

# Sensorial and Sonic Aspects in the Writings of the “English-American” Thomas Gage (c. 1603–1656) on Mexico and Guatemala <sup>28</sup>

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**Abstract. Objective/Context:** This article examines dimensions of sensoriality within the writings of Thomas Gage (c. 1603–1656) regarding his experiences as a Dominican friar in Mexico and Guatemala between 1625 and 1637. His 1648 travelogue, *The English-American His Travail by Sea and Land*, is the first detailed eye-witness report of daily life in the Spanish colonies by an English writer. Yet this work and his other writings were published after he converted to Protestantism and formed an explicit part of anti-Catholic discourse in England. **Methodology:** Written from a historical-musicological perspective, this study is informed by the approaches of sensory history to identify and critique the sonic episodes and metaphors in Gage’s texts. It critically analyzes his travelogue and investigates how his accounts of musical, gastronomic, and religious experiences underpinned and influenced his political and theological views. To draw out his unique perspectives on music, it also considers soundscapes and the material and cultural dimensions in his descriptions. **Originality:** Recent scholarship has shown how Gage’s transnational and transconfessional identities did not fit traditional frameworks of analysis and limited scholarly attention to him. Lately, however, researchers have highlighted his mention of the senses. This article focuses specifically on hearing to show that his writings contain unique viewpoints and data on music and sound. **Conclusions:** Assessment of Thomas Gage within the frameworks of musicology and sensory history demonstrates that he invoked the senses in seemingly unique ways, especially by conflating their physical and metaphysical dimensions when critiquing Catholic practices in colonial contexts.

**Keywords:** Catholicism, Dominicans, Guatemala, Mexico, Protestantism, sensory history, soundscapes, Thomas Gage.

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## Aspectos sensoriales y sonoros en los escritos del “inglés-americano” Thomas Gage (c. 1603– 1656) sobre México y Guatemala

**Resumen. Objetivo/Contexto:** este artículo examina la sensorialidad en las escrituras de Thomas Gage (c. 1603–1656) que dan a conocer sus experiencias como fraile dominico en México y Guatemala entre 1625 y 1637. Su libro *The English-American his Travail by Sea and Land*, de 1648, es importante por ser el primer informe detallado de un escritor inglés sobre la vida cotidiana en las colonias españolas de América. No obstante, Gage publicó esta obra y otros textos después de su conversión al protestantismo, que contribuyeron, explícitamente, al discurso anticatólico en Inglaterra. **Metodología:** el presente estudio, escrito desde la perspectiva de la musicología histórica e influenciado por las aproximaciones de la historia sensorial, identifica y evalúa los episodios y metáforas sónicas en los textos de Gage. Analiza cómo sus descripciones de experiencias musicales, gastronómicas y religiosas mostraban sus puntos de vista políticos y teológicos. Considera, también, el concepto de los paisajes sonoros, las dimensiones materiales y culturales. **Originalidad:** otros historiadores han mostrado cómo las identidades transnacionales y transconfesionales como las de Gage no tuvieron lugar en los marcos tradicionales de análisis; sin embargo, investigadores recientes han destacado sus menciones de los sentidos. Este artículo se enfoca en el oído y muestra las perspectivas excepcionales de Gage y sus datos sobre la música y el sonido. **Conclusiones:** la evaluación de Gage dentro de los marcos de la musicología y la historia sensorial demuestra que invocó los sentidos en maneras únicas, especialmente en la confluencia de sus dimensiones físicas y metafísicas en la crítica de prácticas católicas en contextos coloniales.

**Palabras clave:** catolicismo, Dominicos, Guatemala, historia sensorial, México, paisajes sonoros, protestantismo, Thomas Gage.

## Aspectos sensoriais e sônicos nos escritos do “anglo-americano” Thomas Gage (c. 1603–1656) sobre México e Guatemala

**Resumo. Objetivo/Contexto:** neste artigo, examina-se a sensorialidade nos escritos de Thomas Gage (c. 1603–1656), que fornecem informações sobre suas experiências como frade dominicano no México e na Guatemala entre 1625 e 1637. Seu livro de 1648, *The English-American his Travail by Sea and Land*, é importante por ser o primeiro relato detalhado de um escritor inglês sobre a vida cotidiana nas colônias espanholas nas Américas. Entretanto, Gage publicou essa obra e outros textos após sua conversão ao protestantismo, o que contribuiu explicitamente para o discurso anticatólico na Inglaterra. **Metodologia:** este estudo, escrito a partir da perspectiva da musicologia histórica e influenciado pelas abordagens da história sensorial, identifica e avalia os episódios e as metáforas sônicas nos textos de Gage. Analisa-se como suas descrições de experiências musicais, gastronômicas e religiosas refletiam suas visões políticas e teológicas. Também se considera o conceito de paisagens sonoras e das dimensões materiais e culturais. **Originalidade:** outros historiadores mostraram como as identidades transnacionais e transdenominacionais, como a de Gage, não tinham lugar nas estruturas tradicionais de análise; no entanto, pesquisadores recentes destacaram suas menções aos sentidos. Este artigo se concentra na audição e mostra as percepções e os dados excepcionais de Gage sobre música e som. **Conclusões:** a avaliação de Gage dentro do contexto da musicologia e da história sensorial demonstra que ele invocou os sentidos de maneiras únicas, especialmente ao combinar suas dimensões físicas e metafísicas na crítica das práticas católicas em contextos coloniais.

**Palavras-chave:** catolicismo, dominicanos, Guatemala, história sensorial, México, paisagens sonoras, protestantismo, Thomas Gage.

## Introduction

Thomas Gage (c. 1603–1656), an English man who studied in France and Spain and became a Dominican friar (Tomás de Santa María), was the first English writer to provide a detailed first-hand account of life in Spanish colonies in the Americas.<sup>1</sup> On his return to England, he converted to Protestantism, eventually appearing to embrace Puritan perspectives, and participated in the persecution of Catholics. His writings contributed to the anti-Catholic discourse prevalent there, and his publications played an important role in both promoting English propaganda against Spain and furthering English colonialist aims in the Caribbean. He is best known as the author of *The English-American His Travail by Sea and Land: or, A New Survey of the West-India's* (1648), republished in 1655 as *A New Survey of the West-India's, or, The English American, his Travail by Sea and Land*.<sup>2</sup>

Gage was born in Surrey to parents from prominent English Catholic families at a time of considerable oppression of Catholics in the country. He studied at the Jesuit College of St-Omer (from c. 1615) and then the Dominican Colegio de San Gregorio in Valladolid (from c. 1620).<sup>3</sup> His decision to enter the Dominican order—rather than the Society of Jesus—resulted in his being rejected by his father, who had hoped for his son to become a Jesuit. Gage applied to become a missionary to the Philippines, but his nationality disqualified him from this possibility (since only Spaniards were then permitted to travel from Spain to the colonies). Regardless, he circumvented this rule by stowing away (initially in a barrel) aboard a ship that sailed from Cádiz on 2 July 1625, and he arrived at Veracruz on 3 October the same year.<sup>4</sup> Hearing unfavorable reports about the Philippines, he abandoned his plans to travel there, disobeying orders and seeking instead his future in the Americas.<sup>5</sup> There followed a sojourn in Chiapas before he moved to Guatemala in 1627, where he spent most of the next ten years. He subsequently traveled to England in 1637, a

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1 Edmund Valentine Campos, “Thomas Gage and the English Colonial Encounter with Chocolate,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 39, n.º 1 (2009): 183; Catherine Armstrong, “Print, Religion and Identity: The Cultural Significance of Thomas Gage,” *Atlantic Studies* 15, n.º 4 (2018): 461.

