

Empire, Identity, and Masculinity in Thomas Young's Nineteenth-Century British Handbook of the Mosquito Shore

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Abstract:

This essay contextualizes Thomas Young's *Narrative of a Residence on the Mosquito Shore* (1842) within the overall production of travel narratives to the Americas, the intellection of race, and the construction of British identity and masculinity during the first half of the nineteenth century. It analyzes the author's representation of the Honduran climate, terrain, and raw materials, as well as the "customs and manners" of its Mosquito-Sambo population. It also sheds light on how the Mosquito-Sambos organized themselves socially and politically and utilized their "exceptional" status bequeathed to them by the British Crown to distinguish themselves from other indigenous peoples. In doing so, they complicated the era's ethnoracial ideas and conventions. Lastly, this article argues that Young's narrative provides an insight into bourgeois values and masculine sensibility. Through the description and differentiation of the "other," we are provided with a nuanced image of a middle-class British subject.

Keywords: Masculinity, Bourgeois Class, British Empire, Identity, Nineteenth-century Travel Literature, Honduran Mosquito Coast.

In the 1830s, a group of speculators who formed the British Central American Land Company obtained a grant to develop and carry out a profitable system of emigration to the Mosquito Shore region of Honduras. To accomplish this objective, the associates of this society appointed a British man by the name of Thomas Young as deputy superintendent. As part of this post, Young traveled in 1839 with a group of men from Gravesend, England, to Black River, which was about eighty miles inland, to form a settlement and establish trade relations with the people of the recently-independent state of Honduras with the end goal of encouraging British immigration to the area. This was not the first time British entrepreneurs and surveyors attempted to establish colonies in Black River – efforts were previously made in the mid and late eighteenth century – but the limited success achieved was the same. Nevertheless, Young did produce a written account of his expedition; a text he, in his preface to his readers, described as a sort of handbook of a rugged terrain that is largely unknown and that he wished had existed because it would have saved him from much "trouble, loss of time, and disappointment."¹

This article seeks to contextualize Thomas Young's *Narrative of a Residence on the Mosquito*

Shore (1842) within the overall production of travel narratives to the Americas, the construction of race, and the conceptualization of British identity and masculinity during the early Victorian Period. It examines the author's representation of the Honduran climate, landscape, and production, as well as the "customs and manners" of its Mosquito-Sambo population. It also sheds light on how this ethnic group organized itself socially and politically and utilized its "exceptional" status bequeathed to them by the British Crown to distinguish themselves from other indigenous populations. In doing so, they complicated the era's ethnoracial ideas and conventions. Lastly, this essay argues that Young's narrative provides an insight into bourgeois values and masculine sensibility. Through the description and differentiation of the "other," we are provided with a nuanced image of a middle-class British subject.

Imperialist Travel and Discourses of Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Great Britain

By the nineteenth century, Britain was a preeminent imperialist and industrialized nation. It had expanded its influence and borders to parts of Africa, Asia, and Oceania and had established itself as a prominent commercial and trading nation (Bridges 2002, 54-55). In the metropolis, there were numerous enhancements in transport infrastructure, technological and scientific innovation, and an expansion in the production of goods through the factory systems (Mangan 1989, 2). These advancements also resulted in the rise of the middle class, increased literacy, and a growing number of men joining the professions of business administration, diplomacy, trade, medicine, scientific innovation, surveyorship, and professional writing, among others (Tosh 2007, 12). These "new" bourgeois men were part of the individuals who traveled and migrated, on a short-term or a long-standing basis, in a professional capacity to the empire's colonies or territories it had economic interests in or were "informally" part of the British Empire. Monetary gain and political prowess were the main impetus for travel, but many men and women also ventured out beyond the metropolis in search of adventure, leisure, or knowledge (Watts 2009, 775-776).

Britain's expanding empire and engagement with other peoples and cultures also brought about the production and wide circulation of numerous travelogues. These travel narratives varied to an extent in form, purpose, and scope, but those commissioned by the government or investment and trading companies were, for the most part, required to not only be "more precise and scientific but also more obviously utilitarian, [and] more explicitly concerned with issues of trade, diplomacy, and prestige" (Youngs 2013, 55). That is not to say that many of the letters, diaries, and reports written during and after the travels ended did not include personal anecdotes and entertaining as well as "exotic" details, which they did to appeal to a broader general audience. Still, much of the booster literature focused on attracting settlers to the newly colonized or acquired areas (Youngs 2013, 59). In other words, despite claims to objective and value-free texts, most nineteenth-century travel narratives are hybrid works, a mixture of information that falls between factual or scientific and more literary in tone (Mills 1993, 84-85).

