in the secret Masses and the ritual life of the peasantry (Greene 41–43). As Anderson argues, nationalism—like religion—“inscribes the individual within a larger historical and social context that transcended its individual members,” filling the “existential void” left by the decline of traditional belief systems (Anderson 11). However, Greene’s

personal biases—his admitted “grumpiness” (“I hated Mexico” [Greene 9]) and Eurocentric dismissiveness (referring to tequila as inferior schnapps [Greene 29])—suggest that he interprets Mexico not through its collective national consciousness, but through his own Catholic worldview. As a result, he fails to engage with the “imagined political community” that Anderson describes, one that is “real enough that people are prepared to kill and die for” it (Anderson 7).

West’s *Survivors in Mexico* represents her most sustained attempt to engage with Mexico’s imagined community and its cultural-historical identity. At the National Museum of Anthropology, she observes how Mexican visitors treat the Aztec exhibits with reverence, likening the experience to being in a church, which suggests a collective identity rooted in a shared indigenous past. Her reflection on the ‘Mexican paradox’ at the Basilica of Guadalupe—where indigenous traditions and Catholicism converge—captures the hybrid nature at the core of Mexico’s national consciousness. This aligns with Anderson’s argument that “the nation does not preexist nationalism” but is instead “the product of modern political interests and dynamics,” as West witnesses a nation actively reconstructing its identity in the wake of revolution (Anderson 4). However, her interpretation is not without limitations. Moments of Eurocentrism—such as comparing Aztec rule to fascism and digressing into a tax-related anecdote—reveal the lingering influence of her Western lens, preventing her from fully immersing herself in Mexico’s national narrative as a limited yet sovereign community. Anderson’s assertion that “there is no pre-historical or necessary basis for the delineation of our imagined communities” highlights the challenges that outsider authors face in grasping the constructed nature of such identities (Anderson 16).

Bedford, too, acknowledges Mexican rituals but limits herself to the colonialist mindset from which she cannot escape. Greene, while aware of religious symbolism, is rooted in his Catholic world view, thereby not joining in with the forces of Mexican nationalism. Though West is closest to unraveling the historical and cultural threads that shape Mexico’s national identity, she remains restricted by her Western intellectual framework that forms and restricts her understanding. All three writers, despite their efforts to imagine Mexico, become more observers than

participants in this process of national self-definition that Anderson identifies as part of the 'modern imagination' (Anderson 14).

To conclude, it is Greene's quest, set in motion in search of pure Catholic faith, that distinguishes him from Bedford's nostalgic and sensory travel, West's intellectually hybrid approach. Bedford speaks specifically to the collective, embodied life of Mexican life, its trials and tribulations, while West brings that context together with history and culture to create an intellectual feast of a story that is more cerebral than emotional. Bedford is the most adaptable of the three, balancing her privileged position with genuine cultural engagement, while Greene's picture gives us a detached, moralistic glance at a colonial distance. Although West is rich in analytical insight, it is intellectually engaged yet emotionally restrained and is in midway between Greene's alienation and Bedford's immersion.

Though limited by their colonial gaze, each of the writers step forward with empathy to experience the lived culture of Mexico. Bedford makes the most explicit effort to live with Mexican culture. The cultural paradoxes of West are at play while those of Greene remain largely tied to his religious lens, living in estrangement. Yet the tales that they tell underline how complicated the position of the Western traveler was during the post-revolutionary Mexico, both privileged and detached. Bedford demonstrates the deepest cultural engagement through sensory immersion in markets and haciendas. West offers critical breadth in interpreting Mexico's identity but falls short of full personal connection. Greene, meanwhile, remains insulated by his spiritual focus, while Ralph Bates, through his political activism and commitment to social justice, moves beyond the superficial tourist gaze.

Elaine Showalter's feminist reading of Rosa King further highlights how travel in revolutionary Mexico could foster personal transformation. King's recognition of Mexican humanity amid political turmoil offers a hopeful counterpoint, even as her account remains marked by the tensions of colonial identity. Together, these authors reveal the limits and possibilities of travel writing as a site for negotiating outsider privilege and cultural understanding.

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Chapter Five

‘Outer-truths’ and ‘Inner-truths’: Truths, Lies, and Female Sensibilities in Travel Narratives

The chapter examines how travel narratives of women transition from factual reports of outer experiences to creative representations of emotional explorations during their journeys. The exploration draws on the “intrinsic heterogeneity” of travel writing interpretation outlined by Carl Thompson in *Travel Writing* (2011); Michel Foucault’s concepts of relational power and discursive subjectivities as articulated in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1976); Hélène Cixous’s theory of *écriture féminine* developed in *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975); and Susan Bassnett’s insights into gendered travel writing, particularly from her essay “Travel Writing and Gender” in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (2002). The concept that travel-writing contains autobiographical memoir elements which enable it to assert “literal validity” is explained through the analysis of Paul Fussell’s *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (1980). Fussell opines that travel-narratives maintain an implicit relationship with their readers who anticipate real-life basis in their content (Fussell 40). The chapter benefits from this interdisciplinary method since it reveals how Rosa E. King’s *Tempest Over Mexico* (1935) and Sybille Bedford’s *A Visit to Don Otavio* (1953) and Rebecca West’s *Survivors in Mexico* (2003) demonstrate personal stories within historical settings and power relations.

Rosa E. King’s *Tempest Over Mexico: A Personal Chronicle* (1935) provides a valuable, though often overlooked British perspective of the Mexican Revolution (1910–17). The truths and the contradictions of female authored travel narratives are explored in this chapter through the comparison of King’s account to Sybille Bedford’s *A Visit to Don Otavio* and to Rebecca West’s *Survivors in Mexico*. Each of these writers takes on Mexican culture through personal storytelling that states not only interest but an awareness implicit or explicit of colonial power and cultural interaction. Their stories combine emotional insight and cultural curiosity and self-awareness that come from being both privileged and careful observers of a foreign land.

Maureen Mulligan examines truth and narrative relations in women's travel literature through her essay "Women Travel Writers and the Question of Veracity" (2014). She proposes a succession from objective, fact-based accounts to subjective, symbolic recreations of their inner journeys. She outlines a spectrum of truthfulness in travel writing, that ranges from a discourse focused on objectivity which she terms as the "outer truth" such as Christina Dodwell's *A Traveler in China* (1985) to a subjective reconstruction of their travels or the "inner truth", for example in Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio* (Mulligan 177). Dodwell's anthropological descriptions or Christina Lamb's journalistic *The Sewing Circles of Herat* (2002) prioritize factual reporting, using maps and minimal personal disclosure to validate veracity. Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio* on the other hand can be classified as a subjective work that focuses on attaining a symbolic resonance, often blurring fact and fiction.

King's memoir chronicles her life in Cuernavaca, Morelos, from 1905, through the revolution's upheavals under Porfirio Díaz, Emiliano Zapata, Francisco Madero, Victoriano Huerta, and later presidents like Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles. Her narrative begins with a vivid recollection: "I came with my husband from our home in Mexico City, eager to see the beauty and richness of this famous valley" (King 7). This outer-truth, grounded in historical specificity, aligns with Fussell's view of travel memoirs claiming "literal validity" through references to actuality (Fussell 23). She also provides detailed accounts of revolutionary figures and precise references to places and dates such as Zapata's fight for indigenous land rights and Madero's assassination along with several illustrations by artist Carroll Bill that lend authenticity to her text. Molly M. Wood notes the myriad reasons of Mexico's temptation for foreigners such as large American landholdings as well as millions of dollars of investments" (Wood 106); King also emphasizes Díaz's regime that offered tourists like her, perfect safety during travels. Her travel-memoir captures the stark inequalities of the Porfirio regime where foreign investments fueled prosperity for the elite while indigenous artisans were underpaid- rooted in the belief that "Indians know no better" (King 45). King criticizes her friends' dismissive views of indigenous artisans by making it a point never to haggle with their prices, when she set up a curio shop at her tearoom in Cuernavaca. King exposes the

pervasive colonial mindset that shaped interactions between foreigners and Mexicans and her countercultural move of respecting the prices of the artisans displays her active engagement with the local community. The fact that her pottery factory in San Anton fostered a small artisan industry also adds a layer of socioeconomic realism to her narrative and grounds her narrative in the cultural and economic realities of Mexico. Her memoir's credibility is also bolstered by her business ventures as they reflect the economic realities of a widowed mother navigating a foreign land.

Even though she was a businesswoman she is critical of the wealthy Spanish landowners or the hacendados' greed for indigenous lands. Her appreciation of Zapata's tactical brilliance in targeting the wealth of oppressive hacendados during his raids of their crops and destruction of machinery aligns with historical records of his agrarian rebellion. It also gives the reader a sense of being an eyewitness to the unraveling of the divisions in the revolutionary army. Likewise, King's depiction of the soldaderas, or the indigenous women who fought alongside soldiers with fierce resilience mirrors historical accounts that celebrate them as inspirational figures for Mexican women (Alonso 6). It also draws on outer-truths to maintain credibility within the context of the revolution's chaotic alliances and betrayals. The dramatic elements of her narrative, such as the espionage involving Helene Pontipirani, a deceptive beauty and the Rumanian spy working for Pancho Villa reads like a thriller. Characters like Captain Federico Chacon, a swashbuckling loyalist add romantic and suspenseful elements, making the memoir a page-turner. These devices, as Bassnett notes, develop a distinct female sensibility through "lyrical, descriptive prose" and empathy (235), yet they also manipulate the reader's perceptions, potentially exaggerating King's role in revolutionary events.

Even though she identified herself as an Englishwoman "outside this revolution", who was only worried that the revolution would cause harm to her trade, she gradually recognizes the justice of Zapata's cause. Her admission that she had been "on the wrong side" and her defense of Zapatista deserters reflect a transformation informed by her firsthand observations of Federal cruelty and indigenous suffering (King 213). By acknowledging her initial misjudgments, King makes her narrative feel honest and reflective, inviting readers to trust her account as a genuine reckoning with her own biases. Furthermore, the destruction of King's

hotel, Bella Vista, during the revolution and her description of being reduced to an “animal” alongside others after surviving the siege, stripped of “niceties of breeding”, capture the leveling effect of crisis (King 312). This raw vulnerability, rooted in the tangible setting of Cuernavaca, lends her narrative authenticity, aligning it with real-world events and making her personal story a vivid window into a broader historical moment.

However, King’s narrative is not merely a historical record. Her dedication to Mexico’s people and her claim to call it “home” post revolution positions the memoir as a cultural text that acts as a space for “synaptic” cross cultural exchanges (Thompson 22). Yet, her reliance on memory: “My memory of that evening is an intoxicating blur” (King 5) and frequent use of phrases like “looking back” (King 35–36) introduce ambiguity, complicating the memoir’s factual claims. King’s memoir employs novelistic strategies, blurring fact and fiction, a trait Susan Bassnett identifies in 20th-century travelogues that resemble novels through dialogue and character development (237). A key example is her anecdote about an unnamed American from the U.S. Embassy, pseudonymized as “Mr. Smith”, who joins Huerta’s mission to capture Zapata (King 84). This concealment whether due to forgotten details or deliberate omission creates an imaginative space, enhancing the narrative’s romantic allure, as Fussell describes travelogues as prose fiction akin to romance (Fussell 207). The pseudonym casts the American as an intrusive antagonist, reflecting U.S. diplomatic meddling, yet its anonymity undermines factual accountability and contributes to the narrative’s inner-truth. Unlike Bedford, who openly admits fictionalization in *A Visit to Don Otavio*, King seeks historical credibility while employing similar liberties, raising questions about her narrative’s truth. King’s use of hindsight “I know now” or “looking back” (King 46–52) further shapes her inner-truth, as Maureen Mulligan defines subjective recollections in women’s travel writing (Mulligan 176). Her recounting of the Bella Vista Hotel’s opening night, described as “an intoxicating blur of lights, and music and perfume” (King 5), evokes nostalgia for pre-revolutionary splendor, possibly lamenting lost British glamour rather than solely Mexican struggles. This selective memory risks untruths, as details written years later (published 1935) may be embellished. For instance, her vivid dialogues with figures like Huerta or Madero seem verbatim, yet

their accuracy is questionable without contemporaneous notes, aligning with Bassnett's critique of travelogues inventing conversations to transcend language barriers.

King's empathy coexists with privilege, as her British identity affords protections like sheltering Madero under her flag unavailable to locals. Her depiction of Pontipirani as a "high-strung race horse" (King 142) reflects an essentialist tendency to attribute static cultural traits, reducing complex political behavior to temperament. This characterization glosses over the deeper revolutionary motivations at play—a simplification that, as Mary Louise Pratt argues in her theory of the "contact zone," risks reinforcing asymmetrical power dynamics and cultural misunderstandings (Pratt *Imperial Eyes* 65).

King's narrative also reveals hypocrisies rooted in her colonial mindset. Her solidarity with the "peones" is undercut by detachment "I was glad this was not my revolution" and profiteering, such as doubling pottery prices for American tourists (King 47). This mirrors Pratt's critique of travelers perpetuating power imbalances under moral rhetoric (Pratt *Imperial Eyes* 7). King's critique of the American "Mr. Smith" as intrusive is hypocritical given her own reliance on foreign capital, thriving under Díaz's tourist-friendly policies. Her British privilege, which she leverages for safety and influence (e.g., friendships with figures like Governor Don Pablo), contradicts her claim of oneness, exposing a tension Bhabha describes as hybrid but incomplete identity in *The Location of Culture* (203).

She portrays Victoriano Huerta with empathy and nuance, grounding her narrative in specific details like sharing plums with him that contributes to her outer-truth (King 79). Despite her condemnation of Huerta's cold-blooded murder of President Madero in 1913, King reflects on Huerta's worn appearance as president, sympathizing with his exhaustion from constant vigilance (King 142), thus humanizing his character and building her narrative on introspective truth. However, her friendship with Huerta also served her self-interest, enabling safe travel to Cuernavaca, and her hotel's role as a revolutionary hub amplifies her centrality, likely to captivate readers, as Paul Fussell suggests travelers craft tales for domestic audiences (Fussell 207).

The memoir's blend of outer-truth (historical detail) and inner-truth (subjective memory) raises critical questions such as the influence of creative liberty on the reliability of her narrative. It also illuminates on the contrasting coexistence of solidarity and privilege in Pratt's contact-zone, which reflect the ethical ambiguities of travel writing (Pratt *Imperial Eyes* 7).

Sybille Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio: A Traveler's Tale from Mexico* (1953) is a factual account of her real journey from New York to Mexico, undertaken after the Second World War, and adheres to the conventions of travel literature by opening with a map to orient readers. It deftly weaves Mexican history, politics, and personal reflection, presenting Mexico through lens of a novelist. In the preface to her travelogue, Bruce Chatwin notes Bedford's admission, "Of course it is a novel ... I did not take a single note when I was in Mexico" (Bedford ix). Written in retrospect without notes, the text raises questions about the narrative veracity while relying on memory and postcards. She claims minimal prior reading about Mexico, except for Thomas Philip Terry's *Terry's Guide to Mexico* (1909) and Madame Calderón, Fanny Inglis's *Life in Mexico: A Residence Of Two Years In That Country* (1843). This assertion of a lack of a formal preparation before traveling to Mexico is dubious, as her narrative is replete with detailed references to Inglis's diary and Terry's guide. She criticizes D. H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* as "portentous without good reason" and expresses her preference for the "lyrical" *Mornings in Mexico* (Bedford 31) which indicates that her perspective was shaped by a carefully compiled knowledge. This half-truth deliberately downplays her intellectual preparation and constructs an impression of spontaneity thereby contributing to the poetic allure of her travel-narrative. This tension aligns with Paul Fussell's view of travel memoirs as romantic quests (Fussell 215) that allows Bedford to blend historical insights with subjective impressions while simultaneously inviting a scrutiny of her narrative's reliability.