2 Thomas Gage, *The English-American His Travail by Sea and Land: Or, a New Survey of the West-India's, Containing a Journall of Three Thousand and Three Hundred Miles within the Main Land of America* (London: Printed by R. Cotes, and are to be sold by Humphrey Blunden at the Castle in Cornhill, and Thomas Williams at the Bible in Little Britain, 1648); Thomas Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's: or, the English American His Travail by Sea and Land: Containing a Journal of Three Thousand and Three Hundred Miles within the Main Land of America*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by E. Cotes, and sold by John Sweeting at the Angel in Popes-head-alley, 1655). I take all quotations from the second edition and preserve the original orthography as used in the source.

3 Campos, “Thomas Gage and the English Colonial Encounter with Chocolate,” 186–87.

4 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 15.

5 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 82–84.

voyage that took him the entire calendar year. Prior to leaving Central America, however, he lost to Dutch pirates the hoard of precious items he had accumulated.<sup>6</sup>

On his arrival in England, Gage struggled to remember his native language after around twenty-two years’ absence, was fearful of not being regarded as an Englishman, and applied himself to regaining it.<sup>7</sup> Over a year, he began to investigate the theology of the Church of England but noted similarities with Roman Catholicism, putting music first in the list of resemblances: “When in *Paul’s Church* [Cathedral, in London] I heard the Organs and the Musick, and the Prayers and Collects; and saw the Ceremonies at the Altar, I remembred [*sic*] *Rome* again, and perceived little difference between the two Churches.”<sup>8</sup> He began to take greater notice of Reformed theological thinking at large. Gage traveled to Rome and *en route* was robbed by pirates again.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, he planned to live in France to learn French and become more accustomed to Protestantism.<sup>10</sup> These plans changed, however. Following another (eventful) return to England in October 1640, his religious crisis continued, and he decided to apostatize publicly from Catholicism.<sup>11</sup> Gage describes at the end of his travelogue how he “received [from the Bishop of London] order to preach my Recantation Sermon at *Pauls* [Church].”<sup>12</sup> This sermon was delivered on 28 August 1642, six days after the outbreak of the English Civil War.<sup>13</sup> The following year, he was appointed to a parish in Kent, got married, and had children. During the civil war period, he gave evidence against several Catholic priests (three of whom were executed), including a former school friend and also his brother George (who died in prison).<sup>14</sup> Due to his role as an informant, the stories of his betrayal of former friends and his collaboration as a witness for the prosecution have cast doubt—including for recent historians—on his character and reputation.<sup>15</sup>

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6 My summary of Gage’s biography is based on Allen D. Boyer, “Gage, Thomas [Name in Religion Tomás de Santa María] (1603?–1656), Dominican Friar and Writer,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2007), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10274>; Thomas Gage, *El inglés americano: sus trabajos por mar y tierra o un nuevo reconocimiento de las Indias Occidentales*, translated by Stella Mastrángelo with an Introduction and Notes by Eugenio Martín Torres (Tlalpan, Mexico: Fideicomiso Teixidor; Libros del Umbral, 2001), 485–91 (“Cronología de Thomas Gage”); Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*; Ileri E. Chávez Bárcenas, “Singing in the City of Angels: Race, Identity, and Devotion in Early Modern Puebla de los Ángeles” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2018), 291–93.

7 He writes: “When I came to *London*, I was much troubled within my self for want of my Mother tongue, (for I could only speak some broken words) which made me fearfull I should not be acknowledge to be an *English* man born.” Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 204.

8 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 205. See also Chávez Bárcenas, “Singing in the City of Angels,” 293.

9 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 207–08.

10 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 209.

11 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 211; Boyer, “Gage, Thomas.”

12 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 211.

13 The English Civil War consisted of a series of conflicts that lasted from 1642 to 1651. The reigning monarch, Charles I (1600–1649), was executed in 1649, and his kingdom was declared a Commonwealth (republic). From 1653, Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) was Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The monarchy was restored in 1660 with the return of Charles II (1630–1685).

14 Boyer, “Gage, Thomas”; Armstrong, “Print, Religion and Identity,” 459–60.

15 Boyer, “Gage, Thomas.” For a discussion of “Gage the renegade,” see Armstrong, “Print, Religion and Identity,” 456–60.

Gage wrote his travelogue in Kent during the years 1644–1646. Catherine Armstrong observes that he “probably kept a rough manuscript journal while he was in Central America and these notes may have helped him to write his book,” adding that he drew from other writings that he read in America and England.<sup>16</sup> The work was published in 1648 with the full title *The English-American His Travail by Sea and Land: or, A New Survey of the West-India’s, Containing a Journall of Three Thousand and Three Hundred Miles within the Main Land of America*, and the following lengthy subtitle:

Wherin is set forth his Voyage from *Spain* to *St. John de Ulhua*; and from thence to *Xalappa*, to *Tlaxcalla*, the City of *Angeles*, and forward to *Mexico*; With the description of that great City, as it was in former times, and also at this present.

Likewise his Journey from *Mexico* through the Provinces of *Guaxaca*, *Chiapa*, *Guatemala*, *Vera Paz*, *Truxillo*, *Comayagua*; with his abode Twelve years about *Guatemala*, and especially in the Indian-towns of *Mixco*, *Pinola*, *Petapa*, *Amatitlan*.

As also his strange and wonderfull Conversion, and Calling from those remote Parts to his Native COUNTRY.

With his return through the Province of *Nicaragua*, and *Costa Rica*, to *Nicoya*, *Panama*, *Portobelo*, *Cartagena*, and *Havana*, with divers occurrents and dangers that did befall [*sic*] in the said Journey.

ALSO,

A New and exact Discovery of the Spanish Navigation to those Parts; And of their Dominions, Government, Religion, Forts, Castles, Ports, Havens, Commodities, fashions, behaviour of Spaniards, Priests and Friers, Blackmores, Mulatto’s, Mestiso’s, Indians; and of their Feasts and Solemnities.

With a Grammar, or some few Rudiments of the *Indian* Tongue, called, *Poconchi*, or *Pocoman*.<sup>17</sup>

If taken at face value, the level of detail in this subtitle would have left no doubt for the reader regarding the range and depth of Gage’s experiences. His wide-ranging travels also attest to his changing cultural identity. As López-Peláez Casellas comments, “Gage and his adventures ... [are]

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16 Armstrong, “Print, Religion and Identity,” 460.