Knowingly or unintentionally, travelers were complicit with imperialism. Men and women

embodied and legitimated the growing empire through the successes they claimed to have had in acquiring tangible profits, contributing to society's commercial and intellectual needs, or spreading the Protestant Christian faith. All of these actions were considered expressions of the superiority of the British Empire and its people (Thompson 2011, 174-175). Although not always included in the historiography of empire and industry, definitions of masculinity (and femininity) were also being constructed, debated, and reflected as Britain expanded its borders. As John Tosh indicates, much has been written about the construction of masculinity in the home or public sphere, but it is often compartmentalized and not always tied to empire-building and economic expansion (2005b, 330-331). This approach is limiting because empire provided a space for asserting masculine energies, carrying-out episodes of heroic adventuring, and establishing gendered identity.

As denoted above, this was a period of transformation and advancement, but with it also came heightened anxieties about changes in the codes and discourses on masculinity. This was particularly an issue for the rising bourgeois class that had eclipsed the aristocratic class but had to adapt to differing masculine expectations. It is important to note that masculinity was not a consistent, static, or uniform concept that permeated all classes or the different professions that made up the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, specific characteristics and values constituted a "hegemonic" form of middle-class masculinity and were undoubtedly tied to the ideal male imperial subject (Tosh 2005a, 41-44). These qualities included bravery, earnestness, loyalty, temperance, and protective nature toward the weak (Cohen 2005, 326; Linsley 2013, 2). In addition, the new man was expected to have the self-discipline to achieve a balance between two extreme behaviors: the "imagined self-indulgent lassitude" associated with the aristocrats "and the lustful abandon of the working classes" (Dorré 2006, 24). But how were those masculine codes learned and maintained? Force and education were utilized, but so was textual and visual culture, which flourished in popular forms, including travel literature. Within these narratives, masculinity was represented and reified by British "imperial paragons and heroes" and the imagined unequal and hierarchical relationships between them and the overseas lands and peoples (Tosh 2005a, 50). In essence, many of these representations of masculinity not only resonated with masculine aspirations but also upheld their relevance and legitimacy.

Thomas Young and His Handbook of the Mosquito Coast

In many respects, Thomas Young presented himself as a model man in his report of the two years he spent on the Mosquito Shore and surrounding areas of Honduras from 1839 to 1841. Young commenced his *Narrative of a Residence on the Mosquito Shore* by informing the reader of the purpose of his voyage: to travel as an agent for the British Central American Land Company, a private land development firm, to Black River, where he was to form a settlement, establish amicable relations with its people, and open trade with the citizens of Honduras (2017 [1842], 1). In this capacity, and because of it, Young claimed to have adhered to the facts and recorded his

observations in a measured, direct, and (primarily) simple manner. To ensure that he could obtain accurate information, he even learned the Mosquito language, which facilitated his communication with the natives and resulted in the production of a “Mosquitian-English” glossary.² From his point of departure in Gravesend, England, to the Cape of Gracias Dios on board a brig, to his voyage on a schooner down Black River and to Trujillo, to his excursions to the interior of the country and the Bay Islands via canoe, and his return home via Belize and the United States, Young provided a series of details on the landscape and local people. Also, to appease his employers, he explained the economic opportunities that the soil and raw materials could bring to investors and immigrants who had the sufficient means and perseverance to overcome the difficulties the region may pose. Young’s claim to the truth was in line with the conventions of travel narratives classified as factual or scientific, as well as his auto-representation as a superior bourgeois gentleman.

