

This is the introduction to Pam Decho & Claire Diamond (eds.), *Latin Americans in London: A Select List of Prominent Latin Americans in London, C.1800-1996* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1998). The bibliography at the end has not been updated, but much more has since been published on London in the nineteenth century. This book includes biographies for the people named in bold type in the text below.

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## LATIN AMERICANS IN LONDON: AN INTRODUCTION

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For over two hundred years people born in Latin America have come to London -- as exiles, diplomats, businessmen, writers, and artists. For most of this time the number living in the capital has been quite small, no more than a few hundred people, but it has included many individuals who have become internationally known for their political or intellectual achievements. Except, perhaps, for the independence era of the early nineteenth century historians have tended to neglect the role that Latin Americans in London have played in the relationship between Britain and their home countries. Instead they have preferred to concentrate on what appear to be much more substantial and impersonal issues like trade, finance, inter-governmental relations, and informal imperialism, rather than the individual people involved in them. However, the intellectual and political experience of Latin Americans in London was one of the most important means through which liberal values and ideas were transmitted to the countries of their birth during the nineteenth century. From the time of independence until after the First World War London was also the most significant centre of business for many Latin American countries, an important market as well as a source of capital and technology. More recently, Latin Americans living in London have played a crucial role in making their own culture better known and appreciated by British people.

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From the second half of the eighteenth century until the middle of the twentieth, events in Britain and its relationship with Europe and the remainder of the world had reverberations throughout the Americas. English sailors had first attacked the Spanish colonies during the reign of Elizabeth, two hundred years before, but the commercial relationship between England and the area that was to become known as Latin America really gathered pace following the War of the Spanish Succession. Under the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 the South Sea Company was awarded the prized *asiento*, the monopoly over the supply of African slaves to the Spanish colonies. This permitted English sailors and merchants a legitimate entry to waters formerly dominated by the Spaniards, strengthening the contraband trade that had already commenced

in the Caribbean. At much the same time the discovery of gold in Brazil gave the English the opportunity to take advantage of their long-standing alliance with Portugal and profit directly from this trade. By the 1780s English merchants were heavily engaged in direct and indirect commerce with both the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the New World, exchanging British manufactured products and African slaves for silver, dyestuffs, and agricultural goods. Two ports in Britain dominated this relationship, Liverpool and London, but it was the capital city that attracted the visitors from the Spanish and Portuguese colonies who began to appear in Britain for the first time during this decade.

London in 1800 was quite different from the city which, a century before, had still been recovering from the Great Fire of 1666. It had become the world's largest metropolis (with the possible exception of Edo - Tokyo), having grown from just over half a million people in 1700 to around 950,000 at the time of the first national census in 1801. London dominated Britain. Its population was over eleven times greater than that of Liverpool, the next largest city. During the eighteenth century the city had expanded westwards as the aristocracy developed their landholdings to provide residential and social space for themselves, the growing gentlemanly classes, and those who served them. During this period the characteristic London urban landscape of squares and terraces of narrow vertical town houses had developed. Bloomsbury Square had first been laid out in 1661 by the Duke of Bedford; it was followed in the early years of the Hanoverians by many of the great squares of Mayfair and Marylebone. A mile to the east of these, separated from the West End by areas such as Soho, Holborn, and Covent Garden, which tended to attract people like artists and artisans, the rebuilt City and its port was the centre of the country's rapidly growing international trade. Between 1720 and 1800 London's seaborne commerce tripled, outstripping the capacity of the wharves and the river. With its narrow streets, smoky, bustling, and overcrowded courts and alleys, the daily life of the City contrasted sharply with the gentlemanly pursuits of the West End or the occupations of government in Westminster. At the end of the century the majority of London's population still lived to the north of the Thames, between Hyde Park in the west and Whitechapel and Wapping in the east. Apart from Southwark, Deptford, and Greenwich there was relatively little development south of the river. The New Road (present-day Marylebone, Euston and Pentonville Roads), which had been constructed in 1756-57 to allow traffic to avoid the congestion of central London, effectively formed the northern boundary of the metropolis, but within it there were still large undeveloped areas to the east of Tottenham Court Road. The houses in Tavistock Square, for example, where the Institute of Latin American Studies now stands, were not constructed until the 1820s.