17 Gage, *The English-American His Travail by Sea and Land*, title page.

representative of what might be called ideological and geographical mobility.<sup>18</sup> Armstrong, who has examined the role of this work as a form of propaganda, points out that Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), the Puritan Lord Protector of England, “himself ordered the publication of the second English edition in 1655, thinking that the work would inspire and justify his Western Design.”<sup>19</sup> The “Western Design” refers to Cromwell’s aim to seize the island of Hispaniola, cut off Spain’s source of wealth, and ultimately supplant Spain as a colonial power in the Americas.<sup>20</sup> Gage joined this venture across the Atlantic, sailing in late 1654; mainly due to his linguistic skills, he became a key intermediary with local Spanish authorities in negotiations after the English capture of Jamaica.<sup>21</sup> He died there in 1656.<sup>22</sup>

The popularity of Gage’s narrative is evidenced in its rate of republication.<sup>23</sup> In the following 110 years, seven more editions were published in English; there also appeared six translations in French, two in Dutch, and one in German.<sup>24</sup> Stella Mastrángelo considers the 1655 publication, described as “the SECOND EDITION enlarged by the Author, and beautified with MAPS,” to be the definitive version of the text.<sup>25</sup> (However, Gage probably did not see it in its final published form, having sailed across the Atlantic in late 1654.) The order of elements in the title was switched from *The English-American His Travail by Sea and Land: or, A New Survey of the West-India’s* to *A New Survey of the West-India’s: or, The English American His Travail by Sea and Land*, a move that Kristina Bross sees as an “intensifi[cation]” of “the book’s global ambitions.”<sup>26</sup> She also comments that “scholars of New Spain mine his works, despite their anti-Spanish, Black Legend bent, for their vivid descriptions of the Spanish colonies,” noting, additionally, that “he reserves his most vivid descriptions for sensual knowledge.”<sup>27</sup>

Among the senses, Gage—from a Puritan viewpoint—highlights hearing and sight as being particularly vulnerable to temptation and corruption. He treats them in a literal (physical) and

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18 Jesús López-Peláez Casellas, “Fashioning Identities and Building an Empire: Thomas Gage’s *The English-American* (1648) and English Puritan Proto-Colonialism,” *Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies* 56 (2017): 102. Beatriz Mariscal has also examined how his descriptions of the conquest of Mexico were summarized in this work for the information of his English compatriots; see Beatriz Mariscal, “‘Para el uso y beneficio de mis compatriotas ingleses’: la historia de la conquista de México en la obra de Thomas Gage,” in *Compostella aurea. Actas del VIII congreso de la Asociación Internacional del Siglo de Oro (Santiago de Compostela 7–11 de julio de 2008). Tomo II: Prosa*, ed. Antonio Azaústre Galiana and Santiago Fernández Mosquera (Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2011), 383–88.

19 Armstrong, “Print, Religion and Identity,” 462.

20 Armstrong, “Print, Religion and Identity,” 467–68; López-Peláez Casellas, “Fashioning Identities and Building an Empire,” 97.

21 Armstrong, “Print, Religion and Identity,” 468–69. Boyer writes: “Spanish sources place Gage among the English officers at the conference table, taking a characteristically vocal part.” Boyer, “Gage, Thomas.”

22 Boyer, “Gage, Thomas”; Paul Lay, “Thomas Gage – a Man of Unintended Consequences,” *Engelsberg Ideas* (2020), <https://engelsbergideas.com/portraits/thomas-gage-a-man-of-unintended-consequences/>

23 Armstrong, “Print, Religion and Identity,” 461–62.

24 Gage, *El inglés americano*, 490–91 (“Cronología de Thomas Gage”).

25 Stella Mastrángelo, “Nota de la traductora,” in Gage, *El inglés americano*, 7.

26 Kristina Bross, *Future History: Global Fantasies in Seventeenth-Century American and British Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 60.

27 Bross, *Future History*, 54, 57. For broader context, see her chapter 2, “‘Of the New-World a new discoverie’: Thomas Gage Breaks the Space-Time Continuum,” 53–80.

also in a metaphysical way, corresponding to experiences of the body and the soul. By reading his travelogue in the context of his “recantation sermon” of 1642—preached at the beginning of the Puritan ascendancy in England—it is possible to bring new interpretive light to his emphasis on the senses in his descriptions of religious ritual, the excesses in the lifestyles of the colonial elite, and a diverse range of performances. Here, I am inspired by recent studies in musicology that have highlighted the role of the senses in the first century of Catholic evangelization in Mexico in teaching Christian doctrine and the practice of devotions.<sup>28</sup> Yet I also take a broader view, considering certain examples of ethnographic observation in his writing and aspects of intertextuality in his work. As Daniela Hacke and Paul Musselwhite observe, “sensory history is a broad framework of analysis because senses can interact and arise from distinctly different contexts and cover multiple meanings; intersecting modes of sensory perception can overlap and become bound to particular cultural, political, and social constructs – generating what scholars have termed ‘sensescapes.’”<sup>29</sup> What seems distinct about Gage’s generation of a “sensescape” regarding colonial Catholic practice is that he engaged in this process primarily in order to critique it from a Puritan perspective.

In what follows, I first discuss the multiple lacunae that surround Gage, in dialogue with recent work by Jesús López-Peláez Casellas and Catherine Armstrong, and consider his relevance to discussions of senses by Edmund Valentine Campos, Kristina Bross, and Ileri E. Chávez Bárcenas, and survey his brief appearances in other works on music and the performing arts. I then examine his descriptions of sound and music, including some references to soundscapes. Finally, I consider his metaphysical views on the senses, asking what implications these have for interpreting aural and visual dimensions in his travelogue.

## 1. Re-Engaging with Gage: His Former Neglect in Historical Studies

Gage occupies a somewhat ambiguous place in the historiography of the seventeenth-century colonial world.<sup>30</sup> As Armstrong observes: “His treatment by scholars perfectly illustrates that taking a purely national, or hemispheric, approach to history means that certain liminal people and ideas fall through the gaps.”<sup>31</sup> If Gage was, at the time of his writing, a cultural outsider to Spanish Catholicism, he had nevertheless previously been an insider during the time of the experiences that he relates, and he fashions himself as having an eyewitness’s authority.<sup>32</sup> Kristina Bross notes: “That he and it [his travelogue] have been largely neglected may be attributable to his

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28 Lorenzo Candelaria, “Bernardino de Sahagún’s *Psalmodia Christiana*: A Catholic Songbook from Sixteenth-Century New Spain,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67, n.º3 (2014): 622, 666; Ileri E. Chávez Bárcenas, “Native Song and Dance Affect in Seventeenth-Century Christian Festivals in New Spain,” in *Acoustemologies in Contact: Sounding Subjects and Modes of Listening in Early Modernity*, ed. Emily Wilbourne and Suzanne G. Cusick (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021), esp. 38, 45.

29 Daniela Hacke and Paul Musselwhite, “Introduction: Making Sense of Colonial Encounters and New Worlds,” in *Empire of the Senses: Sensory Practices of Colonialism in Early America*, ed. Daniela Hacke and Paul Musselwhite (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 9; see also 12.

30 This fact has been highlighted by Paul Lay in a popular publication; see Paul Lay, “From the Editor,” *History Today* 66, n.º10 (2016): 2; also Lay, “Thomas Gage – a Man of Unintended Consequences.”