The verifiable truths in Bedford's travel-narrative are rooted in her references to the bureaucratic challenges faced by her along with an awareness of the Mexican Revolution's legacy, such as the nationalization of the petroleum industry which align with post-revolutionary reforms under presidents like Lázaro Cárdenas. The unpleasantness she experiences during the Customs Inspection and the change of

trains is relayed to the reader, and her language is laced with a sardonic humor and wit. She is impatient while the train is stalled at reaching Nuevo Laredo, they are made to stand in a line at two in the morning and she cannot understand what could be the forbidden things, the Mexican passport officials are checking for. She says:

Cigarettes, spirits, French scent, textiles, tea and coffee are all much cheaper in Mexico than in the United States... All they [elderly women passengers] they are bent on is spending their dollars on a huge loot of native arts and crafts, and bringing them home in original Mexican baskets. To subject the luggage of these benefactresses to those thorough and callous indiscretions... is inflicting discomfort on the temporarily powerless by the temporarily powerful. (Bedford 20-21)

It is difficult to determine whether her comment on the foreign women who have come to shop because everything is inexpensive at Mexico is a sarcasm. But it is important to mention that the similar idea has also been expressed by Rosa King about how the Americans and Europeans have flocked into the nation because of its inexpensiveness and it being a place where they could get rich quickly. It does betray their hypocrisy, the high-truths of the colonial mindset. The apparent kindness of the British passport officials is contrasted with the “passportees [in Mexico] ...borne down upon by the underpaid, the brutish and the ignorant. One might be in the Balkans or the East” (Bedford 21). This betrays the colonial gaze of a British writer traveling to Mexico. Her patronizing attitude reduces the native Mexicans into animals as is revealed in the description of customs officials: “Red Indian Pygmies” digging into bags “like terriers” (Bedford 20).

Bedford’s outer-truths are grounded in Mexico’s historical and socio-economic realities that corroborate Fussell’s “literal validity” (Fussell 203). Her observation during a discussion with European expatriates that Mexican Indians adhere to a pre-Conquest diet of tortillas and frijoles aligns with anthropological evidence of indigenous dietary continuity, reflecting resilience against an imposition by the Spanish conquest (Bedford 66). Even though the hosts point out that the indigenous diet is complete with every nutrient, their reluctance to introduce the food brought in by the colonizers such as butter, and pork suggest that more servants are required to run the household, often resulting in them being underpaid “Oh yes, it’s

all cheap enough by Western standards. In Mexico everything is cheap and everybody is underpaid” (Bedford 67). Bedford’s silence in observing the exploitation that prioritizes the employer’s well-being over the workers romanticizes Mexico as a land of opportunity, ignoring the structural inequalities perpetuated by such dynamics. However, the reference to underpaid servants and wealth accumulation opportunities for foreigners accurately captures the post-revolutionary economic disparity, where foreign investment in mining, railroads, and oil persisted despite reforms (Wood 106). The expatriates’ discussion of corruption of the clergy and the inefficacy of Western education for addressing indigenous “ignorance” also reflects real challenges in post-revolutionary Mexico, where land reform and educational initiatives struggled against entrenched inequalities, albeit through a Eurocentric lens (Bedford 66). Bedford delights in accumulation of goods in Mexico which are found to be relatively cheaper than the western standards, and her poetic market scenes immerses the readers in a sensory delight, Indians “squatting on the ground over minute charcoal barriers stirring some dark stew” and offering “a single round white cheese on a loaf” (Bedford 24). Even though this reflects the delight of Bedford the tourist, her privileged mobility post second world war influences her personal truth and is in danger of exoticizing the Indians. Sara Steinert Borella links this notion to the enjoyment of a country’s resources while turning a blind eye to the systemic exploitation of the indigenous people in her crucial article “Travel, Gender, and the Exotic” (2019) (133).

Compared to King’s *Tempest Over Mexico*, Bedford’s narrative lacks the revolutionary immersion; King’s market interactions reflect empathy for the native pottery artisans and her refusal to haggle with potters, contrasts with Bedford’s uncritical enjoyment of cheap goods revealing King’s deeper engagement with economic realities despite her own profiteering.

This contrasts with West’s analytical engagement with racial and economic inequalities (West 166), highlighting Bedford’s limited critique of colonial legacies. akin to the “philosophic dimension” West ascribes to marketplaces (Schweizer 259), masking economic disparities under aesthetic veneer—a hypocrisy Mulligan notes in women travelers’ romantic projections (Mulligan 177).

Bedford's nostalgia for Mexico's sparkling world of fresh produce, natural beauty, and affordable means of travel during the inter-war years, problematizes her outer-truth as it paints an idyllic rural life while ignoring the impact of the colonial power interplay and systemic poverty on the cultural fabric of Mexico. This selective gaze mirrors Lawrence's idealization in *Mornings in Mexico*, which Bedford critiques for projecting his reality onto Mexico yet she falls into a similar trap. Her romanticization of indigenous diets and hacienda life risks perpetuating stereotypes, yet her critical appraisal of Western consumerism reminiscent of Graham Greene, "cellophane, television, deep freeze unit" (Bedford 163–164) resonates with post-World War II disillusionment. Her nostalgia for the inter-war years in the mid-1940s and yearning for simpler times during Europe's turmoil, though hard to justify, reflect a longing for a lost Eden. Mulligan notes that women travel-writers like Bedford often seek symbolic escapes, for Bedford, Mexico becomes a powerful symbol where she confronts the emptiness of Western consumerism and its impact on her life (177). Her disdain for American consumerism, however ignores her own reliance on economic privilege to travel, as seen in her ability to afford train journeys and stays at hacienda as a luxury unavailable to most Mexicans.

Bedford's inner-truth finds its strongest resonance in her depiction of Don Otavio's hacienda, near Lake Chapala. Don Otavio is a man[squire] facing ruin with 17 servants and his family has struggled to hold on to their land and wealth during the various wars and revolutions of the previous decades (Rollmann 8). Described as a fading Eden, beset by family schemes to modernize it, Bedford captures the socio-economic shifts in post-revolutionary Mexico, where traditional haciendas faced decline. These details ground the text in a recognizable reality, supporting Bedford's claim to chronicle Mexico's multifarious faces (Bedford 163–164). Bedford crafts well-rounded characters during her stay at the hacienda such as Mrs. Rawlston, an American expatriate whose racist remarks about "blacks" (high-caste Hindus) and equating of Germans with Nazis betrays the foreign perceptions of Mexico, thereby grounding her travel narrative in a socio-economic reality. These interactions occur in what Pratt terms the "contact zone", a social space where "cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (Pratt "Arts of the Contact Zone" 34). Bedford's narrative set in the mid-1940s post-

World War II, captures Mexico as a postcolonial landscape, where European and American travelers project their prejudices while navigating the ideals of Mexican Revolution.

Characters who maybe real or fictionalized vividly come to life in her travel-narrative such as the kind host of San Pedro hacienda, Don Otavio along with the European expatriates at the Coyoacán tea party which suggests a novelistic reconstruction. Moreover, Bedford's presentation of the exchange of dialogues with the shopkeepers, her travel companion, or the expatriates as if spoken verbatim dialogues seem impossible without notes thereby undermining outer-truth but enhancing inner-truth's emotional resonance (Mulligan 153). The narrative's inner-truth is further supported by instances of several disputes among the local servants of Don Otavio, who sometimes engaged in hidden love affairs that turned into violent conflicts. Susan Bassnett, in her crucial essay "Travel Writing and Gender" notes that the travelogues employ fictional devices like dialogues to bridge the gap with novels, expecting readers to accept conversations as recorded rather than invented (23).

Moreover, the cultural clashes between the non-natives are highlighted in the construction of the Englishman, Mr. Middleton's character whose "interfering, racist arrogance" contrasts with Don Otavio's "generosity and tact" (Bedford 175). These details, per Paul Fussell's "literal validity" (28) ground Bedford's narrative in the outer-truth of Mexico's intercultural dynamics, akin to West's critique of racial discrimination in *Survivors in Mexico*. Bedford's interactions with European expatriates at Coyoacán yet reveal another half-truth in the absence of a Mexicans in the circle which suggests an insular perspective. This Eurocentric lens, per Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) constructs Mexico through foreign frameworks, only partially engaging its realities. Unlike King, who lived through the revolution and interacted with diverse figures like Zapata and Huerta, Bedford's vantage point of a tourist delimits her cultural insights in her travel-narrative.

Bedford's rose-tinted depiction of Don Otavio's hacienda as an Edenic refuge from growing Western materialism as a result of capitalism post the second world war betrays Bedford's hypocrisy who had earlier been dismissive of Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* for imposing "pre-conceived notions" of Mexican primitivity (Bedford 31). Though she has profited by the cheaper prices of goods, her

observation that revolutions went “a bit to their heads” echoes Rawlston’s view and is hypocritical, as it trivializes indigenous struggles while she benefits from Mexico’s affordability (Bedford 175). This aligns with Homi K. Bhabha’s notion of hybridity in *The Location of Culture*, where Bedford’s assimilation (“I already miss Mexico”) is performative but tethered to privilege (203). Unlike King, whose empathy evolves through shared hardship, Bedford’s detachment is expressed in the lines: “only here, we are not engaged” (Bedford 163) which exposes a tourist’s privilege, profiting from Mexico’s exotic allure without commitment. This contrasts with King’s deeper integration in *Tempest Over Mexico*, where she claims, “I was one of them” (King 201–2), reflecting her lived life experience during the revolution. However, it can also be analyzed as a moment of a narrative susceptibility; her acknowledgment of her outsider status, despite fleeting moments of integration with Mexican society, such as longing for the hacienda’s Edenic perfection, enhances the authenticity of her inner truth.

Her emotional transformation is evident in part three of her book where Bedford crafts a gripping psychological portrait of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico who was thrust from a quiet life in Europe into the role of Mexico’s emperor by French occupiers. Benito Juarez, a reformist Mexican president, nationalized land, expelled the Catholic Church, and refused to repay European debts, sparking French intervention to undermine his policies. The French installed Maximilian, a progressive Austrian noble, as emperor. Despite his genuine care for Mexicans, Maximilian was manipulated by unscrupulous schemers, deepening cultural divides. As support crumbled, his wife, Carlota, fled to Europe to rally aid for him. Juarez’s people’s army soon retook Mexico, and despite global pleas for mercy, Juarez ordered Maximilian’s execution. Remarkably, Maximilian chose to stay and face his fate rather than escape. Rather than objectively stating the history, Bedford’s narrative enriches the inner-truth by probing into the inner-workings of the characters’ minds. What drove Maximilian to stay against impossible odds? Why did Juarez, a reformer, refuse mercy? Her speculative style seeks no close-ended truths, blends the pace of fiction with historical detail, and offers glimpse into the broader Mexican psyche. This approach reflects her emotional transformation: she moves beyond detached observation to a vulnerable engagement with human complexity.

Maximilian and Juarez are imagined just as characters in a novel where Maximilian's loyalty cost him his life, while Juarez remained steadfast in his decision to go on with Maximilian's execution. Thus, it can be said that Bedford by giving the shape of fictional characters to historical figures, is confronting her own limitations as a foreigner in Mexico, along with her nostalgia for a simpler, pre-war world.

According to Sybille Bedford in "Money and the Tarascan Indians" she perceives Tarascan people as lacking identity development and disconnected from their personal experiences which reveals her colonial perspective and superior understanding of the world. Ralph Bates presents a contrasting view in his travel essay "Conversations in Mexico" as he explains that Indian submissiveness results from Spanish colonial dispossession of their lands across centuries. The indigenous people lost their will for survival after Spanish colonial oppression made them lose both "land and liberty" promises during the revolution and today face marginalization yet President Lazaro Cardenas works toward their recovery.

Yet, Bedford stance of questioning herself allows the author to confront her own limitations and hence problematizes her initial observations. She questions the applicability of Western frameworks such as capitalism, intellectual discourse, or technological progress to a culture she admits she does not fully understand, confessing, "What can I ever know about the Tarascan Indians?" This moment of self-doubt marks a pivotal shift, signaling Bedford's emerging self-awareness. Her rhetorical question, "Is it a happy life? ... It is ungracious to answer such questions for others", (Bedford 89) underscores a growing respect for the autonomy of the Tarascan people and a refusal to impose external judgments. This vulnerability enriches her narrative's inner-truths, as she learns to interrogate her own assumptions and embrace the discomfort of unresolved questions.

Through this introspective lens, Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio* positions Mexico as a postcolonial "contact zone", as conceptualized by Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes* (7). Within this space, competing truths and hypocrisies between colonial legacies, revolutionary ideals, and Indigenous realities coexist and are negotiated. Bedford's evolving perspective thus exemplifies a critical engagement with the complexities of cross-cultural encounters, challenging the reader to reconsider the ethics of observation and representation in postcolonial contexts.

Bedford's narrative mode differs markedly from King's, reflecting varied approaches to Mexico's revolutionary context and colonial issues. King's *Tempest Over Mexico* is grounded in lived experience offering detailed accounts of revolutionary figures like Zapata and Huerta. Her confessional tone and empathy, per Shweta Shree's feminine style (Shree 5), contrasts with Lawrence's masculine, objective romanticism in *The Plumed Serpent*, which Bedford critiques for its fascist undertones. Lawrence's postcolonial problematic such as promoting Aztec gods and primal leadership as Europe's salvation reflects a colonial imposition, as Said's *Orientalism* critiques. Bedford's female sensibility, as per Bassnett, embraces ambiguity and emotionality (Bassnett "Travel Writing and Gender" 236), contrasting with Lawrence's definitive assertions and King's historical grounding. Bedford's approach to colonial issues is less direct, critiquing corruption but avoiding the revolution's visceral impact, unlike King's firsthand accounts of Zapatista raids. Compared to Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio*, King's memoir seeks greater historical grounding, yet both employ subjective truths. Bedford's open fictionalization relying on memory without notes, contrasts with King's attempt at objectivity, yet both romanticize Mexico: Bedford through Don Otavio's idyllic hacienda, and King through the Bella Vista's splendor. Bedford's post-World War II nostalgia for a country with a "long nasty history" (Bedford 14) is also akin to King's lament for pre-revolutionary glamour, but King's lived experience during the revolution lends her narrative a raw immediacy, absent in Bedford's aesthetic lens.

The text's scholarly significance lies in its contribution to women's travel writing, filling gaps in studies dominated by male authors like Lawrence and Graham Greene. Bedford's gendered narrative, with its introspective humor and ambiguity, enriches the genre, per Bassnett (Bassnett "Travel Writing and Gender" 236), while her postcolonial contradictions invite further exploration of how female travelers negotiate colonial legacies. Her contrast with King's revolutionary immersion and Lawrence's ideological projections underscores Mexico's role as a crucible for diverse literary imaginations, advocating for reappraisal of women's travelogues in postcolonial and feminist scholarship.