But, there were other reasons, which had to do with outside pressures and a series of unfortunate experiences that Britishmen had on the Mosquito Coast the two decades before his arrival. As many of the newspapers of the time reported, there was doubt among the British public as to the land orders that the directors of the British Central American Land Company were granting to investors and the claims to a healthy and fertile environment because numerous men had previously fallen prey to the dishonesty of Scottish general Gregor MacGregor in the 1820s and 1830s. McGregor had lured many to the area under the pretense that the then leader of the Mosquito-sambos had accorded him the territory of *Poyais*, which was nothing but a fictional developed colony.³ In the end, all lost their capital and many of the men their lives as well. Young was well-aware of the information on the prior perils on the Mosquito Shore that circulated in Britain. Nevertheless, while remaining steadfast in not distorting or exaggerating the truth so as not to compromise “his authoritative narrational position” (Mills 2005, 93), Young produced a narrative that reflected many of the tropes of adventure, the discovery of exotic and economically significant flora and fauna, and episodes of overcoming (and dominating) nature (Frawley 1994, 28).

The journey to Honduras was fraught with obstacles and a largely impenetrable terrain. Young’s difficulties began before he even reached the Mosquito Coast as he and the crew had to deal with thunderstorms, extreme waves, and gales that almost carried away one of the men and filled the cabin with water while they were in it. As Young indicated, “The conflict of the elements, and the efforts of man to combat them —the pitching and rolling of a small brig, now on the top of a high wave, and now sunk in the abyss— the orders and responses of the captain and crew in a storm, will create feelings not easily forgotten” (2017 [1842], 4). He knew the voyage would not be easy, and many hardships lay ahead. However, in this incident and others in which he battled with nature, Young emphasized his stoicism and his ability to remain disciplined and agreeable in temperament. The experience where perhaps these qualities are most apparent is one where he, his guide, a Scotsman who had settled in the Bay Islands, and two other travelers got lost in the mangrove swamplands off the shores of the island of Bonacca. Young explained how in one of the many failed attempts to reach Black River:

We struck into a new pass, and after three hours travelling through numerous thickets and the foul drawback grass, which lacerated us severely, we were astounded to hear that our guide had lost his way; yet the stalwart Scotchman kept stalking on with one arm in a sling, and his feet dripping with blood, cutting away with his machete in the direction he thought would lead us to the lagoon, in which was our dorey, but all to no purpose. Our spirits were, however, kept up by constantly meeting with gulleys of water, at which we stopped and drank greedily, first bathing our temples and wrists. At any other time, when not suffering from intense pain, toilworn, and feverish, I should have been enchanted with the many beautiful scenes. Numerous tall and commanding trees, full of orchidaceous plants, bearing lovely and splendid flowers of hues the most varied and singular, and many other fine specimens of a smaller kind were continually seen. Day advanced, and we were still wandering without any prospect of finding our way, so completely bewildered was our poor guide. At length, we reached a matted mangrove thicket, and after cutting a pass with our machetes for upwards of a mile, sometimes crawling on our hands and knees on the dank and fetid swamp; at other times over the huge roots of the mangrove, which impeded our progress by their vast size, and their being twisted together in so many fantastical shapes... or tall tiger grass, six, seven, and eight feet in height (2017 [1842], 44).

The description above clearly shows how the landscape impeded their progress and threatened their health and well-being, as illustrated by the references to the “feet dripping with blood,” “intense pain,” fever, and overall wear and tear of their bodies. Also, the fortitude and stalwartness that both Young and the Scotsman showed reflected their “masculine” nature and, as representatives of the British Empire, that of the empire as well (Linsley 2013, 2; Woollacott 2006, 59). The use of machetes to cut through the mangroves is reminiscent of a chivalrous knight using his sword to overcome his enemy or even himself (Cohen 2005, 320-322).

Nevertheless, according to Young, the natural world is not only something to overcome but also to contemplate, respect, and appreciate for its beauty and grandeur. That is why, following his departure from Bonacca, Young included in his narrative other examples of how in awe he was of the grand terrains and climatic hazards he experienced despite the dangers they undoubtedly posed. For instance, during one of his temporary stays at a Sambo settlement near Black River during the latter part of 1840, Young described how for two days straight, the strong winds and “heavy torrents of rain” had damaged most of the dwellings and put in jeopardy both the abode he was in, and his life as well. Nevertheless, Young survived because he and others could secure protective shelter. As a conclusion to this episode, he articulated that he “sat listening to the raging elements, and the lashing and roaring of the sea on the beach [and conveyed to the reader how] ... the thunder and lightning, in some seasons, during six or eight weeks of the year, in July and August, is awfully grand, and in the pine ridges, it is said to be terrific (Young 2017 [1842], 90). Young’s battle with, and admiration for nature, are evident in his words. Still, it is also important to note that his descriptions, including the human-like qualities he attributed to the elements, are quite literary, which reflect an innate sensibility and a propensity for literature. Young never claimed to want to entertain his readers, be a naturalist, or show his penchant for poetry, but it is evident in his writing and allusion to Lord Byron’s “The Island” and “Hailing a

Portuguese Man of War” by an anonymous US-New England author as well as the works by naturalist Sir Hans Slone (2017 [1842], 5-8).