London's expansion during the eighteenth century was due to the growth of its commerce and industry, and the attractions of the social life surrounding the Hanoverian Court. However, it was not trade, or the exciting technological and industrial developments that were occurring elsewhere in Britain, that attracted Latin Americans to London, but politics. The long series of European wars, in which Britain was almost always in conflict with Spain, increased the British government's interest in the Spanish colonies in America, while measures like the expulsion of the Jesuits from the colonies in 1767 and the other reforms of Charles III engendered dissatisfaction with Spanish rule amongst the creoles. The earliest Latin American residents of London to appear in this volume, **Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzmán** and **Francisco**

**de Miranda**, were exiles from the Spanish colonial regime, the first a former Jesuit from Peru and the second a military officer from New Granada. For the British government, especially when it was involved in war and toying with the idea of attacking Spain through the colonies, such exiles offered both a useful source of information and, in some cases, allies who might assist an invasion. Pitt's government was frequently, therefore, willing to finance them for a time through the secret service budget. For the exiles London offered the opportunity to write tracts and conspire against Spain, as well as to elicit the support of the British government for the independence of the colonies and to influence public opinion in the major cities of the kingdom. Miranda, who had first arrived in Britain from the United States in January 1785, was the central figure within this exile community for a quarter of a century, until he left for New Granada with **Simón Bolívar** in 1810. He developed close contacts both with British ministers and the US diplomatic representatives in the city, as well as encouraging and helping other visitors from Latin America. As the essays in this volume show, many other notable figures in the independence process spent time in London during this period and became involved in Miranda's circle. They include **Bernardo O'Higgins**, to whom Miranda taught mathematics, and **Hipólito da Costa**, a former Portuguese official, who first came into contact with Miranda during a visit to London in 1801 and subsequently returned there to publish *Correio Brasiliense* until the achievement of Brazil's independence in 1822.

Once the movements for independence began to gather force after 1810, political contacts in Britain, now involved in the Peninsular War with Spanish rebels against Napoleon, became even more crucial to the patriots. London could supply not only diplomatic support, but also material assistance in the form of finance, arms, and, after the restoration of peace in Europe in 1815, experienced mercenary soldiers. However, obtaining help from the British government, which had never been easy, now became much more problematic. After the failure of the British invasions of the River Plate in 1806-07 and the successful Spanish uprising against Napoleon in 1808, the Foreign Office became much more cautious about taking on commitments in Spanish America. For a long time, too, the outcome of the revolutions for independence was by no means clear. Both Viscount Castlereagh (Foreign Secretary, 1812-22) and his more liberal successor, George Canning, had to tread a careful path between the pressures of merchants and manufacturers who wished to open up Latin America as speedily as possible to British trade and, on the other hand, the realities of European politics and the conservatism not just of many ministers but also of the Prince Regent, who in 1820 became King George IV.

Throughout this period Latin American supporters of independence were active in London. **Andrés Bello**, who had accompanied Bolívar from Venezuela, remained until 1829. His work in journalism and publishing was crucial not only in raising patriot consciousness but, through contacts with the editors of newspapers like the *Morning Chronicle*, in influencing British opinion in favour of independence. **Luis López Méndez**, who had been the senior member of the Venezuelan delegation which arrived in 1810, also remained in London until 1824, maintaining contacts with the British government and, after 1817, organising the supply of arms and men to New Granada. The twists and turns of the independence wars, and then of the civil wars which followed in the 1820s, resulted in a continued flow of both government agents and exiles to the British capital, including the first emperor of Mexico, **Agustín de**

**Iturbide**, and other key figures like **Vicente Rocafuerte**, **Bernardino Rivadavia**, and **Francisco de Paula Santander**.