West's *Survivors in Mexico*, blending 1966 and 1969 visits, employs a subjective approach, per Bernard Schweizer, merging experiences to mythologize

figures like Trotsky and Rivera (Schweizer 253). Unlike Bedford's aesthetic detachment, West's marketplace observations critique racial hierarchies (West 166), aligning with Pratt's contact zone as a site of power asymmetry (Pratt 34). Bedford's failure to challenge these views, unlike West's direct critique of racial discrimination (West 166), suggests complicity in colonial assumptions. Her portrayal of Rawlston's racism (Bedford 214) is factual but selective, serving to critique American prejudice while sidestepping her own biases, such as describing customs officials as "Red Indian Pygmies" (Bedford 20). This selective gaze, per Mulligan, balances factual reporting with subjective bias (Mulligan 176). Bedford's market scenes, like King's and West's, exemplify the contact zone, where European perceptions clash with Mexican realities. Bedford's "brown-white duality" (Bedford 24) echoes West's "coffee and cocoa" metaphor for mestizo identity (Schweizer 259), but her exoticizing tone contrasts with West's critical lens and King's empathetic detail. Bedford's narrative, per Vesna Goldsworthy's analysis of West's autobiographical merging (91), prioritizes inner-truth, risking sham sympathies, unlike West's communist-inflected spiritualism or King's grounded solidarity.

In contrast, King's narrative, while complicit in profiteering, engages the revolution's human cost (King 201–2), and West's critiques colonial and racial structures (West 166), suggesting a spectrum of engagement. Bedford's travelogue, as a contact zone, discloses the clash of cultures but prioritizes aesthetic profit over transformative critique, questioning the authenticity of her sympathies. This aligns with Pratt's view of travel writing as a site of power negotiation (Pratt *Imperial Eyes* 34), urging scholars to interrogate how narratives construct truth and mask colonial motives. Her description of market scenes evokes a vivid, sensory Mexico, reflecting her aesthetic fascination. This inner-truth, per Susan Bassnett's gendered sensibility, employs "lyrical, descriptive prose" to convey emotional intimacy (Bassnett "Travel Writing and Gender" 237).

Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico* (2003) is a travelogue blending her 1966 and 1969 visits to Mexico and was published posthumously. It offers a complex exploration of the country's revolutionary spirit, cultural heritage, and political upheavals through a subjective, humanistic lens (Schweizer xvii). Rebecca West's personal approach in her travelogue, *Survivors in Mexico* refers to the ruminating,

associative, and introspective approach while dealing with historical personalities such as Cortes, the Reclus brothers, Diego Rivera, Dr. Atl, Leon Trotsky, and Benito Mussolini. This mode of enquiry seeks to understand historical agency by tracing its manifestations, from the most public actions to their roots in individual thoughts and feelings and is reminiscent of Montaigne who says “tis not all the understanding has to do, simply to judge us by our outward actions; it must penetrate the very soul, and there discover by what springs the motion is guided” (Cotton 162-163). West’s personal paradigm to historical insight is also mirrored in what is considered her magnum opus, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941), a travel-journal on Yugoslavia and the troubled relationships between its ethnic groups, where she blends autobiography, history, and fiction, altering identities for universal resonance. In *Survivors in Mexico*, her narrative navigates outer-truths or the verifiable historical and cultural details along with the inner-truths constituting of personal emotions, ideological reflections, and symbolic interpretations while revealing hypocrisies, particularly in her ambivalent stance on communism’s violent costs.

In her chapter on Hernan Cortes, the Spanish conquistador, her account of Cortes reads like a literary portrait and is a compilation of outer and inner-truths. West’s reflection of outer truths in her depiction of Cortes is influenced by contemporary accounts by Gómara and Bernal Díaz, and later synthesized by Salvador de Madariaga. The outer-truths or an objective approach to history by Diaz focuses on factual events and eyewitness observations which are well known and thus are supported by historical records. These specific details that align with outer-truths include Cortés’s physical description (unremarkable features such as his bowed legs from cavalry life), his career trajectory (from law student to conquistador), and his military achievements in Mexico despite limited technological advantages over the Aztecs (West 55-61). These factual truths are crucial because they offer the reader a grounded narrative of the conquest.

However, West overrides documented evidence and a strict adherence to chronology in her travel-narrative *Survivors in Mexico*. With the help of her imagination and a psychological lens, she zooms into the inner-life of Cortes and introspects on his survival in a foreign land. West opines that technological superiority could not be the sole reason for Cortés’s victory, noting that the Indians

were quick to adapt in battlefield and had formidable weapons. Rebecca West emphasizes the mental attributes that likely contributed to Hernán Cortés's success, focusing on his pragmatism, "freedom from bad dreams", and self-restraint, despite his naturally contentious temperament (West 112). She highlights his fervent religiosity as a counterbalance to his volatile nature, adding depth to his character. By comparing Cortés to Harry Hotspur, both bow-legged due to the conquistadores' horseback lifestyle and the prevalence of rickets, West humanizes him, noting personal quirks like his tendency to choke at the height of anger or his evolution from youthful extravagance to a more refined, simple elegance in later years. She also ties his intellectual pursuits, such as his fluency in Latin, early poetry, and passion for technical learning in fields like farming, to his Estremaduran origins, portraying him as a man who evaded a predetermined path as a lawyer. Instead, West attributes his victories to his courage, political savvy, and a metaphorical intellectual harmony: an internal clarity and strategic foresight that enabled his triumphs in Mexico.

This portrayal resonates with the narrative technique in Sybille Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio*, where the hacienda is crafted through memory as an idealized sanctuary, suggesting a shared approach of using subjective recollection to highlight deeper truths. West further elevates Cortés's intellectual curiosity: his love for reading and agricultural innovation into a personal mythology, symbolized by the image of him being "lifted up into the air" by his commission. This reflects an inner-truth focus, emphasizing his psychological complexity and his ability to transcend a conventional destiny, shaping him as a figure of both historical and symbolic significance (West 113).

In the chapter "Tenochtitlán", West's creative narrative extrapolations embellish Bernal Díaz's account of Cortes' first interview with Montezuma. Here, she portrays the subjective impulses of the Spaniards upon first beholding Tenochtitlán, capturing their awe and fear through Díaz's account. Their daze of the colonizers, oscillating between admiration and terror of its scale and potential threat such as being surrounded by a million Indians, and bridges that could trap them, reveals a psychological complexity, challenging the stereotype of conquistadors that they are often brutish and bereft of fear. Even though Montezuma offered lavish

gifts, and luxurious lodgings to Cortes, the meeting masked an inner tension. West highlights his subjective impulses such as his superstitious belief that Cortés was a divine figure, possibly a reincarnation of the Aztec God, Quetzalcoatl. His belief was reinforced by the ill-fated day of entry which was November 8, 1519, under the sign of the Lord of Turbulence. Yet Montezuma also demonstrated political acumen by pragmatically evaluating the unity and authority of the Spanish, adding a richer dimension to his historical portrayal. Bernard Schweizer argues that although West despised Cortes for the conquest that led to the steep decline of the Aztec population, she did not shy away from acknowledging the contributions of the Spanish colonial rule, “yet the Spaniards did much for Mexico. Indeed, their gifts are beyond counting” (West 101). Here, she is in danger of supporting the colonial oppression. One of the reasons could be found in her biography by Carl Rollyson’s *Rebecca West: A Life* (1996), “she is obviously attracted to powerful males and often presents them in her fiction and nonfiction as alluring figures. A good part of her finds the idea of kingship emotionally satisfying” (Rollyson 98). Yet another reason as noted by Schweizer is that West abhorred the brutish practice of human sacrifice that was a part of Aztec culture and as Cortes was vehemently opposed to the practice, West’s portrayal of Cortes’s inner-truth comes close to supporting the Spanish conquistador. West also shares, in this chapter, a personal anecdote of witnessing a sacrifice that ties her sensory memory to Cortés’s revulsion when he first witnesses an execution in Mexico. This personal memory, which Díaz could not have shared, allows West to extrapolate Cortés’s moral decision to challenge Montezuma’s religion as a deeply human struggle, rather than a mere tactical move.

However, West does not stop at that. She also frames the encounter as a missed opportunity for amity, and transforms Díaz’s historical record into a meditation on human connection and loss, illuminated by her own emotional and cultural lens. Her West’s unique narrative lens thus blends history with personal memory and illuminates how individual stories shape broader history.

In the chapter “Elie and Elisée Reclus”, the French anarchist theorists who indirectly influenced the Mexican Revolution of 1910 by their association with a meeting with Dr. Atl in 1904, West highlights the intergenerational impact of ideas and misunderstanding as a cultural exchange. Elisee was a geographer, and Elie

forayed into anthropology, comparative mythology, and socialist banking; moreover, they played a pivotal role in the development of the strike as a tool of industrial action. They introduced two forms: *la grève aux bras croisés* (the passive strike, or work stoppage) and *la grève perlée* (the active strike, involving sabotage and resistance). These innovations represent an outer truth. They were also engaged in critical historical movements such as the Paris Commune and the founding of anarchism in Spain which places them as key figures in the 19th-century left-wing movement. West also highlights the reality of political repression faced by the radicals through their exile in 1851 as they opposed Louis Napoleon. However, the inner-truth emerges as West recounts the growth of deeply respectful relationship between Elie Reclus, who was an atheist, and her grandmother, Arabella Fairfield who assumed Elie to be a Protestant refugee. Despite differences in political ideologies and the chance to return to France again after declaration of an amnesty, Elie Reclus continued to tutor the Fairfield boys thereby showcasing his personal integrity and selfless character. His prioritization of the emotional and intellectual needs of Arabella's sons over his own interests, even reducing his salary when financial difficulties arise and staying until the boys are established in their careers aid in comprehending the inner truth that human connections can thrive on incomplete or even erroneous understandings, as long as there is mutual respect and care. West also hints the possibility that Elie was in love with Arabella and thus humanizes him as a figure who not only navigates personal longing with restraint but also his actions align with the anarchist ideal of mutual aid. West further problematizes the brothers' obsession with volcanoes; despite their calm nature and allegiance to humanity, they could not fully denounce terrorism, they struggled to reconcile their amicable nature with their aggressive political beliefs. Volcanoes, so crucial to the cultural landscape of Mexico with their latent power and potential for devastation, symbolize this duality and tension of reconciliation in West's narrative and enriches her inner-truth. West notes that fascination with volcanoes, also becomes a personal legacy, transmitted to West's father and, by extension, to West herself, "my father was in part Elie Reclus all his life long . . . [and] since my father was so largely Elie Reclus, so am I" (West 78).

In the chapter on “Leon Trotsky”, his historical significance as a leader of the Russian Revolution, his role in the Bolshevik government, and his leadership during the Russian Civil War corresponds with historical events, lending factual credibility, per Fussell’s “literal validity” (Fussell *Abroad* 203). Again, his debates about Soviet bureaucratization, the challenges of Marxist governance, his exile and eventual arrival in Mexico, facilitated by President Cárdenas contribute to the outer-truths while signaling Mexico’s resistance to Stalinist influence and its support for revolutionary figures, albeit with the condition of political non-interference. West also notes the outer-truth of the political climate of Mexico during Trotsky’s refuge which influenced why Cardenas and Trotsky never met. As Cardenas was fighting against foreign oil interests that resulted in the 1938 nationalization, he wished to make a statement by asserting Mexico’s autonomy against Stalinist influence and maintain the domestic balance with Stalinist factions in the Confederation of Mexican Workers. Even though Trotsky’s anti-imperialist ideology finds solidarity in Cardenas’s political decisions, the two leaders never met as a result of the practical governance of Cardenas which contributes to enrich the outer-truth of West’s narrative.

Trotsky, West opines was a great man, but was not hollow like Napoleon, he is not merely a symbol of revolution but a man burdened by guilt, loss, and the fear of harm to his family “within whom there was something resembling the inner vexations suffered by us lesser animals” (West 20). Not only his diary entries about his son Serinzhia reveal fear and a tortured conscience that his disappearance is a form of karmic punishment, but also his acknowledgment of the “crime” of the Romanov executions underscore his inner struggle with the consequences of his actions. Bringing in the symbol of a smoldering, unspent volcano yet again, West captures the inner exhaustion of Trotsky, who was unable to exercise or challenge power in the tolerant environment of Mexico. The inner-truth in this section lies in symbolizing Trotsky’s alienated identity of a man in exile, who is used to action but is reduced to a sense of purposelessness because of his displacement. West also depicts Trotsky’s growing preoccupation with death, the jealousy of his loving partner Natalya over his alleged affair with Frida Kahlo, and the resilience of Trotsky’s grandson, Seva Trotsky’s matter-of-fact mention of the attempt on his life.

Seva's potential desire to move on from his grandfather's legacy hints at an inner struggle to escape the weight of his family's history which embodies an inner-truth of being the eponymous survivor against traumatic episodes.

West's choice to lie to Seva about liking Deutscher's biography shows her compassion and inner struggle. She dislikes Deutscher's rigid, theory-heavy style but sees his love for Trotsky, which echoes Seva's devotion to his grandfather. By lying, she puts Seva's feelings first, honoring Trotsky's memory and sparing his grandson pain. The "wave of primitive feeling" she feels reveals her torn heart- caught between honesty and the urge to protect a sacred family bond, especially by Trotsky's grave (West 27).

West also provides a vivid portrayal of Benito Mussolini's early years through the lens of Angelica Balabanov's recollections, situating him as a flawed and opportunistic figure in the radical left-wing milieu of the early 20th century. West uses Balabanov's perspective to explore Mussolini's character, his eventual betrayal of anarchist principles, and the broader socio-political dynamics of his time. West's choice to frame Mussolini through Balabanov's autobiography, *My Life as a Rebel* (1938) suggests a deliberate reliance on a leftist, female perspective to critique a figure who later became a fascist dictator. It could be said that Balabanov's status as a revered socialist and saintly figure lends moral authority to her judgment, positioning Mussolini as a betrayal of revolutionary ideals. However, this raises the question of whether West is selectively curating Balabanov's account to emphasize Mussolini's flaws, potentially sidelining other perspectives that might complicate the portrait. Her portrayal of Balabanov in a pejorative sense: as "something of a female in the pejorative sense: a Little Me" contrasts with West's appreciation of her ability to go beyond her self-centered interests and oratory skills (West 239). Her tone in the depiction of Mussolini oscillates between fascination with his charisma and disgust at his opportunism which prompts the question whether West is drawn to Mussolini's performative power despite her condemnation, and does this reflect a broader ambivalence about charismatic leaders?

The psychological realities in the depiction of Mussolini lies in the inner conflict between his inherited anarchism and his longing for power which prophesies his shift to fascism, where he could access the "opulent class of benefactors" he

envied (West 90). Balabanov's recognition of the base, greedy, lying nature of Mussolini yet her inability to cut ties with him because of her saint-like dedication engages a complex moral portrait that humanizes her in *Survivors in Mexico*. Balabanov's narrative, as mediated by West, constructs a counter-discourse that exposes Mussolini's opportunism, positioning him as a subversive figure within the socialist community. This aligns with Foucault's idea in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975, trans. 1977) that discourses compete to define truth and shape subjectivities. Balabanov's inability to expel Mussolini, despite her recognition of his flaws, reflects the power of his performative charisma, which sustains his position within the network of radical solidarity. Foucault views discourse as a mechanism through which power produces subjects and regulates social interactions (Foucault 34). Mussolini exploits the discourse of socialist compassion, positioning himself as a revolutionary to gain support, while Balabanov's counter-discourse, via West, exposes his opportunism.

Balabanov's mastery as a multilingual orator and organizer along with her "sensitive ear" for dialogue indicates an inner truth about her emotional intelligence (West 211). This challenges patriarchal constraints, embodying what feminist theorist Hélène Cixous calls "écriture féminine" (Cixous 890) and thus Balabanov's creative voice becomes disruptive that subverts dominant discourses. Her ability to silence a hall with her speech and her saintly dedication to the marginalized, positions her as a powerful female subject, resisting the marginalization implied by West's description. West draws on her ability to capture Mussolini's character through his speech patterns to craft a profoundly empathetic character and a vivid portrait. This inner truth underscores Balabanov's role as a perceptive observer, whose personal insights carry historical weight.