Behaviors, Customs, and Nature of the Mosquito-Sambos

The Mosquito-Sambos are a racially mixed ethnic group that has dwelt on the seacoast of Honduras for close to four centuries. They are the descendants of enslaved Africans that escaped from a shipwrecked ship in the seventeenth century and intermarried with various Amerindian groups (Young 2017 [1842], 71-72). Since then, the Mosquito-Sambos continued to racially mix with other runaway enslaved peoples, privateers, British traders, and intermittent laborers (Jiménez-Moreno 1978, 21; Argueta 2002, 416). Despite a high level of miscegenation and contact with numerous peoples, the Mosquito-Sambos was primarily an autonomous group, although they did maintain economic and political ties with the British. The relationship between them resulted in the Mosquito-Sambos adopting some of the British customs and a quasi-monarchy-influenced system of government led by a king and a series of “appointed chiefs, such as generals, admirals, colonels, and captains” (Young 2017 [1842], 71).⁴ According to Young,

The [Mosquito] men are in general tall and athletic, with a very pleasing expression of features, but they are abominably lazy, subsisting by hunting and fishing and the produce of their plantations, which the women attend to. It is not always they can be moved from their apathy, even by the inducement of liquor or Osnaburg [fabric]... The women are very good looking, with large black eyes; generally well shaped, with small feet and ankles. Many of their young girls, from thirteen to about eighteen, are, I may say, beautiful. Their dress is simply a tournou [breechcloth], which they fasten round their hips; they have also a piece of Osnaburg or print round their bodies, and hanging down as low as their knees; the legs and the body from the waist upwards being bare, except on the occasion of their festivals, when they fasten more print higher up the bosom... To describe the dress of the men is impossible, the variations are so numerous; some having nothing but a tournou, others black hats (pieces of some gaudy ribbon being tied round them) and checked shirts; others again, wear Osnaburg frocks and red caps; indeed, the more connection they have with the English, the more varied becomes their costume; although the intercourse with white people does not at all times tend to increase their morality (2017 [1842], 28-29).

As an observer and someone aware of his reader’s desires for wanting to know and “vicariously experience the lifestyle” (Wernecke 2013, 12) of the “exotic” other, Young’s details of the Mosquito-Sambos’ physical features and character are expected. Yet, these “ethnographic manners-and-customs description[s]” (Pratt 1985, 132) also reveal much about British bourgeois values and gender codes because they are not solely constructed by ideal examples but also images of what they are not; masculinity and morality are defined against images of “unmanliness” and decadence (Dowling 2016, 2-3). Drunkenness and indolence, in particular, serve this purpose as they are two of the vices that the middle-class sought to distance themselves most by the 1840s. In

doing so, the bourgeoisie hoped to further distinguish themselves from the uncouthness of the lower class and debauchery of the aristocracy (Davidoff 1987, 400-401). In addition, the fact that Mosquito women performed arduous agricultural labor emasculates them and feminizes the men in the process. In the eyes of any respectable British man or lady, this would be an aberration and the opposite of the traditional gender roles delineated in the ideology of separate spheres (Woollacott 2006, 138).⁵ Overall, the Mosquito-Sambos are represented as inferior and immoral because the men did not conform to British standards of restraint and hard work and the women to modesty and, to a certain extent, delicacy.