31 Armstrong, “Print, Religion and Identity,” 451.

32 See Chávez Bárcenas, “Singing in the City of Angels,” 14–15. Even so, he still remained an outsider to the inner meanings of Indigenous practices he describes.

neither-fish-nor-fowl identity as seen from one or the other purely nationalist perspective.”<sup>33</sup> Jesús López-Peláez Casellas further observes that “for Gage, the *English-American* is his best chance to make a name for himself as the best-informed man in England on Spanish America,” noting of its genre that it “has this hybrid, confusing look of travel narrative, spiritual autobiography, and politico-military report.”<sup>34</sup> Dionisia Tejera, who dubbed the work “*la crónica de un hereje*” (“a heretic’s chronicle”), has also noted the complex conflation of identities that stand behind its production.<sup>35</sup> Gage certainly does not hide his new allegiances. According to Eugenio Martín Torres, “in his book ... readers find there a severe Puritan critique of the Catholic Church, the Spanish population and institutions in America, Anglicanism and defenders of the monarchy in England.”<sup>36</sup>

Scholars exploring senses have highlighted his travelogue’s engagement with smell and taste.<sup>37</sup> In particular, Edmund Valentine Campos, a specialist in English and Spanish literature, has studied Gage’s description of chocolate as fundamental for the seventeenth-century English engagement with cacao, pointing out that the sensual descriptions of food and gastronomic activity within the book warrant further attention.<sup>38</sup> Musicologist Ireri E. Chávez Bárcenas has labeled Gage’s depiction of the Americas as “a sensuous world” and highlights his attention to aural dimensions:

Gage’s narrative evokes an intense sensuous awareness, describing not only how people on the other side of the Atlantic experienced the sacred during religious rituals, but also providing a highly personal testimony of the seductive power of spectacle, music, and food. What is most surprising is that among the five senses, he seems to be most susceptible to hearing, and focuses in particular on the effects that certain kinds of music provoked not only in himself but also in others.<sup>39</sup>

Sensory allusions by Gage have also attracted attention from disciplines beyond history and literature, including the field of “sensory archaeology” in studying Mesoamerica.<sup>40</sup> Yet there seems to be so far no analysis of his references to senses—in both physical and metaphysical contexts—in the content of the sermon he gave on 28 August 1642 in St Paul’s Church (Cathedral) in London, later published as *The Tyranny of Satan, Discovered by the Teares of a Converted Sinner*, with which he publicly proclaimed his repudiation of Catholicism and embracement of Protestantism.<sup>41</sup>

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33 Bross, *Future History*, 54.

34 López-Peláez Casellas, “Fashioning Identities and Building an Empire,” 101, 105.

35 Dionisia Tejera, “‘The English American or a New Survey’: la crónica de un hereje,” *Hispania Sacra* 40, no. 82 (1988): 731–45.

36 “En su libro, ... los lectores encuentran allí una severa crítica puritana a la Iglesia católica, la población e instituciones españolas en América, el anglicanismo y los defensores de la monarquía en Inglaterra.” Eugenio Martín Torres, “Introducción,” in Gage, *El inglés americano*, 13.

37 For example, Andrew Kettler, “Odor and Power in the Americas: Olfactory Consciousness from Columbus to Emancipation” (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2017), 71, 77.

38 Campos, “Thomas Gage and the English Colonial Encounter with Chocolate,” 183–200, esp. 190, 197n2.

39 Chávez Bárcenas, “Singing in the City of Angels,” 11.

40 Sarah E. Newman, “Sensorial Experiences in Mesoamerica: Existing Scholarship and Possibilities,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Sensory Archaeology*, ed. Robin Skeates and Jo Day (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2020), 492–93.

41 Thomas Gage, *The Tyranny of Satan, Discovered by the Teares of a Converted Sinner, in a Sermon Preached in Paules Church, on the 28 of August, 1642* (London: Printed by Tho. Badger, for Humphrey Mosley, 1642).



As I discuss in more detail below, further consideration of his theological allusion to the senses might help contextualize his treatment of them in his travelogue.

Within studies of music and drama, references to Gage still appear relatively rarely. The most prominent consideration of his work is by Chávez Bárcenas, who drew on his travelogue in her 2018 doctoral dissertation; her analysis of Gage's perspectives as a cultural insider/outsider contributed to her construction of an original critical framework to critique the sensuous dimensions of sacred music in post-Tridentine Puebla de los Ángeles (particularly the *villancico* settings of Gaspar Fernández, 1566–1629).<sup>42</sup> Other musicological citations of Gage's work highlight his descriptions of people being attracted by music to attend church in Mexico and this being their primary motive for being there.<sup>43</sup> He is known for his account of a renowned musician and nun in Guatemala, doña Juana de Maldonado y Paz (1598–1666).<sup>44</sup> His mentions of Mexican convents in urban contexts and of the musical receiving of missionaries in rural environments are noted.<sup>45</sup> Scholars have also examined his descriptions of a performance of a play by Lope de Vega Carpio (1562–1635) aboard the ship on which he sailed to Mexico and the playing of guitars in the Americas.<sup>46</sup> More recently Deborah Singer has referred to his accounts of Indigenous musicians in ecclesiastical contexts in Guatemala; she also quotes his comments on enslaved Africans within broader contexts of her analysis of the musical genre *villancicos de negros*.<sup>47</sup> Yet no study so far has comprehensively surveyed and critiqued his observations on the performing arts.

For all these reasons—cultural liminality, historiographical neglect, and the dubious political motives behind Gage's life and work—and others, his writings on sound and music call for further scrutiny within musicology and sensory history. The rich vein of minute details running throughout his narrative strongly indicates his desire to be recognized as an authoritative eyewitness voice for daily life in the Americas, where he had lived as a transculturated and Spanish-educated functionary of a Catholic religious order. It is important not to read Gage's descriptions of Catholic

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42 Chávez Bárcenas, "Singing in the City of Angels," 10–17.

43 See, for example, Robert Stevenson, "Mexico City Cathedral Music: 1600–1750," *The Americas* 21, n.º 2 (1964): 119; David R. M. Irving, "Hearing Other Cities: The Role of Seaborne Empires and Colonial Emporia in Early Modern Global Music History," in *Hearing the City in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Tess Knighton and Asención Mazuela-Anguita (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 82. See also Ricardo Miranda, "Encuentros y desencuentros musicales en la historia de España y México," *Revista de Indias* 57, n.º 210 (1997): 582.

44 Geoffrey Baker, *Imposing Harmony: Music and Society in Colonial Cuzco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 117.

45 Alejandro Vera, *The Sweet Penance of Music: Musical Life in Colonial Santiago de Chile*, trans. Julianne Graper (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 102; Cesar Favila, *Immaculate Sounds: The Musical Lives of Nuns in New Spain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023); Leonardo J. Waisman, "Urban Music in the Wilderness: Ideology and Power in the Jesuit *Reducciones*, 1609–1767," in *Music and Urban Society in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Geoffrey Baker and Tess Knighton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 218.

46 Harvey L. Johnson, "Noticias dadas por Tomás Gage, a propósito del teatro en España, México y Guatemala (1624–1637)," *Revista Iberoamericana* 8, n.º 16 (1944): 259; Ian Woodfield, *English Musicians in the Age of Exploration* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1995), 88–90; Chávez Bárcenas, "Singing in the City of Angels," 11; Richard T. Pinnell and Ricardo Zavadvker, *The Rioplatense Guitar. Vol. 1: The Early Guitar and Its Context in Argentina and Uruguay* (Westport: Bold Strummer, 1993), 180–81, 246.