In the chapter, "Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo", the outer truth of Mexico's post-revolutionary era, under the leadership of Lázaro Cárdenas, provides the backdrop for Rivera and Kahlo's work. Moreover, their hospitality to Trotsky which was furthered by Cárdenas's anti-Stalinist stance, situates them within a global revolutionary network. Along with that the transformation of Coyoacan from a colonial sugar-cane hub to a bourgeois suburb reflects the environmental and social changes wrought by Spanish exploitation and modernization, challenging West's

initial misconceptions about the area. As a revolutionary muralist, Diego Rivera utilized his personal fortune to fund the Anahuacalli Museum, his art was a tangible attempt to reconstitute Mexico's indigenous past to foster national pride. Kahlo's legacy is also objectively portrayed by West, such as her identity as a surrealist painter and revolutionary figure, whose Blue-House Museum preserves her art and personal vision. Kahlo's adoption of the China Poblana dress, rooted in Puebla's history, connects her to a broader Mexican tradition of cultural resistance, while her surrealist works, like "The Two Fridas", connect her personal identity with her national identity. The ways in which West brings out her trademark subjective approach to history is by marking the deep reverence of her driver for Rivera and Kahlo, his national pride and education foster an emotional investment in Kahlo's Museum and the cultural revival of Mexico. Moreover, West's curiosity and fascination with her driver to let him guide her experience in Mexico reflects her female sensibility as a travel-writer who prioritizes interpersonal connections and nurtures a relational approach to travel writing (Shree 9).

The inner truth of Kahlo's beauty is enhanced in the narrative by the gorgeous China Poblana costume which is juxtaposed with the "creeping corruption" of her body (as a result of her accident, gangrene, amputation, and miscarriage) (West 22). This acts as a poignant contrast that West conveys with empathy when she confesses that she was not aware of all the sufferings of Kahlo. Kahlo's ability to inspire love from Rivera and others, despite her pain, underscores her magnetic charisma and emotional strength. The gendered sensibility is brought to the fore when West reveals "shame and embarrassment" upon learning of her leg amputation (West 21). This reaction reflects a gendered empathy, as West exhibits a sensitivity attuned to the vulnerabilities of the lived experiences of women, and the personal violation of Kahlo's beauty and bodily integrity.

West's vivid descriptions of the Rivera Museum's "grey stone" bleakness and the reveal a heightened sensitivity to color, texture, and atmosphere, which she uses to convey the emotional weight of these places (West 43).

As a female travel writer, West's sensibility is marked by an aesthetic attentiveness-such as a heightened sensitivity to color and atmosphere which aids in conveying the emotional weight of the places. For instance, she vividly describes the

contrast between the drabness of Rivera's museum's "grey stone" with Kahlo's Blue House' that was as if a "blaze of blue slashed with scarlet" (West 25). She also interweaves poetic language to display her sensitivity to Rivera's revolutionary spirit, "overthrown the stoney idols of the heart", along with reflections of an Aztec poem that laments about mortality with her historical meditation to showcase a nuanced approach to objectively written history (28-29). It is crucial to note here that during her visit to Coyoacán, West's astonishment and juxtaposition of the district's bourgeois reality stands in stark contrast with Deutscher's "empty, stony, and dusty" depiction of the outer-truth (West 95). By seeking to prioritize lived realities over abstract narratives, West reflects a gendered approach that blends historical analysis with personal impressions. Moreover, her elaborate description of the China Poblana dress's "red skirt with a green hem embroidered with flowers" (63) does not merely showcase sensitivity to sensory details, rather the cultural significance reflects a gendered attunement to fashion as a site of identity and resistance, aligning with feminist scholarship on women's agency in cultural expression. Even more, Kahlo's Garden is depicted, with its "reeling" vegetation and "troubled inconsequence", which mirrors Kahlo's inner turmoil, showcasing West's ability to read emotional landscapes through a feminine lens (West 68).

However, the sincere recognition of Rivera's Museum as a symbol of Aztec cultural revival is not beyond critique for West. West opines that the museum's grey, neo-Aztec design failure to capture the "laughter and color" of Mexico's Indian heritage (West 67). Moreover, her portrayal of Kahlo's dress as a cultural artifact is in danger of selective narration, as it does not closely engage with or critique the exploitative colonial context of its origins such as slavery as critiqued by Pratt in contact zones (Pratt *Arts of the Contact Zone* 34). Her focus on Trotsky's guilt humanizes him but strategically ignores the broader devastation of Bolshevik policies that aligns with her communist sympathies. Her portrayal of volcanoes as symbols of revolutionary energy also romanticizes Mexico's unrest while ignoring the revolution's failure to achieve stability, as Bedford notes: "Why after all the reform laws, and revolutions... could not yield stability and peace?" (Bedford 163). Unlike King, who acknowledges the revolution's human cost through shared hardship (King 201-2), West's philosophical lens distances her from Mexico's lived

realities, a hypocrisy Mulligan identifies in women travelers' Eurocentric biases (Mulligan 177). West's merging of 1966 and 1969 visits into a single narrative also opens the possibility of altering chronologies, similar to *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*.

King's portrayal of Captain Federico Chacon as a revolutionary savior parallels West's heroic framing of Trotsky, but King's lived immersion lends a greater authenticity, as compared to the romantic abstraction of West. Bedford's narrative, relying on memory without notes, prioritizes inner-truths of nostalgia, with outer-truths limited by her tourist perspective. Rebecca West's colonial gaze is tempered as a result of her ideological investment in her travel-narrative which is in contrast with Bedford's detachment as she says, "Not that the West isn't terrifying enough, as we know. Only here, we are not engaged" (Bedford 163). Both Bedford and West exhibit colonial superiority; King's narrative is not without the colonial gaze yet is more immersive and reveals greater integration with Mexico as compared as Bedford and West.

On a final note, Rebecca West blends academic methods with a critical perspective that includes a particular ideological preference in *Survivors in Mexico*. Her travel-narrative exists between King's emotional *Tempest Over Mexico* and Bedford's detached yet poetic style. Through her personal storytelling and emotional involvement with Mexico's revolutionary environment King unites with the country while expressing empathy toward the destruction of her hotel property. West's comprehensive understanding of European art and culture extends her distance from Mexican culture while enabling her to make precise observations rather than fully experience the environment. The unwillingness of West to address her Western status and human toll from communism indicates her deliberate attempt to glorify revolutionary principles. Her scholarly ambition seems to influence this approach more than genuine interest in Mexican culture. The reason Bedford chose Mexico as her travel destination initially because of its inexpensive tourist appeal while making readers question the ethical use of storytelling in travel literature.

Through their narrative methods West achieves two simultaneous interventions that support postcolonialism and feminism. In her travelogue about Mexico West presents the revolutionary narrative but does not delve into its intricate

elements that Susan Bassnett views as women's travel writing's disruptive force against traditional gender roles (Bassnett "Travel Writing and Gender" 202). The emotional confession technique in King's storytelling follows Shree's definition of feminine writing because it shows sincere personal revelation (Shree *Travelling Women* 5). Bedford achieves self-awareness while maintaining detached introspective humor to develop a non-political perspective in his work. The travelogue genre demonstrates revolutionary history in Mexico through different viewpoints because of the humanist rationality of West and the emotional depth of King and the introspective wit of Bedford. The combined narrative approach in West's work creates a compelling research subject because it reveals how she balances political advocacy with historical truth. Through her analysis in travelogues West teaches readers about the revolutionary representation process which confirms her role as a critical figure in the evolution of feminist and postcolonial travel literature.

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Chapter Six

Conclusion

The authors Rosa E. King and Graham Greene, Ralph Bates, Sybille Bedford, and Rebecca West examined British travel narratives in Mexico's cultural and revolutionary evolution through their works *Tempest Over Mexico* (1935), *The Lawless Roads* (1939), *The Fields of Paradise* (1941) *A Visit to Don Otavio* (1953) and *Survivors in Mexico* (2003) from 1934 to 1969. The authors made their case by analysing the travelogues in conjunction with fictional works to understand how Mexico served as an important cross-cultural site which influenced both artistic expression and identity formation for the authors. The initial chapter of the study reviewed authors' travelogues and fictional works to reveal Mexico's role as a centre of cultural interaction which formed both their identity and artistic development. The study examined how authors managed the colonial perspective by using gender as a tool to break free from homebound limitations while fighting against European-centred views. The research project filled a significant knowledge gap by examining both under-explored female travel writers together with their male counterparts and analysing how these writers developed Mexico into an active cultural destination that avoided tourist stereotypes. The study evaluated themes of identity transformation and representation ethics and travel change using cultural studies and postcolonialism to study how different sensitivities such as understanding, analysis and introspection enhanced the literary genre. This research employed the critical and theoretical viewpoints to examine masculine along with feminine imperial rhetorical approaches studied by Susan Morgan in *Place Matters* together with Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined community as outlined in *Imagined Communities* and Edward Said's critique of imaginative geographies in *Orientalism*. The research incorporated feminist approaches to fight oppressive political systems and intellectual sexism through analysis of Hélène Cixous and Elaine Showalter and other theorists. The research utilized women's travel writings along with their critical elements as essential sources within specific boundaries. The research employed methodological principles from *Research Methods for Cultural Studies* edited by Michael Pickering alongside Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding model and specific

theoretical components from Simon During's Cultural Studies for a comprehensive study orientation. The study demonstrated Mexico's transformative impact on British literature by investigating writer development during the Mexican Revolution and international conflict.

During the period from 1915 through 1940 British writers who explored Mexico displayed an outsider perspective that combined their admiration for the scenery with their political judgment and their use of revolutionary events as dramatic fiction for self-stories. The contrapuntal method required researchers to recover forgotten voices that were suppressed or excluded from these historical records. In *Los de abajo* (1929) Mariano Azuela presented the revolutionary peasant perspective through Demetrio Macías and his comrades who emerged as collective victims of war alongside political instability rather than revolutionary heroes. Juan Rulfo completed *El llano en llamas* (The Burning Plain) in 1953 to expand material realism from Azuela into a ghostly landscape where violent history and personal memories fused within an endless drought-stricken and timeless era. Through her Chicana perspective Montserrat Fontes wrote *Dreams of the Centaur* (1996) to examine Mexican revolutionary history through a mythological lens that connected indigenous cultural heritage with ethnic memory about the British colonial influence and Mexican male dominance. A comparative examination of British travel-narratives and novels on Mexico with works by Mexican and Mexican-American authors proved crucial to address the neglect of the British authors on the latent aspects of class conflict, gender-based experience along with collective memory.

Available literature reviews revealed that, despite the emergence of a new literary genre advanced by writers such as Rosa E. King and D.H. Lawrence, scholarly attention remained largely concentrated on the influence of Mexico on modern British literature through the works of Lawrence, Huxley, Greene, and Lowry. Although Ronald Walker identified Ralph Bates as another British author whose interest in Mexico during the late 1930s inspired his novel *The Fields of Paradise*, the role of Bates's travel essays in shaping both this novel and his Mexican novella *The Burning Corn* (1939) had not been adequately examined. Similarly, Rebecca West's travel narrative remained largely overlooked by fiction critics. In *Abroad*, Paul Fussell's influential study of British literary travel between the wars,

Rebecca West, unlike Waugh, Lawrence, and Greene, did not receive a chapter dedicated to her work; instead, her travel writing was mentioned only briefly and treated in passing. This brief mention reflects a wider trend in literary studies, where women's travel writing has often been overlooked in favor of male counterparts, despite its valuable contributions to the genre. West's insightful examination of Mexican culture and politics, therefore merited further scholarly attention within the context of literary travel writing. Through her memoir West presented an analytical study of Mexican culture and history combined with politics and religion using humanist and socialist principles that opened new possibilities for cultural studies research about human relations and human experience. Despite their significant contributions to Mexican travel literature King and Bedford received prolonged academic disregard from scholars as well. The research investigated Mexico's influence on British writers who used their experiences to produce narrative parts of their imagination. The study investigated how these writers developed fictional narratives based on their cross-cultural interactions and showed Mexico as a living environment where cultural exchange resulted in novel narrative methods.

This dissertation produces results which serve academic research in comparative literature and postcolonial studies along with travel writing and cultural studies. The research findings would serve as a significant academic contribution to existing scholarly discussions among British-Mexican historians and researchers who examine cross-cultural exchange and early twentieth-century literature which depicts otherness.

The second chapter, "Mexico as an Imaginative Crucible" assessed the journey of the travel narratives and novels of the British male and female authors and interrogated their encounters with Mexico. The British authors using their gendered perspectives, transformed Mexico into an imaginative crucible. This chapter critically investigated Rosa E. King's *Tempest Over Mexico*, Graham Greene's *The Lawless Roads*, Ralph Bates's *The Fields of Paradise*, Sybille Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio*, and Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico*. To begin, it investigated how King's relationship with Cuernavaca became more complex which challenged straightforward interpretations of her 'female gaze' as simply colonial. This demonstrated that expatriate relationships defied simple analysis through colonial or

economic frameworks. The decision to stay after her business collapsed showed her complex process of connecting to her identity while balancing sense of belonging and demonstrated widespread cultural involvement between Mexico and foreigners and United States residents. Bedford presented her Tarrascan Indian account with supposed sympathy but through this effort she unintentionally retained colonial ideas about their paternalistic character. Through self-doubt regarding her right to depict others Bedford showed early signs of understanding the inherent violence of knowledge production across cultural boundaries. Through *Survivors in Mexico* Rebecca West advanced the imaginative process by adding new dimensions to it. West used Mexico as a setting to express her metaphysical rebellion and strengthen her humanistic skepticism instead of telling a spiritual transformation story (Dyer “Journeys into history”). Mexico served as a place where West rejected religious interpretations while celebrating secular life through paradoxical dialectics which strengthened her secular worldview. West’s complex perspective about Mexico differed from mystical writers of her time such as D.H. Lawrence to demonstrate how the country stimulates analytical thinking about faith and authority and human survival.

These findings underscored the extent to which early twentieth-century travel writing, even when complicit in colonial discourse, also harbored a latent awareness of its own ethical and representational limits. This ambivalence suggested a transitional moment in which authors began to grapple, however imperfectly, with the complexities of intercultural encounter and the instability of Western knowledge claims. Together, these writers illustrated how Mexico functioned as a crucible where British literary imaginations grappled with the uncertainties of representation, the fragility of cultural authority, and the complexities of human meaning. Their works suggested that encounters with Mexico often destabilized imperial habits of thought rather than reinforcing them, exposing tensions between sympathy and othering, skepticism and wonder, authority and doubt. The implications of these engagements pointed to an emergent consciousness within British writing that anticipated later critiques of colonial knowledge, demonstrating how cross-cultural encounters could generate not just new visions of the “other”, but also profound reassessments of the self (Trinh 8).

British women travel writers often embraced ambiguity and resisted definitive judgments in their representations of Mexico, in contrast to male writers such as Graham Greene and Ralph Bates, who, despite moments of critical self-awareness, ultimately imposed forms of narrative resolution. Greene's *The Power and the Glory* transformed his travel observations into a symbolic struggle between sin and redemption, crafting moral coherence from Mexico's religious and political complexities. Similarly, Bates's engagement with indigenous land reform framed local struggles within a broader narrative of historical progress and revolutionary idealism, seeking to "set it all in order" (Bates 342). Although both writers underwent transformations- Greene confronting his own moral and spiritual ambivalence, Bates recognizing indigenous agency, their quests in Mexico culminated in structured interpretations that sought closure.