Young also emphasized the notion of the ills of excess in his depiction of the Mosquito men's attempts at imitating the English way of boxing and their inhumane approach to taming their horses. After a few days on Cape Gracias a Dios, Young indicated that he was an eyewitness to how men would try to settle their dispute by engaging in ridiculous and over-the-top fist fights. The Mosquito-Sambos claimed to be boxing or fighting in the "English fashion," but Young made it a point to refute their statements as "most absurd... as they [had] no idea of guarding or stopping but receive[d] and exchange[d] blow for blow until one declared himself beaten" (2017 [1842], 33). Boxing was a popular sport in England, across all classes, and it was undoubtedly an avenue to express masculine prowess, but by the nineteenth century, the violence that was once celebrated was seen as excessive and loutish behavior. That is not to say that boxing was no longer practiced, but a more restrained and regularized sport was considered the most appropriate form. Of course, boxing was furthered "civilized" or subject to stricter rules with the introduction of the Queensbury Rules in the mid-1860s (Dunning 2005, 57-59).

Like boxing, horses and horse care have been part of British life and culture for centuries and were topics of debate among the middle class during the nineteenth century. Consequently, it is not surprising that Young spent a great deal demonstrating how the Mosquito-Sambos' method of taming their horses was not only incorrect but brutal at times. For the British, horses (and their treatment) were important because the experiences and attitudes individuals had towards them reflected, to an extent, the understanding of themselves and their desires to control nature (Dorré 2006, 5-6). Furthermore, the horse was traditionally seen as a symbol of male strength and distinction and "a site where masculine and [middle] class authority might be either produced or discredited" (Dorré 2006, 10). This is especially the case through the practice of horse-breaking as it was perceived as articulating "the dominant concerns of the emerging middle-classes intent on securing an ideology of gender difference, a tractable workforce, as well as a position of moral, economical, and political superiority" (Dorré 2006, 69). The middle class advocated for a civilized approach to the domestication of horses and society; unfortunately, Young did not see this practice among the Mosquito-Sambos.

The manner of taming horses is very singular: when a horse is to be tamed, a native fastens a long rope to its head, and takes hold of the other end; it is then driven into shallow water, about up to a man's loins; when

this is effected another advances cautiously towards the horse, and endeavours to leap on his back, in which he is assisted by the person at the end of the rope, and who, with such purchase, pulls vigorously, and turns the horse round to facilitate his companion's attempts; but as the snorting and maddened creature plunges and rears, the native with the stealthiness and activity of a cat jumps on its bare back, and instantly commences beating the horse's head with his open hands, first on one side, then on the other; in vain the horse endeavours to rid himself of his rider; the native with the rope pulls, and the one on his back beats him, till at last his strength and spirit give way, and he becomes completely subdued. So severe is the lesson, however, that sometimes a horse will lie on the beach exhausted, and at the sound of the human voice will tremble violently. Sometimes the rider gets thrown, but as he only falls into the water, it is of no consequence; he again leaps on the horse's back and renews the battle; it is rarely that more than one lesson is required to completely master and break the proud spirit of the before untamed horse. Many of the native horses, by taming, become dull and require to be flogged into exertion; on the contrary, I have known others to be fast and free from vice or tricks of any sort. Most of the horses at the Cape are disfigured by having their ears completely eaten away, or so much so, as to drop, which destroys their beauty; this is done by a species of insect called a tick, the natives being too indolent to relieve the poor horses from them. Horses are often bitten at night by bats, which cause bad sores (Young 2017 [1842], 20-21).

In the account above, there is a vivid display of uncontrolled, excessive, and almost animalistic domestication of the horses by the natives. Young even made it a point to compare the Mosquito-Sambos to cats and indicated that their tactics were ineffective because they left the animals listless and subject to more violence. Moreover, the men did not seem to concern themselves with the health or well-being of horses as they did nothing to protect them from ticks or bats that disfigured them and did away with their beauty.

Although Young underlined the Mosquito-Sambos' propensity for dissipation and ultimately contended that they would not endure nor learn to take full advantage of the natural resources that the regions offered "without the skill and perseverance of the white man" (2017 [1842], 16), he did provide some examples of their more redeeming qualities. First, Young expressed his astonishment at the skill and strength the Mosquito men showed at fishing despite their inadequate equipment (2017 [1842], 22).⁶ He was also pleasantly surprised to see how most of the Mosquito-Sambos spoke the English language intelligibly and how all, including Robert Charles, the king of the Mosquitos, welcomed him and his fellow companions. King Charles made a favorable impression on him when Young first met him and presented him with his credentials because the king "was dressed in the uniform of a post captain in the British navy, and his deportment was very quiet and reserved, although he seemed amused when any favourite subject was started" (2017 [1842], 25). In essence, the king demonstrated a behavior closer to British ideals and sought to emulate the English tribunal structure. As Young revealed, an "amusing" jury trial