With Bello as its pivot after the departure of Miranda, the exile community was an important channel for the transmission of early nineteenth-century liberal ideas into Latin America through their contacts with English utilitarians like Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, and the work of other reformers like the Quaker educationalist, Joseph Lancaster. For much of this time, though, the exiles were living in poverty, with few resources forthcoming either from Latin America or from the British government, supporting themselves as best they could through activities like journalism, writing, and teaching. For most of his time in London Bello lived in Somers Town, the area which is now the site of St Pancras Station and the new British Library but which in the early nineteenth century was one of the scruffiest areas of north London, scandalising both John Nash, the great architect of Georgian London, and the Duke of Bedford, who was horrified at the squalid terraces rising to the north of his exclusive Bloomsbury estate. Inevitably, too, as in any exile community, internal conflicts arose, particularly over the strategy and nature of the independence process and over the terms of the loans which the new states of Latin America contracted in the City of London in the early 1820s.

The negotiations for the first of these loans were conducted in 1820 by **Francisco Antonio Zea**, the representative of Bolívar's government, as a means of consolidating the outstanding debts of Gran Colombia to British merchants. It led him into conflict both with the previous agents in London, including López Méndez, and with his government in Bogotá, which eventually withdrew his powers, though not before he had negotiated a further loan of £2 million in March 1822. This initiated a boom in lending to the newly independent states, bonds being issued with a nominal value of over £20 million in the course of the next three years, but then the first Latin American debt crisis occurred, when all except Brazil ceased to pay the interest on their loans. The activities of intermediaries like Zea or **Antonio José de Irisarri**, who negotiated the Chilean loan and engaged in a series of other speculative adventures, and the defaults of 1825-26 gave Latin American countries a poor reputation in the City of London for many years to come.

London's economic interest in the newly independent states was also diminished by the fact that in the early nineteenth century many of Britain's commercial contacts with the region became concentrated in other ports which served the expanding manufacturing interests of the north. Liverpool handled Britain's exports of textiles. Although London remained an important entrepot for some of the return cargoes – Peruvian guano, for example, as well as coin and bullion and some agricultural goods like coffee – many of Latin America's exports were consigned either to Liverpool or, like Argentine wool, to ports on the continent of Europe. Until the post-independence loans were finally renegotiated in the 1840s and 1850s, the financiers of the City of London showed much more interest in domestic railway investment and ventures in the United States and continental Europe than they did in Latin America. Brazil, the one Latin American country which continued to pay interest on its debt, used the Rothschilds as its financial agents in London throughout this period, leaving little opportunity for others to break into the business.

The formal recognition of the Latin American states by Britain which had begun in 1823 with the appointment of consular officials to investigate the reality of independence, was followed by the successful negotiation of commercial treaties with Gran Colombia and the United Provinces of the River Plate in 1825 and Mexico in 1827. Latin American countries now began to send envoys of ministerial status to London. Along with important exiles like Iturbide, Rivadavia, or Santander, these diplomats, many of whom were assigned jointly to Britain and France, were the most prominent Latin Americans in London during the post-independence period, but official duties could never occupy more than a fraction of their time. Such postings therefore offered both prestige and ample opportunities for social and intellectual activities. The Latin American diplomats in London during this period thus included several writers of significance, among them the poet **José Joaquín Olmedo**, the first Peruvian minister in London, the playwright **Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza**, who was promoted to become the Mexican minister in London in 1829, and later in the century the Chilean novelist, **Alberto Blest Gana**. Family connections also played a part in attracting several Latin American visitors to London. Many British and Irish migrants, merchants and others, had settled in Latin America after arriving there during the independence struggle, and some of their children returned to Europe. Blest Gana's father, for example, was an Irish doctor in Chile. Similar family links with Britain drew other Latin Americans to London during the nineteenth century, amongst them the Colombian writers **José María Samper** and **Soledad Acosta de Samper**.