47 Deborah Singer González, "De músicas amenazantes a músicas devocionales. Los sonidos indígenas en el imaginario colonial de Guatemala (siglos XVI al XVIII)," *Estudios de historia novohispana* 60 (2019): 122–24; Deborah Singer, "Políticas de inclusión/prácticas de subalternización: la construcción de etnicidad en los villancicos de negros de la catedral de Santiago de Guatemala (siglos XVI–XVIII)," *Revista de historia*, n.º 80 (2019): 25–26.

ceremonies as if he were an itinerant travel writer; rather, he had been an active participant in ritual, an administrator of sacraments, and a promoter of religion.<sup>48</sup> His account serves the purpose of challenging these practices from the perspective of his “inside” experiences and thus reinforcing his new identity not just as a Protestant but specifically as one who concurred with Puritan attitudes against sensual excesses in religion and daily life.<sup>49</sup>

## 2. Gage’s Descriptions of Sound and Music

A recurring theme for Gage is the idea of musical performances within both secular and sacred contexts that “delight the fancy and senses.”<sup>50</sup> From a Puritan perspective, these would be seen as temptations and a distraction from worship. The words “delight” and “pleasure” often appear within these frames of reference. Some examples of secular (domestic or public) experiences and sacred contexts serve to demonstrate his differences of views on each. In the former, his discourse focuses more on questions of excess in lifestyle, and in the latter, Gage highlights what he sees as superstition and idolatry. Luxury appears in his narrative from his very first days in the Americas, where he describes how he and his fellow Dominicans, newly arrived from Spain, reacted in two different ways to the lifestyle of the young Prior of the Dominican convent in Veracruz.<sup>51</sup> The magnificent apartment of the Prior was considered by “the zealous Fryers” of the mission to be “most vain, and unbeseeming [of] a poor and mendicant Fryer”; however, to the more materialistic members of their group, “this sight was pleasing and gave them great encouragement to enter further into that Country, where soon a Mendicant *Lazarus* might become a proud and wealthy *Dives*.”<sup>52</sup> Gage’s allusion to this parable from the Gospel of Luke (16:19–31), which involves the rich man Dives’s experience of worldly pleasure that would be reversed in the afterlife, points to the sensual temptations he saw attract some of his fellow missionaries. Chávez Bárcenas observes that “the way in which he repeatedly describes the Western Indies as a highly sensuous world reflects his criticism of the Catholic Church’s tendency to emphasize the supremacy of the senses over reason to promote religious devotion.”<sup>53</sup>

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48 Chávez Bárcenas, “Singing in the City of Angels,” 14.

49 Chávez Bárcenas, “Singing in the City of Angels,” 14–15. As noted above, near the end of his book, he states of the Protestant Church of England that he could not see or hear much difference between their rituals—in St Paul’s Cathedral—and those of Rome.

50 For example, Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 36.

51 This episode is highlighted in Bross, *Future History*, 63–66.

52 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 23.

53 Chávez Bárcenas, “Singing in the City of Angels,” 14.

Gage describes how the “young and light headed Prior” talked vainly about many aspects of his character and the esteem in which he was regarded by elite members of the local community. The Prior also boasted

of his clear and excellent voice, and great dexterity in Musick, whereof he presently gave us a taste,<sup>54</sup> tuning his *Guitarra*<sup>55</sup> and singing to us some verses (as he said, of his own composing)[,] some lovely *Amaryllis*, adding scandall to scandall, loosenesse to liberty, which it grieved some of us to see in a Superiour who should have taught with words, and in his life and Conversation, examples of Repentance and Mortification.<sup>56</sup>

Besides the Prior’s own compositions, one could speculate that Gage’s mention of “some lovely *Amaryllis*” possibly refers to the solo madrigal “Amarilli, mia bella” published by Italian musician Giulio Caccini (1551–1618) in his highly popular *Le nuove musiche* (1601).<sup>57</sup> If the latter piece were that work (although further documentary evidence would be required to substantiate such a hypothesis), its highly sensual text—with its sexual imagery—could perhaps account for Gage’s mention of “scandall” and “looseness” in the behaviour of a friar.<sup>58</sup> It is also worth noting that Gage earlier makes a passing reference to “*Amaryllis*” (*Amarillis*) as the popular name of Spanish actress María de Córdoba (c. 1597–1678). Gage met in Guatemala a Franciscan friar, Juan Navarro, who—according to Gage—had engaged in a year-long clandestine affair with her before traveling to America in 1632.<sup>59</sup> Thus, one wonders whether “some lovely *Amaryllis*” might alternatively refer to songs from the Madrilénian theater or whether it might simply be a general reference to musical works with lascivious textual content.

Gage continues his narrative by putting three senses together—hearing, sight, and taste—in his description of this welcome feast:

No sooner were our senses of hearing delighted well with Musick, our sight with the objects of Cotten-Wool, Silke and Featherworkes, but presently our Prior caused to be brought forth of all his store of dainties, such variety as might likewise relish well and delight our sense of tasting. Thus as we were truely transported from *Europe* to *America*, so the World seemed truely to be altered, our senses changed from what they were the night and day before, when we heard the hideous noise of the Mariners hoising up Sailes, when we saw the Deep and monsters of it, when we tasted the stinking water, when we smelt the Tar and Pitch; but here we heard a quivering

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54 Although Gage mixes the appreciation of musical sound with “taste,” it seems clear in this context that he here means “a taste” in the sense of a small sample.

55 Earlier on the page, Gage glosses the italicized word “*Guitarra*” as “the *Spanish* Lute.”

56 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 23.

57 Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (Florence: I Marescotti, 1601), 12–13. See also discussion of this possible musical relationship to Caccini’s work in Chávez Bárcenas, “Singing in the City of Angels,” 15.

58 Its text is translated by H. Wiley Hitchcock as follows: “My lovely Amarillis! O heart’s desire, do you not believe you are my love? Believe it! and if doubts assail, take this arrow of mine, open my breast, and you shall see written on my heart, ‘Amarillis is my love.’” Translation from Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche*, edited by H. Wiley Hitchcock (Madison: A-R Editions, Inc., 1970), 18. Bross, in her analysis of this episode, describes these “tunes” as “love songs”; see Bross, *Future History*, 66.

59 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 8–9; Johnson, “Noticias dadas por Tomás Gage,” 261.

and trembling voice and instrument well tuned, we beheld wealth and riches, we tasted what was sweet, and in the Sweet-meats smelt the Muske and Civit, wherewith that Epicurean Prior had seasoned his Conserves.<sup>60</sup>

As Bross points out, the "pollution of the senses" occasioned by the visual and aural experiences at sea was an extreme contrast with the pleasure that this evening's entertainment presented. She sees Gage's descriptions of senses on arrival in the Americas as "an instantaneous, mystical transformation not just of their setting but of the travelers themselves," asserting that, in this passage, Gage "plays with the Christian concept of conversion."<sup>61</sup> Chávez Bárcenas observes regarding this episode that "for Gage this delightful music had activated the senses of sight, taste and smell, so dangerously associated with sexual pleasure, although the sensuality of their 'gallant and amorous' young singer and the assorted aphrodisiac delicacies might have also contributed to this effect."<sup>62</sup>

The political motives of Gage's narrative come to the fore in his description of colonial power imbalance expressed by the social relations between Indigenous peoples and clergy, which he first saw at Veracruz, stating: "Here we began to discover the power of the Priests and Fryers over the poor *Indians*, and their subjection and obedience unto them."<sup>63</sup> The group was greeted *en route* to Veracruz by local authorities on horses, "the Trumpeters, the Waits;<sup>64</sup> (who sounded pleasantly all the way before us) the Officers of the Church, ... the singing men and boyes, all the Queristers, who softly and leisurely walked before us singing, *Te Deum laudamus*, till we came to the midst of the Town."<sup>65</sup> There they were served chocolate as refreshment. After presenting gifts, the group left and was bid farewell by Indigenous people who knelt to receive a blessing. Gage continues:

And this submission of the poor *Indians* unto the Priests in those parts; this vain-glory in admitting such ceremonious entertainment and publick worship from them, did so puffed up some of our young [*sic*; young] Fryers hearts, that already they thought themselves better then [*sic*] the best Bishops in *Spain*, who though proud enough, yet never travail there with such publick acclamations as we did. The Waits and Trumpets sounded again before us, and the chief of the Town conducted us a mile forward, and so took their leaves.<sup>66</sup>

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60 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 23. Gage later mentions the hospitality of one Antonio Meléndez, from Segovia, in a similar way: "He spared no dainties which might welcome us to his table, no perfumes which might us delight in our chambers, no musick (which his daughters were brought up to) which might with more pleasure help to passe away the time." See Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 85.