commenced before three magistrates and the king; all the white people at the Cape, and several natives attended. The king was dressed in his plain clothes but had his naval sword and hat with him; he listened

attentively and repeatedly testified his pleasure at having the prisoner tried in the English fashion. A jury having been formed, and a person well acquainted with the language appointed as interpreter, several witnesses fully proved that the prisoner had maliciously shot Lyndia, the king's aunt. He said nothing in his defense; he was, therefore, after a patient investigation in the open air, under some cocoa-nut trees, unanimously found guilty by the jury, and sentenced to be hanged. To this sentence, the natives around showed no symptom of dissent or dissatisfaction... [Nevertheless, at the time of the hanging] the cries and wailings of the women and children collected together were heart-rending; some would throw themselves frantically on the sand before the prisoner's feet, their bodies streaming with blood; others would vent the most piercing shrieks, while some would moan and cry in a piteous manner; indeed, I scarcely ever felt so completely saddened... At length arriving at the place of execution, the cord was adjusted, and he was launched into eternity. The dreadful scene was at last terminated; the signal gun fired from the brig, and the flag lowered half-mast high; the king causing it to be proclaimed that any of his people who did wrong should be hung (2017 [1842], 26-28).

The description of the trial is significant for numerous reasons. First, it clearly showed the British' influence on the Mosquito-Sambos. It also provided the reader with one of the few instances in which Young was not stoic or measured with his emotions but rather showed great empathy for the suffering of the women; what he observed was "heart-rending" and "dreadful." While it may seem that Young's behavior is out of character or even "divorced from the dominant code of masculinity," it is essential to consider that it was more acceptable to demonstrate emotion during the first half of the nineteenth century than it was in the latter decades (Tosh 2005a, 49). Moreover, Young's reactions are justified because lynching, capital punishment in general, was seen as extreme, inhumane, and no longer a common practice in Britain during that period.

Rituals, Symbols, and Identity in the Mosquito Kingdom

As previously mentioned, the Mosquito-Sambos adopted many British customs, including military clothing and symbols and a monarchy-influenced organization system. But what was the significance of these traditions for the Mosquito-Sambos despite Young's assessment as simple imitations of the "superior" British race? Why were they exercised and maintained for centuries? The Mosquito peoples established a form of hegemony over the territory and other coastal groups during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through the adoption and resignation of symbolic British royal regalia and titles. In addition, the social-political structure, as well as relations of power of the Mosquito-Sambos, was constructed, strengthened, and perpetuated through ritualistic symbolization and emblems of authority such as clothing, coins, canes, and military titles. In other words, objects and practices that were once seen as English were embedded with new meanings and became essential markers of Mosquito culture, identity, and everyday life. This can be seen first and foremost in the ceremony surrounding the crowning of Robert Charles, the then King of the Mosquito-Sambos. On August 9, 1856, the *Bell's Weekly Messenger* published one of the most detailed accounts of the coronation that occurred in 1824.⁷ The anonymous writer stated that,

[On] the day of the coronation, the king [was] dressed in the uniform of [a] British major, and attended by his chiefs, who wore military coats and sailor trousers. [When] they arrived at the Court House [in] Belize, the principal persons of the were there [to] meet them. When the procession was formed, the whole [assemblage] proceeded to the Church, the elected king horseback, [with] a British officer riding on each side of his majesty, and the Indian chiefs following, in pairs, [on] foot. [Once] arrived [at] the church, his majesty was seated on a chair. The English coronation service was then read [by] the chaplain of the colony. During the ceremony, his Majesty... admir[ed] his 'new and gorgeous' garments [a silver gilt crown, a sword, and [a] scepter]. The anointing afforded him [a] particular pleasure... When the ceremony of the coronation was finished, the ships in the harbour fired a colossal salute, and all bystanders shouted Long live King Robert! (1856, n.p.)