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After the 1860s the economic relations between Britain and Latin America underwent a remarkable change, and London played a central role in this transformation. Under the impact of rapidly growing demand for foodstuffs and raw materials in Britain and Europe and increasing possibilities of supply in Latin America itself, commerce expanded markedly, especially between Britain and the major countries of South America, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. The total value of Britain's trade with Latin America (imports and exports) in 1860 was £28.5 million, in 1890 £39.7 million, in 1900 -- even after a decade of depression following the Baring Crisis -- £51.9 million, and in 1913, on the eve of the First World War, £131.7 million. The growth of commerce encouraged the development of merchant firms in London specialising in Latin American business, amongst them houses like Antony Gibbs & Sons, which dominated the Peruvian guano trade and then the Chilean nitrate trade, or E. Johnston & Co., one of the leading participants in Brazil's coffee trade. The growing significance of London relative to Liverpool was reflected in the relocation of the headquarters of leading merchants like Balfour Williamson from the north to the south around the turn of the century. However, London was also gaining in importance as a result of the increasing financial connections between the City and Latin America. By the time of the First World War financial services such as banking and insurance, together with the issue of loans for governments and the flotation of companies in London, had become much more important than the purely commercial links. One indicator of this was the transition of trading houses like Barings, Schrodgers, or Kleinwort Benson, all of which had developed strong ties with Latin

America, into merchant banks specialising in government loans and the raising of company finance. The City of London also provided the home for the major British commercial banks operating in Latin America and the hundreds of companies founded to exploit railway and mining concessions and other business opportunities. Underpinning this was Britain's ability and eagerness to supply capital to Latin America. The exact figures are in some doubt, but by 1913 Britain had between £750 million and £1000 million invested in Latin America, about a quarter of its total overseas investment. Approximately two-thirds of this was in Argentina and Brazil, with Chile, Uruguay, and Mexico also significant outlets for British finance.

By this time the population of London had grown to around 4.5 million. While the West End and the City retained much of their early nineteenth-century character and functions, the development first of the horse-drawn omnibus and then of suburban railway and tramway systems had permitted residential development to spread far beyond the limits of the metropolis a century before. Latin American visitors, coming from cities which were much smaller and less differentiated, remarked not just on the enormous size but also on the profound social contrasts of London. The villas of the middle-class suburbs like St John's Wood or Muswell Hill to the north, Ealing to the west, or Dulwich to the south contrasted with the town houses of fashionable aristocrats and the wealthy 'gentlemanly capitalists' around Hyde Park or the squalid and overcrowded tenements of the East End. Visitors also commented frequently on the smoke, soot, grime, and noise of London. This did not deter many of them, however, from residing near the centre of activity rather than moving out to the suburbs (in contrast to the thousands of clerks who dealt with Latin America on an everyday basis in the financial and commercial houses of the City). There were only 683 Latin American-born residents of London counted in the 1901 census (up from 296 in 1851), but of these just under a third lived in Kensington, with most of the remainder in Westminster, Paddington, Marylebone, and Hampstead.

Diplomats and exiles remained the most significant figures amongst the Latin American residents of London: a violent change of government in someone's native country could of course quickly transfer an individual from one of these categories to the other. Many such people, like their predecessors, were still heavily engaged in journalism and literary activity: well-known examples included in this volume include **Rui Barbosa** from Brazil and **Agostín Edwards** from Chile. However, the expansion of British business interests in Latin America now offered other attractions and opportunities. Amongst the succession of Brazilian businessmen who visited London, for example, were **Irineu Evangelista de Souza**, later the Viscount Mauá, in 1840; the Rebouças brothers, who came to London for the International Exposition of 1862 (one returned in 1874); the Prâdo brothers who visited the same exhibition and also later returned; and Francisco Pereira Passos. The reasons for such sojourns were partly to study engineering techniques in areas like railways and docks, but also to explore the possibilities of financing ventures using British capital. For the same reasons **Francisco J. Cisneros**, the Cuban entrepreneur working in railway construction in Colombia, also paid visits to London in the 1870s and 1880s. The growth of more rapid and reliable steamships between Britain and Latin America must have facilitated such repeated journeys, although the expense meant it was normally only worthwhile in the 1870s and 1880s if the stay had a particular purpose, either in terms of obtaining technology or finance. By the turn of the century,

however, wealthy Latin Americans were able to afford to travel to Europe much more frequently and for pleasure as well as business, combining work in London with the social delights of Paris and the French Riviera. It was at this point that the phrase ‘as rich as an Argentine’ seems to have entered the English language. Some Latin American entrepreneurs, indeed, moved the centre of their business activities to London in the decade before the First World War in order to maximise their access to the financial resources of the City. Moreover, people forced into exile by political changes in their home country, such as **Joaquim Nabuco**, **Félix Avelino Aramayo**, or **Augusto B. Leguía**, could now profit from business activities in London, especially if they had already developed links with British interests in their home countries and could offer useful information and advice to firms doing business there. Diplomats posted to London could also pursue private interests alongside their official duties.