By contrast, women writers such as King, Bedford, and West navigated Mexico's intricacies without seeking definitive answers. King's immersion in post-revolutionary life, Bedford's ironic but cautious portrayals of indigenous culture, and West's dialectical skepticism all prioritized inquiry over resolution. The consequences of these findings suggested that Mexico served less as a stage for affirming imperial knowledge than as a crucible for exposing the instability of identity, authority, and cultural understanding. It was also found that "these writers subtly challenged conventions by simultaneously embracing and subverting assigned female roles through their writing" (Morgan 193). Women writers' willingness to dwell in uncertainty illuminated how literary marginality fostered more open, self-reflexive modes of representation. This analysis paves the way for a deeper examination of how such approaches anticipated key concerns of post-colonial thought, ultimately challenging dominant frameworks for representing the "other."

One of the limitations of this research was that its scope did not allow for an extensive contrapuntal reading of Mexican writers' perspectives on the revolution or how they viewed the British writers who traveled and wrote about Mexico. Consequently, a comprehensive exploration of how Mexican authors responded to British portrayals of their country was not feasible within the constraints of this study.

The second chapter briefly addressed this issue by conducting a contrapuntal analysis through the theoretical framework of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The author used this method to maintain equilibrium between British writers' Mexico portrayals and Mexican writers' home society descriptions thus revealing their contrasting storytelling methods. Ralph Bates in *The Fields of Paradise* and Graham Greene among other British authors depicted Mexico by showing its potential for moral transformation while offering positive resolutions. Through his storytelling Bates presented Felipe's vision of land reform as a positive sign of rebuilding his community after the revolution. Through his literary works such as *The Power and the Glory* Greene depicted Mexico as a setting for spiritual salvation as well as political stability.

Mexican writers Mariano Azuela and Juan Rulfo presented through their work a negative perspective on how the revolution turned out. Through *The Underdogs* Azuela depicts the destructive psychological effects of the revolution through his portrayal of justice ideals destroyed by violence and betrayal and disillusionment of revolutionaries. Rulfo reveals in his short story "They Gave Us the Land" how the post-revolutionary land distribution policy led peasants to receive unproductive land which contradicted the promised fertile land. The revolutionary concepts failed to match the actual tough circumstances which Mexicans experienced during that period. These British and Mexican literary works demonstrate opposing approaches as their authors handled Mexican complexities. British writers who attempted to create structure in their writing shaped their stories toward precise endings because they wanted to establish a clear moral standard and path to change. Mexican writers immersed in the revolutionary reality rejected definitive conclusions by presenting their stories with unresolved pessimistic outcomes (Rutherford 220). British writers wrote their narratives with imperial views as they sought defined conclusions yet Mexican writers allowed their stories to remain open because they experienced the ongoing societal complexities of post-revolutionary Mexico.

Postcolonial scholars together with Latin American historians could use this study as the starting point for their research by analyzing how Mexican writers challenged the revolution while responding to worldwide literary and ideological movements of their time. Their findings would provide crucial corrections to naive

depictions of Mexico found in foreign texts. The research would improve understanding about intercultural literary exchanges by providing essential knowledge about postcolonial representation and identity dynamics during that period.

The third chapter, “Cultural Interface and Identity Formation” looked at how British travel writers’ experiences in cross-cultural encounters in Mexico radically altered their identities, upsetting received ideas, and creating possibilities for self-change. The analysis hinged on British travel writers: Rosa E. King along with Graham Greene, Ralph Bates, and Rebecca West and Sybille Bedford who explored cultural encounters in Mexico through a theoretical lens which combined Edward Said’s contrapuntal reading from the crucial text, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) with Homi Bhabha’s hybridity. It also relied on the concept of ambivalence in *The Location of Culture* (1994) and Mary Louise Pratt’s contact zone theory. The research tools evaluated writers’ transformation against their adoption of colonial practices. In *Tempest Over Mexico* by Rosa E. King a split mindset was found where she exposed colonial exploitation while remaining detached during the Revolution which demonstrated her colonial mindset. Through the lens of contrapuntal analysis by Said the reader discovered how King simultaneously challenged and supported imperial beliefs within her writing.

Graham Greene (*The Lawless Roads*, 1939; *The Power and the Glory*, 1940) was analyzed using Bhabha’s theories of ambivalence and hybridity. Greene’s evolving, self-critical gaze acknowledged the complexities of Mexican religiosity, yet ultimately his universalizing Christian narrative centered Western frameworks, revealing the tensions between empathy and Eurocentrism.

Ralph Bates (*The Fields of Paradise*, 1941; *The Burning Corn*, 1939; “Conversations in Mexico”, 1939) was studied through the contact zone lens, emphasizing his solidarity with indigenous struggles and his commitment to socialist ideals. While Bates promoted anti-colonial narratives, occasional essentialist descriptions of indigenous characters indicated the challenges of escaping residual colonial discourses. An exploration of an interplay between explored the interplay between Fontes’s Chicana perspective in *Dreams of the Centaur* (1996) and Bates’s socialist lens in his Mexican works revealed that Fontes provided an intimate,

detailed portrayal of indigenous experiences, while Bates offered a broader, more generalized cultural perspective. Together, these approaches enriched the understanding of Mexico's complex identity, emphasizing travel writing as a bridge to living, evolving cultures and highlighting the dynamic nature of cultural representation.

Rebecca West (*Survivors in Mexico*, posthumously published 2003) approached Mexico with secular irony, offering a critical deconstruction of nationalist mythologies without succumbing to romanticism. Her skepticism aligned with Bhabha's view of identity as negotiated and unstable, though her intellectual detachment remained rooted in a Western humanist tradition. Sybille Bedford (*A Visit to Don Otavio*, 1953) exhibited cultural curiosity but also occasional lapses into exoticism. Using Pratt's framework, Bedford's writing revealed the inevitable inequalities embedded within even sympathetic cross-cultural narratives.

The study adopted postcolonial and travel writing scholarly approaches to improve current understanding of how travel literature works toward keeping or breaking colonial power dynamics. Through Pratt's 'contact zone' concept the study indicated that intercultural communication exists in unbalanced power relations while Bhabha's critical analysis demonstrated the British authors construct double-meaning elements into their cultural identity and Said explained how textual narratives establish political positions by concealing gaps.

The research revealed that transformation appeared in diverse unstable ways along with partial implementation. King united her sympathy for Mexican natives in Mexico with detached behavior yet Greene simultaneously performed self-reflection through Eurocentric perspectives. Bates expressed anti-colonial optimism through essentialist narratives yet West employed secular methods to break myths and prove her intellectual dominance as an outsider. The sympathetic attitude of Bedford contained a potential danger of developing into exoticism. Travel writing from this time period demonstrated dual behavior because it both exposed imperialist heritage and continued to uphold these aspects.

These findings deliver consequences which exceed the analysis of individual writers. Literary representations from cross-cultural contact produce complex yet uncertain results instead of entire transformations or rigid oppositions. The

discoveries challenge what the reader thinks he/she knows about travelers who become enlightened during their trips because they need to be seen in their historical complexity rather than one-dimensional enlightenment depiction. These tensions refuse any neat divide between colonial complicity and anti-colonial resistance, revealing how a traveler's voice is never fixed but always caught in the "third space" of competing meanings. As Homi Bhabha reminds the reader, this in-between realm "ensures that the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; ... that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized, and read anew" (37).

The fourth chapter, "Place as Living Culture Beyond the Tourist Gaze" critically examined how British travel writers, namely Rosa E. King, Graham Greene, Ralph Bates, Sybille Bedford, and Rebecca West, represented Mexico, moving beyond the stereotypical "tourist gaze" informed by colonial legacies and engaged with the vibrant, living culture of the place. Using theoretical frameworks such as John Urry's tourist gaze, Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model, and Renato Rosaldo's theory of imperialist nostalgia, the chapter assessed how these writers navigated Mexico's post-revolutionary cultural landscape. Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio* attempted a nuanced connection with Mexico but retained Eurocentric biases; Greene's *The Lawless Roads* employed a Catholic lens but ultimately reflected limited cultural integration. Through his literary works Bates showed opposition to colonial exploitation and praised indigenous resistance while at times crossing into romantic territory regarding Mexico. The text *Tempest Over Mexico* by King demonstrated a transition from impartiality toward sympathy but the author maintained colonial advantages. The intellectual depth in West's *Survivors in Mexico* was limited by her Eurocentric viewpoint. The different levels of involvement between the visitor and national identity in Mexico showed a struggle between visitor superiority and sympathetic interpretation which mirrored Mexico's multifaceted identity after the revolution.

The study's findings indicated that Urry, Hall, and Rosaldo's theories were applicable particularly regarding such theories applied to interpreting cultural dynamics in the British authors' travel writing. Both writers' engagement and their distancing themselves from realities of Mexico were using Urry's tourist gaze and

Rosaldo's theory of the imperialist nostalgia. Urry's theory would therefore have a particularly marked relevance for explaining why these writers, even at the moments of their empathy or introspection, often tended to convert Mexico into a series of exotic symbols or historical sites. In addition, Rosaldo's imperialist nostalgia was useful in pointing out that some writers, especially Bedford and Greene, often held a degree of idealization of particular elements of Mexican culture at the same time as they took on a stance of outsider detachment. The theories, however, gave useful insight but according to the finding, the current understanding of the tourist gaze and imperialist nostalgia could be expanded. Often these theoretical frameworks advocated for a separation between a limited understanding of an outside individual and an unmediated insider perspective. However, writers in this study represented that the categories were not so cleanly divided. As example, Greene's self-reflexivity and King's developing empathy demonstrated that connection to a global culture would lead to a fantastic, ambivalent knowing rather than any such clear split as primitive exoticism versus comfortable empathy. By challenging a simplistic reading of these theories, this strengthened the argument that reality of cross-cultural engagement was much more nuanced than one would have first expected.

The approach that the writers took to Mexico was one of the contradictions and on the complexities that could be one of the identities in academic understanding of travel writing that have been explained through the travel writing in frameworks of the tourist gaze and imperialist nostalgia. However, these writers were not just remitting colonial stereotypes: they had moments of transformation, self-reflection, and tried to close the cultural chasm. However, their prejudices, not only overt but also latent, betrayed the origins of colonial legacies in shaping both the Mexicans' perception and representations of the nation. Thus, the study concluded that it is time to look for a more flexible and dynamic theoretical framework which would help understand more nuanced patterns of cross-cultural encounters in travel writing. Theories that centered in hybridity, like in Bhabha's work, or theories based on the agency of indigenous peoples and cultural resistance could have provided more adequate tools to understand the changing relationship between the writer with the foreign culture.

The fifth chapter, “Outer-truths’ and Inner-truths’: Truths, Lies and Female Sensibilities” explores how Rosa E. King, Sybille Bedford, and Rebecca West connected with Mexico’s difficult cultural landscape by merging ‘outer-truths’ (fact-based events) and ‘inner-truth’ (symbolic recreations of subjective events) in their writing. The chapter explored how these women navigated memory, colonial privilege, and cross-cultural encounters in post-revolutionary times, Mexico, through the lenses of Carl Thompson’s heterogeneity of travel writing, Paul Fussell’s autobiographical memoirs of ‘literary validity’, Michel Foucault’s relational power, Susan Bassnett’s gendered approach to travel writing and Hélène Cixous’s idea of *écriture féminine*. Combining a factual detail of the Mexican Revolution with emotionally charged, lyrical prose, King’s memoir *Tempest Over Mexico* often contradicted her attempt at empathy with her British privilege and capitalist motivations. Richly aesthetic, and romanticised, Bedford’s *A Visit to Don Otavio* paints Mexico’s indigenous cultures with the eyes of a tourist, reducing any in depth engagement with the colonial history of the country. West merged her two visits into one, and her more humanistic emphasis provided a more empathetic tone in her factual account, though her choice to focus only on those figures involved in the revolution and their ideological leanings clouded a view of contemporary Mexico’s post-revolutionary complexities. By means of their respective female sensibilities, King’s emotional depth, Bedford’s poetic introspection, and West’s rational humanism, these authors brought to bear on Mexico their own particular insights on what it might mean to be empathetic there, which reside in the tensions between solidarity and colonial privilege, while also enhancing the category of travel writing by incorporating gendered narratives of empathy and self-reflection.

The study makes a significant contribution to feminist and postcolonial scholarship as regards how power dynamics of gender and colonialism impact travel writing. Using Bassnett’s and Cixous’s feminist theories, this study argues that women’s travel narratives are complex texts that involved both self-expression and the continuance of colonialist history. The study may prove useful to scholars in these fields in their pursuit of how women writers in the travel literature genre have created through empathy and privilege. The exploration of how Mexico is represented in the writing of travel writers by the study has a potential to benefit the

tourism industry. Overall, the findings underscored the need for more ethical and sincere engagement with the cultures and histories of the regions visited by tourists. The results demonstrated the intricate relationship between travel writing and postcolonial discourse, as well as the intersection of travel literature and gender theory. Consequently, these insights extended beyond the interests of academic scholars, offering value to practitioners, organizations, and interdisciplinary researchers. The study also highlighted that the expressions of male sensibility observed in the works analyzed held interpretive significance and contributed meaningfully to broader critical discussions. Thus, tourism organizations could concentrate and develop more responsible narratives that are more empathetic, self-aware and advance a greater understanding of local cultures as opposed to the superficial, commodified representations that populate the travel industry (Viken 21). There is, therefore, potential for a more sustainable form of tourism that respects indigenous and local communities and for an inclusive kind of global travel. The study could be of use as regards educational curricula for fostering empathy, gendered perspectives, and postcolonial critique, as well as cultural exchange programs. However, through teachers' implementation of these ideas into teaching travel writing and cross-cultural studies, it is possible for them to actively teach students about seeing the power dynamics present in representations of other cultures. It could also aid the students of intercultural communication courses, giving students a way to critique how cultures are represented and how to deal with cultural differences with respect and knowledge. The findings suggest that travel writers and journalists today can use a model in creating less monotheistic, self—reflective stories, which take into account their own subject positions in cross—cultural encounters. For writers hoping to experience another culture and in the process avoiding stereotypes through our representations of its complexity, these authors are instructive because of the empathy and self-awareness they bring to these texts. This may be a study that inspires a new batch of travel writers to engage with local histories and cultures through empathy rather than viewing one from the side. The study's insights would be useful for organizations operating in the cultural preservation, indigenous rights and postcolonial justice areas in advancing more respectful and collaborative engagement with local communities. Through

identifying the relevance of empathy and authenticity to portraying and mirroring of cultural identities, the study offers an advocacy group framework for tackling their work with greater understanding of power dynamics in representing marginalized voices.

This thesis is an examination of male and women's travel writing along with their fiction, that significantly contributes to the understanding of how gender, colonial privilege, and empathy inform narratives of foreign cultures. This gives the suggestion that travel writing can play a role as a significant mode to create cross cultural understanding and problematize the colonial power, if it includes self - reflexivity and empathetic engagement. It's possible to use these insights to a number of areas of the application, for instance, tourism, education, or advocacy where there is need of more refined and moral depiction of culture. The study champions how travel writing can foster such potential in terms of a deeper, more ethical practice of cultural encounters in which both cultures represented and the writer have an obligation to engage in responsible representations of cultures.