This eyewitness description of how Robert Charles Frederick was presented with royal ceremonial regalia and declared the 9th king of the Mosquito Nation shows the significance of this rite for the continuation of a monarchy-influenced system of organization and order in general. In this coronation, one can observe how social relations between Mosquito-Sambos and other ethnic groups “are displayed and renewed and the hierarchical forms underlying social relations confirmed and strengthened by ritual” (Dirks 1994, 483). Furthermore, Robert Charles’ authority over others is legitimated by the scepter, sword, and other symbols of power he is given as king. That is why even Young recognized the respect the Mosquito-Sambos showed for their king’s authority when he indicated that the men would follow the orders of the king or his representatives if they showed them “one of his tokens, either a silver medal, formerly presented to his deceased brother George Frederic by the English, or a gold-headed stick, a sword, or something known to belong to the king. These tokens the natives never disavowed” (2017 [1842], 12-13)

Like a ritual, clothing is also an essential part of identity. As scholars have demonstrated, “clothing is a palpable, immediate, and intimate form of [both] material culture [and material capital] ... [it is] a marker of identity, and a vehicle” for socio-political and cultural expression (Shukla 2015, 10). Military uniforms, in particular, serve as a form of totem that certifies legitimacy and “helps [to ensure] that organizational goals will be attained, and orders priorities of group and status demands for the individual (Joseph & Alex 719). Thus, it is not surprising that adopting British military clothing and titles by the Mosquito-Sambos became crucial in establishing their symbolic and literal hegemony on the Mosquito Coast. Although the use of military attire and leadership designations were initially foreign-imposed, the Mosquito-Sambos knew that British culture “had gained considerable prestige on the coast” and, as a result, their costumes and titles were considered “anything but absurd by the people themselves” (Olien 1985, 123). Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the Mosquito-Sambos’ actions cannot and should not be reduced to emulation or as an indication of British control over them because it takes away their agency and erroneously presupposes that Mosquito culture and identity are simply the end products of recycled European traditions.

Conclusions

Thomas Young could never fully carry out his mission to form a permanent settlement on the Mosquito Coast that would draw British immigrants to the area or establish trading relations with the Spanish in Honduras. Nonetheless, his two-year voyage resulted in a written travel account titled *Narrative of a Residence on the Mosquito Shore*, published in 1842 by Smith, Elder & Company. Excerpts from his manuscript —mainly scenes of adventures and survival and customs and origins of the native peoples— were also printed in numerous British newspapers during the mid and late 1840s.⁸ As expected, many of the reviewers praised Young for a travelogue they considered to be not only objective and helpful but also a candid representation of Honduras' challenging climate and geography. Indeed, Young's work appealed to a series of readers because it contained many of the traditional tropes and conventions of travel literature written by men during the Early Victorian Era. But as demonstrated in this essay, his travel manuscript also provided a space where British identity and bourgeois masculinity were constructed and debated by employing a language of difference and hierarchy when describing the native peoples. Overall, this examination of Thomas Young's *Narrative of a Residence on the Mosquito Shore* shows the value of a transnational approach to the study of nineteenth-century British identities and masculinities and the undeniable correlation between empire, identity, and travel.

Endnotes:

1. See preface to his travel narrative. All citations of his work will come from the republication of the 1842 edition by Leopold Publishing in 2017.
2. Young included a copy of the "Mosquitian" vocabulary he had acquired during his travels in Honduras and provided English translations of all words on pages 170-172 of his travelogue.
3. Many of the doubts surrounding the British Central American Land Company's land grants and business ventures on the Mosquito Coast in the aftermath of Macgregor's fictional Poyais territory and defrauding actions were included in the November 6, 1840, edition of the *Welshman*, the August 21, 1841, publication of the *Saint James Chronicle*, and November 5, 1841, edition of the *Evening Mail*. All newspapers were accessed from the British Newspaper Archive, www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk.
4. For a more detailed discussion and analysis of the Mosquito system of government, see Olien's "The Miskito Kings and the Line of Succession" and Offen's "The Sambo and Tawira Miskitu."
5. See Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) for a detailed explanation of the doctrine of separate spheres.
6. The inclusion of fishing accounts should come as no surprise, as it was an activity where masculinity was constructed and debated by the different British classes. See "The Other Side of the Coin" by Mangan and Mackenzie.
7. For a complete account of the coronation, see "A Mosquito Coronation" in *Bell's Weekly Messenger*. www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk.
8. Among the newspapers where excerpts of Young's narrative appeared were the *Jeer Examiner*, *Naval and Military Gazette*, and *Morning Chronicle*. All newspapers were accessed from the British Newspaper Archive, www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk.

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