61 Bross additionally comments that Gage "sees himself transformed by the experience. A discommoded and homeless English man beforehand, at this dinner he becomes the feted English-American"; see Bross, *Future History*, 63, 65.

62 Chávez Bárcenas, "Singing in the City of Angels," 13.

63 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 25. See also Chávez Bárcenas, "Singing in the City of Angels," 11.

64 This term refers to a group of wind instrumentalists.

65 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 25.

66 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 25.

Earlier in his travelogue, he had hinted about such practices as a warning to his English readers against similar activities that might be promoted by Catholic missionaries in England.<sup>67</sup> In this way, his descriptions of sensory experiences are politically propagandistic and serve a didactic purpose for his intended audience.

Yet Gage reserves his deepest criticism of sensual reactions to music when he sees its performance in ecclesiastical contexts as a superficial act that distracts the listeners and detracts them from what he considers true worship. For example, he describes “the fancy and senses” as being “delighted” and “the spirit” (the soul) as “sad and dull” in the experience of “sweet and harmonious Musick,” writing of a Franciscan convent in Oxotelulco (Ocotelulco, Tlaxcala):

they have there joyning to their Cloister a very fair Church, to which belong some fifty *Indian* singers, Organists, players on Musicall Instruments, Trumpeters and Waits, who set out the Masse with a very sweet and harmonious Musick, and delight the fancy and senses, while the spirit is sad and dull, as little acquainted with God, who will be worshipped in spirit and in truth.<sup>68</sup>

The last clause appears to be a reference to the Gospel of John (4:23–24), a passage cited by Puritans and other religious reformers to support the eschewing of certain aspects of worship, such as church ceremonies and music.<sup>69</sup> Yet Gage’s views on the performing arts are also complicated by the blurred boundaries between the sacred and the secular in religious communities of New Spain. Not long after, in his narrative, he speaks positively of music and dancing within a religious community, but outside the context of worship. In a story that again involves Franciscans (who were “fat Fryers [*sic*]” and lacked for nothing as far as “all provision necessary for the body” was concerned) in the town of “*Guacocingo*” (probably Huejotzingo), Gage relates that these priests had taught children to dance “after the *Spanish* fashion at the sound of the Guitarra.”<sup>70</sup> He describes how a dozen children, no more than fourteen years old, performed for the assembled company until midnight, “singing both *Spanish* and *Indian* tunes, capering and dancing with their Castanettas [*sic*] ... with such dexterity, as not only did delight, but amaze and astonish us.”<sup>71</sup> Here, Gage implicates his own senses of sight and sound as being delighted, although he goes on to criticize the Franciscans for prioritizing such activities over their religious vocation and duties.<sup>72</sup>

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67 Gage describes his former Catholic coreligionists as “wretches, who upbraide our [English] Church and Ministers for want of zeal to labour in the Conversion of Infidels. Who when they arrive to those parts, are entertained with ringing of Bels [*sic*], with sounding of Trumpets most part of the way as they travail, and as Apostles are received by the *Indians*, though soon like *Judas* they fall from their calling, and for pleasure and covetousnesse sell away Christ from their souls. *England* may here learn to beware of such Converters, who are daily by name of Missionaries sent hither by the Pope to preach among us Popery”; see Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 9.

68 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 36.

69 See a slightly later example by Puritan poet Edward Taylor (c. 1642–1729), discussed in Karen E. Rowe, *Saint and Singer: Edward Taylor’s Typology and the Poetics of Mediation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 33–34.

70 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 37.

71 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 37.

72 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 37–38.

In Mexico City, he writes critically of the Mercedarian order:

It is ordinary for the Fryers to visit their devoted Nuns, and to spend whole daies with them, hearing their musicke, feeding on their sweet meats, and for this purpose they have many chambers which they call *Loquutorios*, to talke in, with wooden bars between the Nuns and them, and in these chambers are tables for the Fryers to dine at; and while they dine, the Nuns recreate them with their voices. Gentlemen and Citizens give their daughters to be brought up in these Nunneries, where they are taught to make all sorts of Conserves and Preserves, all sorts of needlework, all sorts of musick, which is so exquisite in that City, that I dare be bold to say, that the people are drawn to their Churches more for the delight of the musick, then [*sic*] for any delight in the service of God.<sup>73</sup>

He goes on to remark that the nuns taught acting skills to the children and organized performances by them that involved rich costuming to attract people to attend their churches. A sense of competition arose where observers argued about which convent had the greatest skills in music and in educating children. He concludes on a somber note: “No delights are wanting in that City abroad in the world, nor in their Churches, which should be the house of God, and the souls[’], not the senses[’] delight.”<sup>74</sup> Here, he appears to speak of the senses in a corporeal manner, putting them in a binary contrast with the soul. For Gage, the church should delight the soul and not the senses.

In relating his journey to Guatemala, Gage describes the produce of local communities (including honey and game), the impressive levels of music-making, and the material wealth of several churches.<sup>75</sup> However, he reserves his most lavish account for Guatemala City itself, mentioning the “stately Cloisters” of the Dominican, Franciscan, and Mercedarian orders, naming that of the Dominicans (“to which is joyned in a great Walk before the Church the University of the City”) as the grandest.<sup>76</sup> Emphasizing the amount of silver used in lamps and statues (“which the *Spaniards* in merriment would often tell me that the *English* Nation did much enquire after ... and that they feared I was come to spie them”), Gage comments that “[a] hundred thousand duckats might soon be made up of the treasure belonging to that Church and Cloister,” stating that “within the wals [*sic*] of the Cloister there is nothing wanting which may further pleasure and recreation.”<sup>77</sup> He then makes an explicit mention of the soundscape: “In the lower Cloister there is a spacious garden, in the midst whereof is a fountain casting up the water, and spouting it out of at least a dozen pipes, which fill two ponds full of fishes, and with this their constant running give musicke to the whole Cloister, and encouragement to many water-fowles and Ducks to bath and wash themselves therein.”<sup>78</sup> In this way, the sensory experiences for “pleasure and recreation” that were provided by visual stimuli were complemented by the sounds of water harnessed by artifice to attract creatures of nature.

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73 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 59.

74 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 59.

75 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 116–17.

76 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 127.

77 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 127.

78 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India's*, 127.