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ABSTRACT

**SELECT BRITISH TRAVEL NARRATIVES AND MEXICO AS
INSPIRING FULCRUM: A STUDY**

**AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
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DECEMBER, 2025**

**SELECT BRITISH TRAVEL NARRATIVES AND MEXICO AS INSPIRING
FULCRUM: A STUDY**

BY

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Submitted

**In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in English and Culture Studies of Mizoram University, Aizawl.**

Mexico, though historically marginal as a global political power, has long exerted a profound cultural influence, captivating foreign imaginations with its ancient heritage and tumultuous modern history. This allure drew a constellation of British writers between 1934 and 1969, whose travelogues and novels reveal Mexico as a dynamic landscape for exploring themes of cultural encounter, political upheaval, and personal transformation. The proposed study examines how Mexico shaped the works of Rosa E. King, Graham Greene, Ralph Bates, Sybille Bedford, and Rebecca West, focusing on their travel narratives and novels- *Tempest Over Mexico: A Personal Chronicle* (1935), *The Lawless Roads* (1939), *The Fields of Paradise* (1941), *A Visit to Don Otavio: A Mexican Journey* (1953), and *Survivors in Mexico* (2003) alongside Bates's travel-essay "Conversations in Mexico" (1939), a novella, *The Burning Corn* (1939), and Greene's novel *The Power and the Glory* (1940) as secondary sources. By analyzing these texts, the study investigates how British writers constructed imaginative narratives from cross-cultural encounters, positioning Mexico as a liminal space for intercultural exchange while navigating the complexities of colonial legacies and gender dynamics. It also elucidates the historical context of Anglo-Spanish rivalry, the motivations behind British literary fascination with Mexico, the interplay between travel writing and fiction, and the distinct contributions of female voices, highlighting the research's originality in addressing lesser-studied authors and the female gaze.

The British literary fascination with Mexico cannot be divorced from the historical tensions between Britain and Spain, which profoundly shaped perceptions of Spanish America. Since the reign of Elizabeth I, Anglo-Spanish conflicts were multifaceted, encompassing religious (Catholicism versus Protestantism), economic (trade monopolies), and imperialist (colonial expansion) dimensions. As one account notes, Catholic Spain aimed "not only to overthrow Protestantism, and to put an end to the assistance given by England to the rebellious Netherlanders, but to check for ever the attacks on his colonies and commerce by the audacious and piratical English adventurers" (Traill 416). Mexico, as a Spanish colony after 1519, was entangled in this rivalry, which extended to the Americas and informed British writers' perspectives. Despite these conflicts, English interest in Spanish culture grew over time, intensified by literary and cultural exchanges (Samson 19). While Spain looked

to Italy during the Renaissance, Germany during the Reformation, and France during the Restoration, British writers found inspiration in Mexico's post-revolutionary landscape, particularly after the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920). This period marked Mexico as a site of political and cultural ferment, attracting writers disillusioned with Western civilization's failures- be it Christianity, imperialism, or industrialization (Mermann-Jozwiak 29). The Mexican Revolution, with its focus on land reform, indigenous rights, and anti-imperialist sentiment, resonated with British writers seeking alternatives to Britain's societal constraints. Mexico's exotic allure, coupled with its revolutionary fervor, offered an escape from repressive domestic environments and a canvas for exploring universal human themes. The study's selected authors- King, Greene, Bates, Bedford, and West, engaged Mexico's peasantry with the legacy of Spanish imperialism, and the revolution's promise, albeit through varied ideological lenses. Their works reflect a complex interplay between fascination and critique, shaped by the historical Anglo-Spanish dynamic and the broader disillusionment with modernity.

The British writers under study were drawn to Mexico for diverse reasons, ranging from political activism to personal reinvention. Ralph Bates, a committed communist, visited Mexico in 1938 to support the Loyalist cause in the Spanish Civil War, focusing on the plight of Mexican peasants and the ejido land-reform system (Walker 4). His travel essay, "Conversations in Mexico," informed his novel *The Fields of Paradise*, which critiques the romanticized exoticism of predecessors like D.H. Lawrence, presenting a grounded perspective on indigenous struggles. Graham Greene, a Catholic, traveled to Mexico in 1938 to observe the anti-clerical policies of the Communist government, describing "the fiercest persecution of religion anywhere since the reign of Elizabeth" (Greene X). His travelogue, *The Lawless Roads*, inspired *The Power and the Glory*, a novel exploring faith and morality amidst political extremism. Rebecca West, traveling in 1969, sought to understand Mexico's history as reflective of broader human predicaments, challenging mystical narratives and offering a sympathetic portrayal of native Mexicans. Sybille Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio* portrays Mexico's revolutionary turbulence and vibrant culture, reflecting an introspective yet prejudiced lens, blending humor and historical insight. Rosa E. King's *Tempest Over Mexico: A Personal Chronicle* offers an intimate,

firsthand narrative of the revolution from a British expatriate's perspective, illuminating class tensions and the chaotic dynamics of change.

These writers, often disillusioned with Britain's moral and cultural crises-exacerbated by World War I and the looming threat of World War II- found in Mexico a space to interrogate their identities and artistic practices. As George Woodcock observes, writers "who sensed despair and crisis in the air, were attracted to lands such as Mexico where the moral divisions would be less obscured by tradition and hypocrisy than in Britain" (Veitch xiii). Their journeys facilitated a transformation from initial negative impressions, often marked by colonial biases, to more affirmative narratives in their fiction, which explored universal emotions and human resilience. This evolution underscores Mexico's role as a catalyst for personal and artistic growth, positioning the nation as a vibrant cultural force beyond its geographical boundaries. A central contribution of this study is its exploration of the interplay between travelogues and fiction, demonstrating how travel narratives served as precursors to more mature novelistic works. Bates's "Conversations in Mexico" and *The Burning Corn* directly informed *The Fields of Paradise*, where the protagonist Felipe's revolutionary zeal reflects Bates's engagement with land-reform movements. Greene's *The Lawless Roads*, with its stark depictions of poverty and oppression, evolved into *The Power and the Glory*, where the whisky-priest's empathy transcends initial disparagements, finding compassion in a prison scene, while West's *Survivors in Mexico*, a 264-page travel memoir, engages with Mexico's racial and cultural complexities, challenging notions of superiority and drawing parallels with the works of Mexican muralists like Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio* blurs the line between fact and fiction, prompting debate about whether such imaginative reconstruction captures a deeper authenticity or sacrifices historical precision for literary effect. King's *Tempest Over Mexico*, rooted in her experiences as a hotel owner in Cuernavaca, during the revolution, offers a narrative bridge between historical reality and personal reflection. This interplay highlights the potential of travel narratives to evolve into fiction, as factual observations transform into imaginative explorations. The study posits that travelogues reveal the authors' subjective selves more intimately than realist fiction, allowing for a deeper examination of cross-cultural encounters. By prioritizing

travelogues, the research uncovers how these writers navigated the tension between objective observation and colonial bias, contributing to a richer understanding of Mexico's literary representation. The study's focus on female writers- King, Bedford, and West, addresses a critical gap in scholarship, which has largely centered on male authors like Lawrence, Greene, and Lowry. Drawing on Susan Bassnett's observation that early travel accounts were predominantly male (Bassnett 239), the research examines how women used travel writing to challenge domestic constraints and reflect on global issues with a more nuanced approach as compared to the male writers. For early twentieth century women, foreign travel offered a means to engage with emerging genres like essays and memoirs, subtly subverting gendered expectations (Morgan 193). The analysis centers on whether the female gaze in these narratives reinforces Eurocentric perspectives or de-romanticizes the revolution's impact, particularly the dispossession of native lands.

This study addresses several underexplored areas in literary and cultural studies. While scholars have examined Mexico's influence on prominent authors like Lawrence and Greene, lesser-known writers like King, Bates, Bedford, and West remain understudied. By analyzing their travel narratives collectively through a cultural studies lens, the research reveals Mexico as a site of dynamic intercultural exchange, exposing the identities of both traveler and observed. The focus on travelogues as precursors to fiction highlights their role in shaping artistic evolution, challenging the traditional view of travel writing as merely informative. The emphasis on the female gaze addresses a gap in understanding how gender shapes representations of the 'other,' particularly in the context of post-revolutionary Mexico. The study also contributes to postcolonial scholarship by examining how these writers navigated colonial legacies. By questioning whether these writers approached Mexico with objectivity or a patronizing agenda, the study offers a nuanced perspective on the ethics of travel writing.

Mexico's allure for British writers between 1934 and 1969 lies in its capacity to serve as a locus for cultural, political, and personal exploration. Through the travelogues and fiction of Bates, Greene, West, Bedford, and King, this study illuminates how cross-cultural encounters shaped imaginative narratives, transforming initial biases into empathetic portrayals of human resilience. The

historical context of Anglo-Spanish rivalry, the interplay between travel writing and fiction, and the distinct contributions of female voices underscore Mexico's enduring influence on British literature. By addressing lesser-studied authors and the female gaze, the research fills critical gaps, offering a comprehensive analysis of Mexico as a vibrant cultural force that transcends its geographical boundaries.

Chapter I: Introduction

The introductory chapter embarks on a nuanced exploration of the connections between selected British travel narratives and Mexico, centering on the Mexican Revolution, its politics, history, culture, and literature. It undertakes a comparative analysis of the imaginative positions of male and female fiction writers—Rosa E. King, Graham Greene, Ralph Bates, Sybille Bedford, and Rebecca West, examining how their cross-cultural encounters with Mexico shaped their literary works and contributed to the formation of hybrid identities. By juxtaposing their artistic expressions against domestic realities, the study positions Mexico not as a mere tourist destination but as a vibrant, living culture that profoundly influenced these authors' creative output. A particular emphasis is placed on the critical analysis of diverse female perspectives, as portrayed by King, Bedford, and West, addressing a significant scholarly gap in the predominantly male-focused literature on this subject.

In his essay "Authority and Veracity in the Modern Travel Book", Carl Thompson characterizes the modern travel book as the "more literary branch of the travel writing genre which has flourished since the nineteenth century" (Thompson 86). This genre emerged amidst significant socio-economic transformations, particularly during the nineteenth century, when rapid industrialization spurred urbanization, increased production, and introduced groundbreaking inventions like the steam engine. The development of the railway steam locomotive in 1804 revolutionized transportation, facilitating travel for the burgeoning European middle class. As Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, travel became more accessible, aligning with the rising demand for entertainment through magazines, newspapers, and affordable novels. The expansion of railways also enabled the transport of heavy printing machinery, sparking a revolution in print culture which fueled the production of sensational literature like yellowbacks (Shillam). This period coincided with the British Empire's colonial zenith, making travel both

affordable and a marker of social prestige, or what Pierre Bourdieu terms ‘cultural capital.’ Consequently, a domestic readership in England emerged, eager for accounts of global exploration. The modern travel book, as Thompson describes, is distinguished by its literary seriousness, chronicling the author’s extensive journeys and detailed observations of people, places, and cultures, crafted explicitly for a homeland audience. However, the twentieth century ushered in a profound shift in travel writing, influenced by the cataclysmic events of the First and Second World Wars and the subsequent avant-garde movements. These disruptions challenged the notion of objective truth, broadening the genre’s creative scope. Additionally, Sigmund Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) introduced the study of the subconscious, undermining the linear, realist narratives prevalent in the nineteenth century. As a result, between 1880 and 1940, travel writing evolved, mirroring trends in imaginative literature. The genre transitioned from detailed, morally didactic realism to a more impressionistic style, emphasizing the traveler’s subjective consciousness as much as their physical journey (Hulme and Young 74).

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, modern travel books became “both more overtly autobiographical, and more self-consciously literary” (Thompson 88). These works deliberately highlight their fictionality through self-reflexive techniques and novelistic narrative devices, claiming “the authenticity of fiction” (89). By prioritizing subjective experience over factual precision, modern travelogues paradoxically assert an enhanced truth, blending the authority of both fiction and non-fiction. This shift reflects a broader cultural skepticism toward absolute veracity, aligning the genre with modernist literary experimentation. Writers embraced impressionistic and fragmented narratives, foregrounding personal responses over objective documentation, thus redefining authenticity in travel literature. This evolution underscores the travel book’s adaptation to changing intellectual and cultural landscapes. By integrating autobiographical depth with literary artistry, modern travelogues offer nuanced portrayals of cross-cultural encounters, challenging readers to reconsider the boundaries between fact and imagination. The genre’s embrace of subjective truth not only reflects the complexities of modern experience but also cements its status as a dynamic, hybrid form of literary expression.

The study's methodology employs a close-reading approach and comparative analysis, grounded in cultural studies and postcolonial theory. It examines the lived experiences of British travelers as documented in their narratives, exploring identity formation through lenses such as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and feminist theories by Hélène Cixous and Elaine Showalter. Stuart Hall's "Encoding/Decoding" and Susan Morgan's concept of imperial rhetoric further orient the analysis, enabling an interrogation of how these writers constructed Mexico as a cultural and imaginative nexus.

By addressing the critical neglect of female travel writers and offering a comparative analysis of male and female perspectives, this study illuminates the multifaceted role of Mexico in shaping modern British literature. It positions Mexico as a matrix for cross-cultural encounters, where writers interrogated their identities and worldviews, producing narratives that bridge personal and collective experiences. Through its methodological approach and engagement with cultural and postcolonial theories, the study attempts to fill existing research gaps and opens new avenues for exploring the intersections of travel, literature, and identity in the twentieth and twenty first century.

Chapter II: Mexico as an Imaginative Crucible

The journey of the travel narratives and novels of the British male and female authors interrogates their encounters with Mexico, who, using their gendered perspectives, transform Mexico into an imaginative crucible. This chapter critically investigates Rosa E. King's *Tempest Over Mexico*, Graham Greene's *The Lawless Roads*, Ralph Bates's *The Fields of Paradise*, Sybille Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio*, and Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico*. Together their works question the building of identity and the dynamics of the other as they work primarily with the complicated and variegated history of Mexico and the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920). A striking distinction emerges between male and female authors: King, West, and Bedford often embrace ambiguity and resist conclusive endings, while Greene and Bates tend to seek order and resolution. This difference not only points to personal experiences but also underscores Mexico as a transformative space that reveals hidden aspects of the authors' identity.

Rosa E. King's *Tempest Over Mexico* chronicles her experiences as a British expatriate in Cuernavaca from 1907, navigating the Porfirian era and the Mexican Revolution. King intertwines personal entrepreneurial ventures with historical reflections, subtly critiquing the colonial legacy of the Spanish Conquistador, Hernan Cortés: "Cortez had no reverence for civilization, only a love of space and elbowroom" (King 13). Her empathy for indigenous potters: "I made it a fixed rule never to haggle with the Indians" (King 31), contrasts with her profiteering, i.e. doubling pottery prices for American tourists, revealing a nuanced stance within Porfirian economic disparities. Initially dismissive of revolutionary unrest, stating, "such talk has been going on for years, and nothing ever comes of it" (King 43), King's perspective evolves through interactions with figures like Madero and Zapata. Her sheltering of Madero under her British flag and her complex encounter with Huerta, marked by an unexpected abrazo, reflect her integration into Mexican society while maintaining a degree of detachment: "I was glad it was not my Revolution" (King 64). King's narrative prioritizes personal anecdotes and sensory details, such as "the smell of the countryside" and "sounds in the little cobbled lanes" (King 135), aligning with Carl Thompson's observation that women's travel writing emphasizes domestic details to explore cultural encounters (Thompson 201). Her refusal to leave Cuernavaca after her hotel's destruction suggests a deeper attachment, complicating a purely colonial reading of her female gaze.

In contrast, Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico* takes a more analytical approach, harnessing Aztec imagery to critique concepts of divine benevolence. She provocatively claims that "human beings are often made hideous by what the gods do to them" (West xxi), which leads her to reject narratives of spiritual renewal. Instead, she celebrates the secular vibrancy of Mexican life, describing a palpable "life force" that underpins her experiences (West xi). Her view of ambiguity "we develop by misunderstanding" (xxi), stands out as refreshing in a world that often seeks neat conclusions. West does not shy away from political critique, implicating U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson in Madero's downfall by likening his actions to "Hitler's pre-war tactics" (West 195).