The economic relationship between Britain and Latin America reached its peak in the decade before 1914. Despite competition from other European countries and the United States, Britain’s trade with Latin American countries, especially with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, had continued to grow at a remarkable rate after the turn of the century. It was not difficult to raise finance either privately or on the Stock Exchange for ventures in Latin America, even in areas as risky as mining. However, the First World War proved to be a watershed, allowing the United States to make further inroads into Britain’s commercial position, and, even more significantly, undermining the role of the City in international investment. Wartime taxation may also have deterred some Latin American businessmen from remaining in London. The Aramayos, for example, moved the headquarters of their mining enterprises to Switzerland in 1916. The Bank of England’s informal restrictions to deter British investment in Latin America, imposed at the beginning of the war, continued until 1926, resulting in the foundation of very few new ventures in the interwar period unless they could be financed internally. The Depression, coupled with the increasing problems of the older British companies in Latin America during the 1930s, further deterred investment. Latin American businessmen seeking foreign technology and finance looked to the United States rather than Great Britain.

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Yet if the economic and business relationship between Latin America and Britain was falling into decay, a process accelerated by the Second World War and the long-term decline of the British economy, the cultural life of Britain and the physical safety of exile there have remained significant in attracting Latin Americans to London. Improved air travel and other forms of international communication have doubtless also contributed to the process. The Latin American-born population of London has thus expanded significantly in the course of the twentieth century, at first slowly but in the second half of the century much more rapidly. Census figures (which doubtless include some British nationals born in Latin America) suggest that the Latin American population of the administrative county of London was around 2000 in 1951, over a third of them Argentines. Kensington was still the most favoured borough with about 20 per cent of total residents. By 1991 the Latin American-born population of Greater

London had increased to about 18,500, still concentrated in inner London rather than the outer suburbs.

London has, of course, remained one of the world's great cultural centres despite the country's economic decline. The quality of music, drama, galleries, and libraries, and the international image of 'Swinging London' in the 1960s have undoubtedly played a part in persuading Latin Americans to reside there, but the reasons why prominent figures have decided to live in London are, as these essays indicate, much more complex. Amongst the literary figures **Guillermo Cabrera Infante**, **Carlos Fuentes**, and **Mario Vargas Llosa** have all indicated how they found in London the calm and quiet, yet also the access to libraries and life, which they needed in order to write. Moreover, in contrast to the nineteenth century when the emphasis was very much on literature and journalism, other areas of cultural and intellectual activity have also become important. **Alberto Cavalcânti**, for example, worked alongside John Grierson, one of the founders of the British documentary film, in the 1930s, **Fernando Montes**, the Bolivian artist, came to London to study in 1960 and stayed, and at the end of that decade **Gilberto Gil** and **Caetano Veloso**, exiled from Brazil, found London an ideal place in which to develop their musical style.

In explaining this, it is important to note the revival of interest in Britain in Latin American society and culture during the twentieth century, reversing the decline which had followed the disappointments of the early nineteenth century. W.H. Hudson, who came to Britain in 1874 and published *The Purple Land*, his first book, eleven years later, eventually attracted an increasing audience for his work on the River Plate. After the sporadic production of authors like Thomas Hutchinson and Clements Markham in the mid-nineteenth century increasing numbers of 'travel accounts' were published in London in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Following a long period when there was scarcely any reference to Latin America or Latin Americans in English fiction, one of the greatest novels of the early twentieth century, Joseph Conrad's *Nostramo*, published in 1904, was set in an imaginary country in Spanish America. Hudson and Conrad were both close friends of R.B. Cunninghame Graham, the Scottish writer and politician, who had spent some time in Argentina as a young man and indeed died there in 1936. He, along with academics like James Fitzmaurice-Kelly, Professor of Spanish at Liverpool University, was pivotal in the orientation and encouragement of Latin American intellectual figures arriving in London like **Santiago Pérez Triana** and **Baldomero Sanín Cano**. And in contrast to the complete neglect of Latin America by English novelists of the nineteenth century, the region figured heavily in the work of mid-twentieth century writers like D.H. Lawrence, Graham Greene, and Malcolm Lowry.