This mention of a semi-natural soundscape is followed by his account of Sor Juana de Maldonado y Paz, or Sor Juana de la Concepción, who lived in the Convento de Concepción next to that of the Dominicans. He describes her as “the wonder of all that Cloister, yea of all the City for her excellent voice, and skill in musick ... she was witty, well spoken and above all a *Calliope*, or Muse for ingenious and suddain verses.”<sup>79</sup> Yet he attacks the inconsistency of her luxurious and artistic lifestyle as out of keeping with the vocation of a nun, describing how she built at her own cost a spacious residence:

Above all she placed her delight in a private chappell or Closet to pray in, being hung with rich hangings, and round about it costly lamina’s (as they call them) or pictures painted upon brasse set in black Ebony frames with corners of gold, some of silver brought to her from *Rome*; her Altar was accordingly decked with Jewels, Candlesticks, Crownes, Lamps, and covered with a Canopie embroidered with gold; in her Closet she had her small organ, and many sorts of musick instruments, whereupon she played sometimes by herself, sometimes with her best friends of the Nuns; and here especially she entertained with musick her beloved the Bishop.<sup>80</sup>

Gage underscores Sor Juana’s considerable personal wealth and indicates that she desired to become abbess, commenting that “ambition and desire of command and power crept into the walls of Nunneries ... and hath possessed the hearts of Nuns, which should be humble, poor, and mortified Virgins.”<sup>81</sup> Thus here, and in other similar cases, his mentions of riches, which gave vivid details to any English readers who sought to attack and plunder such communities, are interwoven by Gage with questions of religion in a polemical and propagandistic tone.

Writing in the 1640s as a recently converted Protestant, Gage frequently highlights aspects of what he characterizes as idolatry and superstition, focusing particularly on the visual. In discussing Indigenous festivities for Christmas in Petapa, Guatemala, he describes the Nativity scene, “which they call *Bethlehem*” (*Belén* or *pesebre*). This had “a child made of wood, painted and gilded,” surrounded by the images of the customary figures: Mary and Joseph, the “three wise men of the East,” shepherds with offerings, a donkey and an ox, and sheep and goats. He adds that “the Angels they hang about the stall some with Vials [*sic*], some with Lutes, some with Harps, a goodly mumming and silent stage play, to draw those simple souls to look about and delight their senses and fantasies in the Church.”<sup>82</sup> This mention of “delight[ing] their senses and fantasies” refers solely to sight since it is silent visual imagery, although Gage clearly implies that this is a superficial attraction. Gage goes on to critique the offerings (“money or somewhat else”) made by Indigenous people who came to view this display. However, he elaborates further that in the Christmas season, some “dance clothed like Angels and with wings, and all to draw the people more to see sights in the Church, then [*sic*] to worship God in Spirit and in Truth.”<sup>83</sup>

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79 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 128.

80 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 128.

81 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 128.

82 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 152. See also discussion of Gage’s description of these Christmas celebrations in Chávez Bárcenas, “Singing in the City of Angels,” 51–53.

83 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 152. Here, Gage appears to evoke the same biblical passage (John 4:23–24) mentioned earlier. See also Chávez Bárcenas, “Singing in the City of Angels,” 52.

Mark M. Smith writes, following a discussion of sixteenth-century contexts of Spanish colonialism, that “even though the Maya and other Mesoamerican peoples placed heavy emphasis on the importance of smell and hearing, sight was the predominant sense, so much so that even though the three senses were linked in synesthetic fashion it took the stimulus of sight to trigger sound and smell.”<sup>84</sup> Such a comment about the primacy of the sight is perhaps reflected in the following passage of Gage:

As for their Religion, they are outwardly such as the *Spaniards*, but inwardly hard to believe that which is above sense, nature, and the visible sight of the eye: and many of them to this day do incline to worship Idols of stocks and stones, and are given to much superstition, and to observe crosse wayes, and meetings of beasts in them, the flying of birds, their appearing and singing near their houses at such and such times.<sup>85</sup>

Gage also makes comparisons between the Indigenous reverence for living things and the veneration of images within Catholic contexts and claims that he had been informed by some Indigenous people that “they yeeld unto the Popish religion” for the visual similarities between “Saints Images” and “their forefathers’ Idols,” as well as the representation of certain saints in the company of animals (for example, St. Jerome with a lion, St. Anthony with a donkey, St. Dominic with a dog, and others).<sup>86</sup>

In reflecting on the earlier history of Mexico, Gage’s text also includes some occasional considerations of sensory details. He writes of Indigenous allies coming to join Hernán Cortés (1485–1547) as follows: “When they came to *Tezcuco* [*Tetzcuco* / *Texcoco*], they entred [*sic*] in in very good order, with the sound of Drummes, Snail shels [*sic*; conch trumpets], and other like instruments of musick; and against their entry into the City, they put on all their bravery of clothes, and bushes of feathers, which was a gallant sight; they were six hours in entring [*sic*] into the Town, keeping their array.”<sup>87</sup> He gives a particularly detailed description of the dance-song genre *tocotín* (also known as the “dance of Montezuma”).<sup>88</sup> He appears to have seen it in person.<sup>89</sup>

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84 Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 30.

85 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 148.

86 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 149.

87 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 40.

88 “On this stock [the *teponaztli*] (which is placed upon a stool or fourm [*sic*] in the middle of the *Indians*) the Master of the dance beates with two sticks, covered with wooll at the ends, and a pitched leather over the wooll that it fall not away. With this Instrument and blowes upon it (which soundeth but dull and heavy, but somewhat loud) he giveth the dancers their severall tunes, and changes, and signes of the motion of their bodies either straight or bowing, and giveth them warning what and when they are to sing. Thus they dance in compasse and circle round about that instrument, one following another sometimes straight, sometimes turning about, sometimes turning half way, sometimes bending their bodies and with the feathers in their hands almost touching the ground, and singing the life of that their Saint, or of some other. All this dancing is but a kind of walking round, which they will continue two or three whole hours together in one place, and from thence go and perform the same at another house”; see Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 154–55.

89 This seems a reasonable assumption to make, given that his lengthy discussion of this genre is followed immediately by a discussion of another, in which he demonstrates his experience as an eyewitness: “This is a very rude sport, and full of screeching [*sic*] and hideous noise, wherein I never delighted”; see Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 155.



He mentions by way of introduction that it had been brought to Spain. Performed before the king in Madrid “by *Spaniards*, who have lived in the *India’s*”, to demonstrate to him an example of Indigenous performing arts (“somewhat of the *Indians* fashions”), “it was reported to have pleased the King very much.”<sup>90</sup> With the use of the word “pleased,” this anecdote seems to hint at sensory delight. Within his account of the dance, his mention of the Aztec *teponaztli* drum may also rank among the earliest eyewitness English descriptions *in situ*—if not the first—and he curiously makes a comparison with the viol (viola da gamba) in terms of the respective sizes of the instruments’ bodies, despite their very different means of sound production.<sup>91</sup>

### 3. Metaphysical Dimensions of the Senses

Regarding his distinction between the soul and the senses, Gage presents an interface between the metaphysical and physical in discussing the effects of visual and sonic stimuli. Among the ways in which he mediates between these two dimensions are the soundscapes of the natural world. For example, on the way from “Tecoantepeque” (probably Tehuantepec) to “Estepeque” (probably Ixtepec), he lost his companions and spent a night on a plain, where he heard “an hideous noise of howling, barking and crying, as if a whole Army of dogs were come into the wilderness,” within which he perceived “some intermixt shriekings as of Christians.”<sup>92</sup> In his last comment, he seems to imply the screams of Christians undergoing torment or divine punishment. Yet he discovers the next day that there was a natural explanation:

When I related unto them [his three friends] and to the *Indians* the noise and howling that I had heard, the *Indians* answered me that that was common musick to them almost every night, and that they were Wolves and Tigres which they feared not, but did often meet them, and with a stick or hollowing did scare them away, and that they were only ravenous for their Fowles, Colts, Calves or Kids.<sup>93</sup>

Whether the description of canine sounds as “common musick” is the wording of these Indigenous informants or Gage’s own is not made clear. Yet the description of this dialogue points to how his relationship with the natural soundscape of Mexico underwent a gradual transformation during his time there.