Unlike King's emotionally immediate style, West employs a more theoretical lens, situating Mexico within a broader political context and focusing on diplomatic

failures rather than personal narratives. Her dismissal of mysticism as “D.H. Lawrenced” (West xiv) highlights her rational humanism and reinforces her critique of theistic ideologies, contrasting her earlier somber reflections in works like *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*. Sybille Bedford’s *A Visit to Don Otavio* marries humor with keen historical insights, framing the Austrian archduke Maximilian I’s brief reign in Mexico (1832-1867) as “a tragedy of misunderstanding” (Bedford 84–86). Her portrayal of the Tarrascan Indians, while warm, risks reinforcing colonial stereotypes, as she notes, “they are not acquisitive; their sense of identity undeveloped” (Bedford 115). This statement captures the tension within postcolonial discourse and demonstrates Bedford’s awareness of her own cultural positioning. The narrative’s vibrant characters and dramatic encounters draw on a pre-war travel writing style, provoking critical thought from readers as she questions, “What can I ever know about the Tarrascan Indians?” (Bedford 115). This self-awareness reflects her understanding of the limitations of her cross-cultural insights. By exploring Maximilian’s psychological dilemmas alongside Juárez’s motivations, Bedford invites deeper contemplation of Mexico’s colonial legacy and the ongoing construction of its national identity.

Greene’s travelogue *The Lawless Roads* and the novel, *The Power and the Glory* delve into Mexico’s issues of religious persecution through a postcolonial lens. Greene’s touristic gaze in *Lawless Roads* is tinged with distrust and suspicion at “an untrustworthy mestizo face” (Greene 25), at “the brown impassive sentimental Mexican eyes” (207). The use of such epithets to define the physical appearance is reductive as it diminishes the native Mexican to a primal being, a mere body that is at the mercy of his instincts, and unable to restrain his emotions or betrayed none, echoing Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism. Greene, later in the travelogue refutes these stereotypes by affirming that “Indians are no less equal in the eyes of God” (Greene 87), particularly through the powerful imagery of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The whiskey priest in his Mexican novel, *The Power and the Glory*, is characterized by his flaws yet redemptive qualities, embodies Greene’s exploration of grace amidst moral uncertainty. The priest’s martyrdom symbolizes an act of resistance against oppressive secular regimes, reflecting Greene’s dual identity as both Catholic and socialist. His myriad struggles to reconcile personal faith with political realities

enrich the narrative, ultimately revealing how Mexico catalyzes spiritual growth within him, complicating his status as merely a colonial observer.

Ralph Bates's novel, *The Fields of Paradise* presents a contrastingly hopeful vision of Mexico through the lens of land reform, depicting the ejido system as "the sign of new faith" (Bates 400). Bates's protagonist, Felipe Mantanzas, embodies optimism and a vision of restoration, yearning for "a bower of greenery, of abundance" (Bates 238). Drawing from his experiences in Spain and fluency in Spanish, Bates critiques the capitalist exploitation under Díaz while acknowledging the sadness tied to historical betrayals of indigenous people (394–99). Felipe's hopefulness, inspired by genuine peasant congresses, starkly contrasts with narratives of despair and disillusionment with the revolutionary ideals, found in Mexican literature, such as Mariano Azuela's *The Underdogs* (1929) or Juan Rulfo's short story "They gave us the land" (1953). Bates's sympathetic perspective on economic progress prompts critical reflection on his position as a white colonial author and the implications of his privileged viewpoint.

This chapter employs a contrapuntal reading approach, inspired by Edward Said, to juxtapose British narratives with Mexican voices. Works by Azuela and Rulfo illustrate the disillusionment faced by revolutionaries and peasants, providing a stark contrast to the more optimistic narratives presented by British authors. Mariano Azuela's *The Underdogs* vividly captures the protagonist, Demetrio Macias's sense of alienation amid revolution, while Juan Rulfo's short story "They gave us the land" highlights the unfulfilled promises of reform, emphasizing the harsh realities of post-revolutionary life. By examining these contrasting perspectives, the analysis reveals how British authors, despite their empathetic intentions, often impose external frameworks that can overshadow the lived realities presented by Mexican writers, who foreground systemic challenges facing their societies.

The chapter concludes by reflecting on the gendered dynamics in narrative approaches. Women writers: King, West, and Bedford, embrace ambiguity, gravitating toward complex explorations rather than simple, tidy conclusions. King's decision to remain in Mexico, illustrates her active participation in post-revolutionary efforts, while still noting the Yaquis of the desert as "the primitive", however, in "Conversations in Mexico", Bates refers to "the Yaqui agriculturist (today as) much

more prosperous than even the Nahua, former master of the Mexican plateau (Bates 404). Meanwhile, West and Bedford engage in dialectical narratives that prioritize inquiry “we develop by misunderstanding” (West xxi)—signaling a desire to question rather than resolve. In contrast, male narratives often seek definitive conclusions; Greene’s whiskey priest aspires to redemption, and Bates’s Felipe pursues order and restoration. These differences underscore women’s unique capacity to navigate intercultural encounters without the pressure for resolution that characterizes male narratives. Ultimately, through their experiences, Mexico emerges as a hermeneutic space for revealing aspects of these writers’ identities, highlighting the transformational power of the country in illuminating hidden dimensions of their selves as they engage deeply with its history, culture, and people.

Chapter III: Cultural Interface and Identity Formation

This chapter looks at how British travel writers’ experiences in cross-cultural encounters in Mexico radically altered their identities, upsetting received ideas, and creating possibilities for self-change. These authors discuss the complex interplay of cultural difference through Rosa E. King’s *Tempest Over Mexico*, Graham Greene’s *The Lawless Roads*, Ralph Bates’s *The Fields of Paradise*, Sybille Bedford’s *A Visit to Don Otavio* and Rebecca West’s *Survivors in Mexico*, where they reassess their opinions in the unique and ever-changing context of the tapestry Mexico’s historical landscape has woven. Using Mary Louise Pratt’s “contact zone”, a liminal space where cultures meet, clash, and hybridize- it examines whether their intercultural dialogues fostered universal humanity or reinforced cultural biases. The traveler’s identity, shaped by these encounters, is dynamic and fluid, continuously evolving through interactions with the landscape and native populations encountered during their journey (*Travel and Identity* 6-7).

Rosa E. King’s *Tempest Over Mexico* chronicles her experiences as a British expatriate in Cuernavaca during the Mexican Revolution, revealing a complex interplay of identity, colonial dynamics, and evolving empathy. Initially, King leverages her English identity to maintain detachment, asserting, “as an Englishwoman (it) was not her revolution” (King 62-64). This stance, prioritizing business interests, “My worry was that... accidental damage might be done to my property” (King 122-132) which reflects a colonial mindset that distances her from

the native struggle, suggesting a lack of genuine solidarity. Her confidence in her fairness toward Indians masks a focus on self-preservation, echoing historical exploitative patterns cloaked in moral rhetoric. King's essentialist portrayal of Pontipirani, a European woman aligned with Pancho Villa, further complicates her perspective. She attributes Pontipirani's allegiance to a "decadent" fascination with "brutal, primitive strength", implying fixed racial or cultural traits. This essentialist view, critiqued within postcolonial discourse for overlooking contextual motivations like political ideals or societal disillusionment reinforces a colonial hierarchy positioning Europeans above the "illiterate, half-clothed Indians" (King 166). Such framing risks perpetuating stereotypes, yet King's depiction of the soldaderas, the native women who supported revolutionary soldiers, reveals admiration for their resilience and agency. King contrasts them with privileged women, noting, "Mexican woman of this class despised by the women of indolent wealth ignorantly proud of their uselessness" (King 183), recognizing their role as "helpers and constructionists" in forging Mexico's liberal government. This acknowledgment hints at a growing appreciation for native contributions, challenging her initial detachment. The loss of her Bella Vista Hotel marks a pivotal shift. King reflects, "For the first time I had the feeling that I was leaving my home ... Now, in the moment of losing it, I found my home" (King 246), a paradox, suggesting colonial dispossession fosters identification with Cuernavaca's marginalized. Her description of shared hardship, "we were more like animals than people, foul-smelling, indistinguishable" (King 246) implies a fleeting alignment with the disenfranchised, eroding distinctions of breeding. By the memoir's end, King declares, "I was no longer the woman, who because she was a foreigner, thought this was not her Revolution," indicating a transformation through shared suffering and participation in rebuilding efforts. This evolution, distancing her from "the bankers in London and New York" (King 249), suggests a rejection of purely exploitative models, though her earlier biases reveal the complexity of her colonial identity. King's narrative thus navigates the contact zone, where cultural encounters both reinforce and challenge preconceptions, ultimately fostering a partial transcendence of her initial detachment.

In *The Lawless Roads*, Graham Greene grapples with his quest for a purer faith in Mexico, ultimately finding it elusive. He contrasts the visceral Catholicism of

indigenous Mexicans, “a peon knelt with his arms out in the attitude of the cross, woman dragged herself up the aisle on her knees” (Greene 289) with the seemingly “fictitious” Mass in Chelsea, yet remains disconnected, describing Indians as “little primeval figures of an older day” and their religion as a “dark, tormented, magic cult” (Greene 214-216). The term “magic” evokes something alien and incomprehensible, “something simple and strange and uncomplicated, a way of life we have hopelessly lost but can never quite forget” (215). This unattainable ideal frustrates Greene, mirrored in the German “escapist” character, who flees one prison only to face another, dreaming of an idyllic Amazon where “a man could live on nothing, without violence or hate” (Greene 220). This cyclical entrapment reflects Greene’s realization that his modern self, shaped by twentieth-century Britain, cannot transcend its constraints. His journey yields no transformative faith, only a questioning of his perspectives, encapsulated in the closing reflection: “Mexico is a state of mind” (Greene 224).

In contrast, *The Power and the Glory* (1940) transforms Greene’s experience into a creative epistemological site, distilling Mexico’s revolutionary tensions through the whiskey priest. As John Updike notes in the introduction to *The Power and the Glory*, the novel sheds the “querulousness” of “Greene the exasperated tourist” (Greene xi), replacing it with profound stakes of “life and death and beyond” as the priest’s journey culminates in a sacrificial act, returning to hear the dying American James Calver’s confession despite knowing it is a trap. Forgiving the betraying mestizo, he echoes Christ’s compassion, prioritizing duty and sacrifice over self-preservation (Greene 139). In his final debate with the lieutenant, the priest asserts the Church’s enduring power: “Within the priest rests the power of Rome, even though he himself is, as a man, nameless and a sinner ... The Church, he argues, does not depend on any one person” (Greene 140). This shift from self-pity to resilience reflects Greene’s evolving view of Mexico, moving from disdain to admiration for its people’s faith: “when you saw the lines at the corners of the eyes, the shape of the mouth, how the hair grew, it was impossible to hate. Hate was just a failure of imagination” (Greene 109). Through the priest, Greene explores identity as a reconciliation of imperfection with purpose, offering a universal meditation on human struggle and redemption.

Ralph Bates's Mexican oeuvre, centered on *The Fields of Paradise*, "Conversations in Mexico", a travel-essay (1939), and a Mexican novella, *The Burning Corn* (1939), rejects exploitative colonial models, emphasizing indigenous agency and resistance. In *The Fields of Paradise*, the burning of Sulpicio Rosas's hacienda by peasants mirrors a postcolonial reclamation of land, paralleling *The Burning Corn*'s destruction of Don Atanasio's hacienda after his death: "Don Atanasio's ghost 'rides about on his horse at night'" (Bates 578). Both texts depict colonizers' dominance: Atanasio's "inordinate pride in his collection of spurs from the early colonial period" (Bates 576) and Braulio Acosta's cruelty in killing Pedro's son for stealing water (Bates 143) as symbols of historical oppression. Acosta's Spanish headman, Juan Hinojosa, uses horsemanship to "pick off the cowards, isolate the determined ones, divide them" (Bates 143), reflecting physical and psychological control, akin to Frantz Fanon's notion of colonial trauma's lasting grip (Fanon 65). *The Burning Corn* follows Nacho, a revolutionary painter, and Elena, his wife, through a jungle to Quetzaltotomatlatlan, where villagers defend their milpas against counterrevolutionaries. Nacho's disillusionment: "I get bored with the revolution, because I lose my belief in it" (Bates 606)—and the villagers' despair after the corn's burning: "The burning of the corn... had deprived them of courage" (Bates 619) highlight revolution's emotional toll, resisting romanticized narratives. Elena, a mestizo woman, with "half her blood" indigenous and "black hair, a purple tinge in it from the coppery sun" (Bates 567-568), embodies Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity, blending native resilience with modern roles like teaching the usage of sewing machines to the women in the village (Bates 568) and her plea, "Only be a little kinder" (Bates 622), challenges patriarchal residues as well, thereby amplifying resistance against colonial gender hierarchies. "Conversations in Mexico", the travel essay by Ralph Bates, underscores Yaqui resilience: "The Yaquis were never completely conquered," thriving under Cárdenas's Land Reform through communal customs and "El Pueblo" as a judicial voice (Bates 404). Bates's vignettes, like dialogues with a Pátzcuaro commissar (400), frame Mexico as revolutionary promise, contrasting Montserrat Fontes's *Dreams of the Centaur*, which details Yaqui persecution under Díaz, who targeted their lands as they "refused allegiance to Mexico" until 1928 (Cantu 149). Fontes's multicultural Mexico: "We have Lebanese,

Arabs, Sephardic Jews, Marranos, French, German, Irish, Japanese, Chinese and Mexicans” (152), grounds Yaqui trauma in global contexts, complementing Bates’s optimism with historical sobriety. Bates’s works critique colonial legacies through characters like Felipe, whose imprisonment parallels the whiskey priest in Greene’s *The Power and the Glory*, fostering “a greater awareness... of the essential bond between people entrapped in the world’s prison-house” (Walker 322-29). Despite occasional essentialism: “his thoughts and emotions gathered round his native intelligence” (Bates 99) Bates challenges stereotypes, as Nacho rejects “rubbishy watercolors... for American tourists” (Bates 606), critiquing neocolonial commodification. Fire, from Felipe’s fireworks to burning haciendas, symbolizes destruction of colonial order, yet ongoing struggles: “We have as yet no faith in the future” (Bates 400)—reflect decolonization’s complexity, affirming Bates’s commitment to indigenous empowerment over exploitative models.