The efforts of the British government, in its attempts to counter the decay of the economic relationship and to influence Latin American opinion, have also played a part in improving Britain's cultural links with Latin America and the opportunities for Latin American residents in London. The BBC World Service, for example, has provided several with employment during difficult times in the city. London has provided the arena, to an extent that no other city in Britain can, in which the spheres of government, education, journalism, and business can interact. The Royal Institute of International Affairs, closely linked with the Foreign Office, began to show an interest in the region in the 1930s, and later employed Claudio Véliz, one of the leading figures in the early years of Latin American studies in Britain,

as a research fellow in the mid-1960s. At the same time the publication of the Parry Report in 1965 and the foundation of centres or institutes of Latin American studies shortly afterwards, the most dynamic and important of which was located in Tavistock Square in London, were significant stimulants to the appreciation of Latin American culture in Britain as well as providing a route for Latin American students and intellectuals to spend time living and working in London. From the late 1960s the outlets for specialist journalism on Latin America also expanded, providing opportunities for writers like Eduardo Crawley, Rodolfo Terragno, and Andrew Graham-Yooll. The latter, like Cabrera Infante, Gil and Veloso, formed part of the wave of exiles from Latin America in the late 1960s and 1970s who found a home, at least for a time, in London, as their predecessors had done since the 1780s.

There is probably now greater popular interest in Latin America in Britain than ever before. This is due to a range of factors, amongst them increasing standards of education, the opportunities to become informed about Latin America through television and literature or, as a result of cheaper air travel, through tourism or extended residence in the region, a developing interest in indigenous cultures, and the growth of popular causes and pressure groups involving Latin America in areas like the environment or human rights. In retrospect the repression undertaken by military governments in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, resulting in the arrival of numerous exiles first from Brazil, and then from Chile and Argentina, seems to have been profoundly important in increasing British consciousness of Latin America. So was the growing international prominence and appreciation both of Latin American novelists and Latin American popular music. Nor should one forget perhaps the most enduring popular legacy of British influence in late nineteenth-century Latin America, the game of football. Following Argentina's World Cup victory in 1978 Latin American footballers began to arrive in London and other cities to play for English clubs. The most important, **Ossie Ardiles**, who played almost 250 league matches for Tottenham Hotspur, lightened the gloom which has surrounded White Hart Lane since the early 1960s, and not even an Arsenal fan would deny him a place in this volume.

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Historians tend to look for threads of continuity and examples of discontinuity. One can find both in the history of Latin American residents in London. Some of the reasons why Latin Americans have come to the city have remained fairly consistent. Many of the individuals who appear in this volume, from the 1780s to the 1980s, were political exiles, and from the 1820s until the present day diplomats who have subsequently gained prominence in other fields have also been significant. For both the exiles and the diplomats London has been a place not only for political activity but also for writing and involvement in the intellectual and social life of the capital. This has continued into the late twentieth century, although it is to be hoped that the return to civilian government in Latin America has at last brought an end to the flow of exiles fleeing persecution and repression. Businessmen, scientists, engineers, and academics also appear in this volume, and although they are less numerous than the writers, journalists and artists, this may become a flow of increasing significance in years to come. The great discontinuity has been in the direction of the transmission of culture and ideas. In the

nineteenth century this was almost entirely one-way, from Britain to Latin America. London was important as a source of liberal ideas, modern engineering technology, and finance. However, few people in Britain knew much of Latin America and, after the surge of interest at the time of independence, little of the work of Latin American writers was translated into English. What the exiles and the diplomats wrote when they were in London, whether it was poetry, fiction, or journalism, was for consumption in Latin America. In the second half of the twentieth century this changed. As Britain's role in the world was transformed, as international travel became easier, and as British people began to lose the sense of superiority which empire had stimulated, so the contribution of Latin Americans, whether on the printed page, in the galleries or the cinema, or on the football pitch, gained a much more appreciative audience in London itself.

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