Earlier in his book, he writes of another geographical area that he characterizes as ostensibly non-urban (although he immediately casts doubt on that idea). He describes it as “the pleasantest place of all that are about *Mexico*, called *La Soledad*, and by others *el desierto*, the solitary or desert place and wilderness. Were all wildernesses like it, to live in a wilderness would be better

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90 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 154.

91 “Their Musick and tune to this dance is only what is made with a hollow stock of a tree, being rounded, and well pared within and without, very smooth and shining, some four times thicker then [*sic*] our viols, with two or three long clefts on the upper side and some holes at the end which they call *Tepanabaz* [*teponaztli*]”; see Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 154.

92 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 88.

93 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 89.

than to live in a City.”<sup>94</sup> He goes on to detail the luxurious residence of the discaled Carmelites, “a stately Cloister,” within which are ten “Eremeticall holes and caves” (hermitages), and describes the “orchards and gardens” and “springs of water” surrounding them. Highlighting the sensory appreciation of rare flowers in the cloister, changed weekly, he states: “They have also the sweet smell of the rose and jazmin, which is a little flower, but the sweetest of all others; there is not any other flower to be found that is rare and exquisite in that Country, which is not in that wilderness to delight the senses of those mortified Eremites.”<sup>95</sup> These senses of smell and sight are followed by descriptions of foods and fountains and the visits of wealthy citizens from Mexico City.

According to Gage, these visitors brought gifts to the friars, including money, jewels, precious metals, and fabrics. Describing a picture of Our Lady of Carmel with precious silver lamps hanging in front of it, Gage asserts:

Truly Satan hath given unto them what he offered Christ in the desert, All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me; all the dainties and of all the riches of *America* hath he given unto them in that their desert, for that they dayly fall down and worship him.<sup>96</sup>

If Gage’s earlier allusion to the parable of the Rich Man (Dives) and Lazarus (mentioned above) at the beginning of his time in the Americas used a biblical analogy to warn about the potential future actions of his fellow missionaries, this assessment does not so much speculate as directly assert that he saw the religious community’s sensory indulgement as something that “Satan hath given unto them.” He then makes a musical reference: “In the way to this place there is another Town yet called *Tacubaya*, where is a rich Cloister of Franciscans, and also many gardens and orchards, but above all much resorted to for the musick in that Church, wherein the Fryers have made the *Indians* so dexterous and skilfull, that they dare compare with the Cathedrall Church of *Mexico*.”<sup>97</sup> Here he also admits his own complicity in the temptation he describes, mentioning that these places were sites that he and his companions frequented.<sup>98</sup>

In his “conversion” sermon, preached in London in 1642, Gage refers several times to the senses of hearing and sight. He mentions the work of Satan in attacking “our tongues ... that we may not call upon God for helpe and succour” and, “when he [Satan] hath separated a soule from the good and righteous,” in closing “the mouth of the heart, the hearing of it, the eyes of the understanding, so that no maintenance [help], nor spirituall food may enter into it.”<sup>99</sup> He uses the story of the “deaf and dumbe man” who was healed by Jesus Christ (Mark 7:33–35) as an example of such an affliction, likening “this cruell tyrant” (Satan) to the bear that the Prophet Daniel saw in a vision (Daniel 7:5). Gage also cites an interpretation of “*Richardus de Sancto Victore*” (the theologian and philosopher Richard of Saint Victor, d. 1173) that the bear represents “the malicious spite

94 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 70.

95 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 70.

96 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 70.

97 Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 70.

98 “These were the chief places of mine and my friends resort, whilst I abode about *Mexico*, which I found to be most worth a History, and so thought fit here to insert them, and so passe on to the other parts of Provinces of *Mexico*”; see Gage, *A New Survey of the West-India’s*, 70.

99 Gage, *The Tyranny of Satan*, 7. My quotations of this sermon’s text preserve the original orthography.

of the Devill, who with 3 set and orders of teeth devoureth and destroyeth the three noble powers, wherewith the Soule doth spiritually speake, see, and heare.”<sup>100</sup> He later uses the analogy of “a Bee feeding upon the sweetnesse of Hony [*sic*]” to refer to “any one ... in the Church feeding upon sweetnesse of Prayer and Contemplation, delighting with the sweetnesse of singing Prayse and Psalmes unto the Lord.”<sup>101</sup> A worshipper is clearly a “bee,” while the devotional music is “honey.” Warning then that a “*Beare*” (another creature attracted by honey) similar to that seen by Daniel would be present, Gage continues:

And as that *Beare* had three set or sorts of teeth to devoure the three Empires of the *Babylonians*, *Persians* and *Medes*; even so hath the Devill three severall sorts of warlike engins to destroy and overthrow those three Forts and Castles of our Soule, to wit, the Sight, Speach and Hearing, that so no reliefe may come from God to that wretched sinner, whom he hath once possessed.<sup>102</sup>

Gage thus makes a clear reference to the soul’s internal senses of sight and hearing, as well as its capacity to speak. He also employs the strong metaphor of a “fort” and “castle” for these. The rhetorical use of senses here is for Gage to emphasize his conversion to listeners and readers, and he describes himself as having “had experience of these 3 blows.”<sup>103</sup> Gage distinguishes between physical eyes, reading books, and “the eyes of my Soule,” referring to his acceptance or rejection of specific theological matters.<sup>104</sup> It seems, then, that the double meaning he gives to certain senses can offer new interpretive insights to our reading of his travelogue.

## Conclusions

Thomas Gage represents an ambiguous, liminal, and transitory figure whose writings complicate and challenge our views of early seventeenth-century Mexico and Guatemala. They can be considered to have aspects both emic and etic, reflecting the perspectives of an insider and an outsider, depending on the context. In particular, his invocation of the senses is made on two levels: first, in his autobiographical reflection on his experiences as a Catholic priest, and second, in a critical mode following his conversion to Protestantism (and Puritanism) that put new layers of interpretation on those events. Gage differentiates between the sensory dimensions of the body and the soul and considers how malign supernatural powers can channel and control those senses. His new theological perspectives are woven through his descriptions of soundscapes and sensescapes in ways that continue to invite the attention of scholars.

It appears that Gage’s textured descriptions of music and dance and other forms of cultural expression involving sound and movement (such as processions) provide many forms of data that have long been overlooked in musicological studies. While it must be acknowledged that his work was written in a hyperbolic and propagandistic tone and served religious and political purposes

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100 Gage, *The Tyranny of Satan*, 7–8.

101 Gage, *The Tyranny of Satan*, 8.

102 Gage, *The Tyranny of Satan*, 8.

103 Gage, *The Tyranny of Satan*, 15.

104 Gage, *The Tyranny of Satan*, 16.

that were both anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish, there remain points of detail that might yet be compared to those from other sources of the times, such as archival records of ecclesiastical institutions in New Spain. Additional perspectives for future research are suggested by the material elements of his accounts of music and dance (such as musical instruments, clothing, and the luxurious interiors of churches and other buildings). Although these are probably intended to emphasize the richness of the Spanish colonies and thus excite the attention of the intended (Protestant) English readership, they can also offer new ideas about the haptic, timbral, and visual dimensions of performing arts. The double meanings, multiple identities, and multisensory contexts implicit in the literary output of Thomas Gage undoubtedly call for further transdisciplinary examination.

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