Chapter IV: Place as Living Culture beyond the Tourist Gaze

In this chapter, place is revealed as a vibrant, living culture, one that moves beyond a superficial tourist point of view to reveal the many variegated ways in which place has become infused into the very fabric of social identity in Rosa King’s *Tempest Over Mexico*, Graham Greene’s *The Lawless Roads*, Ralph Bates’s *The Fields of Paradise*, Sybille Bedford’s *A Visit to Don Otavio*, and Rebecca West’s *Survivors in Mexico*. This chapter attempts to understand Sybille Bedford’s *A Visit to Don Otavio* oscillating between the ‘tourist gaze, which is a superficial engagement with preconceived notions and aesthetic consumption, as theorized by John Urry in *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (1990), and the “critical insider perspective”, marked by participatory understanding and critical reflection on cultural and historical complexities (Urry 21). Across Chapters Four to Eight, Bedford’s narrative reveals a tourist captivated by Mexico’s sensory allure as Barthes’s *jouissance*, yet increasingly aware of its social and historical depths, though constrained by her outsider status and occasional Eurocentric biases. Bedford’s tourist gaze is evident in her aesthetic fixation and consumerist impulses. Her shopping spree includes buying “a quart of Bacardi rum” “a bottle of tequila” “six avocado pears for three-pence”, and “two armloads of tuberose” embodies a consumerist gaze, where Mexico’s affordability fuels whimsical accumulation of

goods (Bedford 42-43). This prioritizes personal gratification over local meanings, reinforcing superficial consumption. Similarly, her description of locals' complexions: "café-au-lait, chestnut, glowing copper, or milky mauve and dirty yellow"—and attire, from "skin-tight... pistachio and rich chocolate" suits to "sleezy material in blood orange, emerald, chrome yellow, azure," exoticizes them as "quite exquisite or too monstrous to be true" (39). This binary judgment reduces individuals to visual curiosities, reflecting the tourist's tendency to reduce people into stereotypes. Her frustration at X's restaurant, where she deems the Santo Tomas wine "cheap ink dosed with prune juice and industrial alcohol, as harsh on the tongue as a carrot-grater" (Bedford 49), and insistence on Spanish claret, reveals reliance on familiar European standards, dismissing local products with disdain (49). In Cuernavaca, her reluctance, "I do not like to go anywhere for the day, it is always too long and too short" (Bedford 71), and avoidance of a conducted tour prioritize personal comfort, further anchoring her in the tourist gaze. Yet, Bedford exhibits critical insider moments, engaging Mexico's complexities. Her note on literacy, "one quarter of the people cannot read... there are still two million Mexicans who speak only one of sixty different pre-Columbian tribal dialects" demonstrates awareness of linguistic diversity and educational challenges, hinting at social realities. Her disorientation while traveling, "I hardly know who I am... these pieces of escaped knowledge seem immediately paramount" reveals vulnerability, suggesting openness to Mexico's transformative potential as she struggles to "fill the blanks as though it were for air" (Bedford 40). The Coyoacán tea party (Chapter Six) captures this shift. The dialogue begins with the host's assumption in (*A Visit to Don Otavio*:

You found? You came by taxi, yes?

E. explained that I had prevented her from doing so.

The company seemed favorably impressed.

And you walked after tramway? That is good. The tourists are so helpless.

Be charitable," I said, "call us travelers. (60)

This exchange frames Bedford as a tourist, with "helpless" implying detachment, her vague "about a year" and ironic glance reveal tourist ambivalence, yet her walking and plea to be called "travelers" suggest her intention to engage deeply with the Mexican culture. Her deepest insider moment is her analysis of Maximilian's

tragedy, dissected as “a tragedy of misunderstanding... pitiful, often squalid”, rooted in European miscalculations: “not one of them knew the first thing about Mexico” (Bedford 75-80). Describing Maximilian as “liberal in a sheltered way, high-minded, serious and romantic” yet “incapable of finding anything anomalous” in colonial rule (78), contextualizes his failure within global politics, engaging Mexico’s historical agency (Bedford 75-80). However, Bedford’s insider perspective is limited by Eurocentric biases- exoticizing locals, relying on expatriates, and using terms like “semi-barbarous” (69), keeping her tethered to the tourist gaze. She navigates Mexico’s splendor and complexity as a tourist aspiring to insider status, poised for deeper understanding but not fully transcending her outsider lens.

Rebecca West’s *Survivors in Mexico*, an unfinished travelogue from her 1966 and 1969 visits, navigates the spectrum between the tourist’s superficial gaze and the empathetic gazer’s participatory engagement with Mexico’s cultural, historical, and social complexities. The tourist gaze, characterized by preconceived notions and aesthetic fixation, contrasts with the empathetic gazer’s deeper appreciation of a place’s values and relationships, striving toward a critical insider perspective. West’s narrative oscillates between these poles, reflecting both her initial consumption of Mexico as an exotic spectacle and her evolving understanding of its resilient “survivors”- those embodying the nation’s life force. However, her biases occasionally hinder her full transcendence, aligning with S. J. Squire’s critique of literary tourism’s potential to misappropriate cultural meanings, particularly when travelers from developed nations assign questionable values to “heritage sites” (Squire 14). West’s tourist gaze is evident in her early depictions of Mexico City, where she romanticizes its “wild architecture” and “coffee and chocolate” skin tones (West xii), declaring, “Mexico City is a town where one feels one might meet anybody, where one might meet everybody” (West 4). This generalization casts the city as an all-encompassing spectacle, satisfying her preconceived notion of Mexico as vibrant and exotic, as seen in her focus on “the bustle and life of Mexico City’s crowded streets and parks” (West xi). Similarly, at Frida Kahlo’s Blue House, West marvels at “the courtyard... full of sculptures... two enormous papier-mâché skeletons” (12), and describes Diego Rivera’s murals as “a new sort of beauty” (West 9). These observations prioritize visual allure over cultural depth, echoing Squire’s

concern that literary travelers may reduce complex sites to consumable images, reinforcing questionable cultural narratives for global audiences. However, as West engages more deeply, she transitions toward an empathetic gaze, participating in Mexico's living culture. Her appreciation of the mestizo majority's integration: "Here, if a white man and a man of mixed blood quarrel, it is simply as if a dark man has fallen out with his brother who takes after the other side of the family and is fair: no more than that" (West 45) contrasts with South Africa's racial tensions, reflecting her valuation of Mexico's inclusive social reality: "Mexicans do not ever stand up for themselves. They are standing up for a process, for the Indians, for the 'tradition' or 'innovation'" (West 98). At the Anthropological Museum, West's views exhibit not as static artifacts but as part of a cultural revival, noting Mexicans' non-cynical engagement with their Aztec heritage (West 54-56). Her empathetic portrayal of Doña Marina, who "spoke Mayan and Nahuatl" and was "the voice of the conquest" (124), highlights Marina's agency, challenging simplistic historical narratives. Yet, West's empathetic gaze is not absolute. Her anti-Turkish bias and ambivalence toward Cortés reveal persistent prejudices, limiting her critical insider status. These lapses resonate with Squire's warning that literary tourism risks misappropriating cultures by imposing external meanings, potentially shaping how heritage sites are marketed globally. West's journey thus illustrates the empathetic gazer's potential and pitfalls, as she strives to understand Mexico's complex network of relationships while grappling with her own cultural lens.

Graham Greene's tourist gaze, in *The Lawless Roads* manifests not in Bedford's aesthetic delight or West's intellectualization rather in visceral repulsion, describing Tabasco's "swamps and forests" as oppressive, with "dust and heat and boredom" (Greene 34). Like Bedford's wine fiasco, Greene, too, recoils at local conditions, e.g., "vultures overhead" (67), however, Greene's critical insider perspective emerges through his Catholic lens, probing Mexico's anti-clerical reforms with empathy for the persecuted whiskey-priest in his novel, *The Power and the Glory*. Greene's engagement is deeper, as he interacts with locals more, such as the peasants in Chiapas, contrasting Bedford's expatriate enclave (Bedford 60). Rebecca West, probes Mexico's colonial and indigenous legacies, akin to Bedford's Maximilian critique, but with a broader philosophical lens, questioning civilization's

violence and resilience. For instance, West's reflections on Mexican murals parallel Bedford's literacy observation: "one quarter of the people cannot read" (West 57), but West elevates them into meditations on art's political role, showing greater engagement with cultural production.

Chapter V: 'Outer-truths' and 'Inner-truths': Truths, Lies, and Female Sensibilities

This chapter explores the complex interplay between truth and narrative in women's travel writing, proposing a continuum from objective, fact-based accounts to subjective, symbolic recreations of their inner journeys during travel in Rosa King's *Tempest Over Mexico*, Sybille Bedford's *A Visit to Don Otavio*, and Rebecca West's *Survivors in Mexico*. Rosa E. King's *Tempest Over Mexico* straddles outer-truth in factual accounts of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917) along with inner-truth, shaped by memory and empathy. Her memoir, dedicated to Mexico's people in the prologue, begins objectively: "I came with my husband from our home in Mexico City... to see the beauty and richness of this famous valley" (King 7). Detailed descriptions of Porfirio Díaz's regime, Emiliano Zapata's revolt, and leaders like Madero and Huerta, with specific dates and places (King 3), illustrations by Carroll Bill and references to governors like Don Pablo bolster credibility, which Paul Fussell terms as "literal validity" in his critical text, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*. (Fussell 56). Initially viewing the conflict as foreign, she expresses relief at being a foreigner, "I was glad this was not my revolution" (King 47) which reveals detachment, and reflects unaddressed privilege (172). However, King's shared experience of "the bitterness of the town's woe" transforms her perspective, seeing it as "a necessary upheaval" for justice (King 178). Engaging in the work of reconstruction, she distances herself from Western economic concerns, aligning with locals over "bankers in London and New York" and toward the end of her travel-memoir, her assertion of oneness with Mexicans, "I belong" (King 236) challenges her British identity, suggesting home as a performative, chosen affiliation rather than a birthplace. This deconstruction of home, anticipates postmodern notions of constructed identity, as theorized by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994), where identity is fluid, negotiated in liminal spaces of cultural encounter (Bhabha 203). King's narrative which is reliant on memory: "My memory of that

evening is an intoxicating blur” (King 5) often uses phrases like “looking back” (King 35-36), thereby admitting hindsight’s creative reshaping, akin to Bedford’s fictionalization, which can be referred as her inner-truth, re-constructed along with historical figures and events in the shape of a memoir.

West’s *Survivors in Mexico* grounds its narrative in factual observations and verifiable encounters such as her account of visit to Diego Rivera’s Museum, “grey blocks of stone piled up” (West 8-9), tracing the history of Frida Kahlo’s China Poblana dress to a 1650 Chinese princess, and conversations with her taxi driver about Kahlo’s accident, which bolster credibility by providing specific details. It is to be noted here that West visited Mexico twice, in 1966 and 1969, as she was commissioned to explore Trotsky’s legacy (Schweizer 251). However, her merging of these trips into a single narrative suggests curation, even the fact that the travelogue was left unfinished and was published posthumously after revision, reflects that thematic coherence was prioritized over a strict chronology. West’s inner-truth emerges through ideological and personal reflections, leaning toward symbolic recreation. Her fascination with communism, evident in Trotsky’s “dynasty” (West 24) and anarchists like the Reclus brothers (West 175) cloaks her travelogue in a mythic dimension, yet her silence on communism’s violent toll through Tzar family executions reveals her prejudice. Even, West’s personal disclosures, like her father’s link to Elie Reclus (West 175), weave autobiography into history that emphasizes emotional resonance over mere coherent statement of facts. Her sensibility is scholarly but distant because of her minimal self-disclosure, such as shame at her ignorance regarding Kahlo’s accident, she rarely expresses vulnerability that would give rise to an intimacy, thereby navigating truth through selective, gendered reflection rather than emotional exposure.

Bedford’s *A Visit to Don Otavio* outrightly rejects outer-truth’s factual rigor with Bedford’s admission “Of course it’s a novel... I didn’t take a single note when I was in Mexico” (Bedford ix), relying on memory and postcards for writing the travelogue which undermines verifiable detail. Yet, her travelogue is filled with dialogues as if verbatim. Sybille Bedford’s fascinating stay at Don Otavio’s Hacienda San Pedro on Lake Chapala makes up for the part which could be referred to as an ‘inner-truth’ as this section is evocative of the atmosphere of a novel, characterized

by richly developed characters and humorously dramatic plotlines. Don Otavio's family, weathered by wars and revolutions, clings to their dwindling estate while scheming to convert it into a modern hotel, revealing their ambitious, Machiavellian nature. A colorful cast of arrogant British expatriates, eccentric German settlers, American Confederate descendants, and volatile local servants, fuels dramatic, humorous intrigues (Bedford 148-179) when Don Otavio, ever the gracious host would escape into the world of American fashion magazines over family plots. Her nostalgia for Don Otavio's hacienda, evokes a symbolic Eden, could be read as a critique of "American consumerism" as well as a yearning for accessibility of travel during pre-war Europe (Mulligan 177). This nostalgia however glosses over economic disparities that enabled such mobility for Europeans, thereby betraying a prejudiced view, it could be noted here that Rosa King traveled to Mexico for economic necessity. Bedford's narrative thus blends outer-truth such as logistical constraints faced during travel with inner-truth- a gendered yearning for aesthetic and emotional refuge in Don Otavio's hacienda situated in rural Mexico. Unlike West's ideological bias and philosophical detachment, Bedford's truth is introspective, and her sensibility is relational, admitting imaginative reconstruction, yet risks romanticizing Mexico.

CHAPTER VI: Conclusion

This chapter sums up the various threads of Mexico's profound role as a cultural and transformative milieu for British writers Rosa E. King, Graham Greene, Ralph Bates, Sybille Bedford and Rebecca West between 1934 and 1969. Through their travel narratives and novels: *Tempest Over Mexico*, *The Lawless Roads*, *The Fields of Paradise*, *A Visit to Don Otavio*, *Survivors in Mexico*, and supplementary texts like Bates's "Conversations in Mexico", *The Burning Corn*, and Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, these authors transformed Mexico's post-revolutionary landscape into a dynamic space for exploring identity, cultural encounters, and political upheaval. Their works reveal how Mexico, despite its marginal global political status, wielded significant cultural influence, challenging colonial legacies and gendered dynamics while fostering personal and artistic growth. By addressing lesser-studied authors and emphasizing the female gaze, this research bridges critical gaps, offering a nuanced understanding of Mexico's enduring impact on British literature. Bates's communist

activism, Greene's Catholic inquiry, West's historical curiosity, Bedford's aesthetic introspection, and King's lived life experience during the revolution reflect diverse motivations, yet all found in Mexico a canvas for universal themes- resilience, faith, and hybridity. Their narratives, oscillating between fascination and critique, underscore Mexico's role as a site of intercultural exchange, where identities were negotiated and reimagined. A key contribution lies in tracing the interplay between travelogues and fiction, demonstrating how lived experiences informed novelistic depth. Bates's grounded depiction of peasant struggles evolved from "Conversations in Mexico" to *The Fields of Paradise*, rejecting romanticized exoticism. Greene's *The Lawless Roads* fueled *The Power and the Glory*, transforming repulsion into empathy through the whiskey priest's redemption. West's *Survivors in Mexico* engaged cultural complexities, paralleling Mexican muralists' visions, while Bedford's fictionalized travel-memoir, *A Visit to Don Otavio* blurred fact and imagination, and King's *Tempest Over Mexico* bridged memoir and history. This evolution highlights travel writing's capacity to reveal subjective selves, per Carl Thompson's view of modern travelogues as autobiographical and literary, challenging colonial biases through introspection. The focus on female writers: King, Bedford, and West, addresses a scholarly neglect. King's empathy for the Indian peasants, mestizos, and eventual belonging (King 236) contrasted her initial detachment, embodying Homi K. Bhabha's fluid identity. West's analytical rejection of mysticism offered nuanced critiques, while Bedford's introspective humor romanticized yet questioned Mexico's past. Unlike Bates and Greene's resolution-driven narratives, these women embraced ambiguity, enriching the genre with gendered insights that subverted domestic constraints and Eurocentrism, though not without occasional biases. Postcolonial lenses, drawing on Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, expose how these writers navigated colonial legacies- Bates and West critiquing indigenous dispossession, Greene wrestling with faith and imperialism, Bedford and King revealing privilege. Contrapuntal readings with Mexican voices like Mariano Azuela's *The Underdogs* and Juan Rulfo's *The Burning Plain and Other Stories*, underscore British external frameworks, yet their empathetic portrayals affirm Mexico's agency. This study thus positions Mexico as a vibrant force

transcending geographical bounds, advocating for further exploration of female travel narratives and intercultural dynamics in shaping modern literature.

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