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**Aims and Scope:** Formerly *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* (1997–2005), *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* is an online journal that is committed to foregrounding innovative Romantic-studies research into bibliography, book history, intertextuality, and textual studies. To this end, we publish material in a number of formats: among them, peer-reviewed articles, reports on individual/group research projects, bibliographical checklists, and biographical profiles of overlooked Romantic writers. *Romantic Textualities* also carries reviews of books that reflect the growing academic interest in the fields of book history, print culture, intertextuality, and cultural materialism, as they relate to Romantic studies.

# AUTHORS IN AN INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY

## The Case of John Murray's Travel Writers

*Bill Bell*



THE HOUSE OF JOHN MURRAY is well known as one of the principal British publishers in the field of travel and exploratory literature throughout much of the nineteenth century. With a list that sported such celebrated names as Charles Darwin, John Franklin, Isabella Bird, David Livingstone and Austen Henry Layard, the titles that were published under the proprietorship of John Murray II (1778–1843) and John Murray III (1808–92) read like a who's who of nineteenth-century travel writing. The John Murray Archive, located at the National Library of Scotland, offers one of the richest archival sources for publishing history, providing unequalled insight into the way that a prominent London publisher dealt with its authors in the age of colonial expansion. As the Archive demonstrates, the transformations that took place in the British and international book trades during the first half of the century were to have a considerable impact on the way in which the House of Murray negotiated its authors and customers, and brought its travel writers to market. Like other publishers, the firm was able to take advantage of these opportunities to reach out to new reading constituencies. This essay will examine the industrial processes through which Murray's works would come to make their way from manuscript to publication over several decades. It will conclude with a discussion of authorial self-presentation, examining ways in which some of Murray's travel writers fashioned themselves, through various discursive strategies, in accordance with their position within this new literary economy. While it may be assumed that the industrial transformation of literary production during this period provided a more efficient vehicle for authors to reach new reading constituencies, what I aim to demonstrate is the extent to which these same modes of production offered an increasing challenge to literary authority, providing a site of struggle in which authorial autonomy was negotiated in the face of commercial imperative.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Publisher's Reader*

In his well-known model of the production cycle of books, Robert Darnton identifies the key agents that were instrumental in the manufacture of books at the end of the eighteenth century. Not without its detractors, Darnton's 'communication circuit' is nevertheless a helpful reminder that texts were not part of a simple gift economy from author to reader, nor were they authorised

exclusively by the writer, but were the result of a number of collaborative forces that came into play in the production of a printed text as it found its way to customers.

From the moment that a manuscript arrived at the Murray offices, it was subjected to a regime of regulatory practices, as it went through the filters of technology and taste that would turn it into a Murray book. Like other quality publishers, the company deployed a network of experts to comment on the suitability of travel texts for publication as well as the reliability of their contents. As Darnton observes, the reader is not simply the end-point in this production cycle but 'influences the author both before and after the act of composition'.<sup>2</sup> One way in which this was certainly so in the nineteenth century, though it is conspicuously absent from Darnton's diagram (which is based on an earlier era in book production), is through the role of the various agents working with and within the publishing company. The literary advisor, or publisher's reader, was a role that became increasingly important in the nineteenth century, as book capitalists came more and more to employ experts to assess the commercial possibilities of manuscripts for the market and, in the case of travel writers at least, whether they were to be relied on for their veracity.

More often than not, an aspirant author would approach the firm directly and, especially where their literary and scientific credentials were untried, Murray sought out expert witnesses before committing to publish. In 1817, James Riley wrote to the publisher to offer his account of *The Loss of the American Brig Commerce* (1817). An unknown writer, Riley petitioned Murray from New York, to say that he had 'never before been earlier a Bookmaker Bookseller', but that his recent financial losses required him to seek out a British publisher for his book, which was to be self-published in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Riley's ship had been lost in 1815, after which he had led his crew through the Sahara. Captured by Sahrawi natives who had pressed Riley and his men into slavery, the story was to say the least sensational. On receipt of the manuscript, Murray sought the advice of James Renshaw, the proprietor of a London trading house with contacts throughout Africa for verification of the authenticity of Riley's remarkable story. On 25 March 1817, Renshaw reported that he had spoken with the Vice-Consuls in Mogadore and the Consul-General in Tangier, who had verified Riley's narrative. For his own part, Renshaw believed that the captain had 'given a very accurate description of what he has seen' and felt that it was 'described with [...] veracity'. Further corroboration he gave for Riley's description of Timbuctoo, saying that it concurred with descriptions that he had 'heard related by several Moorish merchants that have been there'.<sup>4</sup> In the early days of travel into relatively unknown regions, Murray was clearly nervous about the authenticity of Riley's claims, not least because of the many notoriously sensational accounts of shipwrecks then in circulation.

One of the most trusted of the firm's literary advisors throughout the 1820s until his death in 1828 was William Hamilton, the brother of the influential orientalist, Alexander Hamilton. William's connection with the firm began

in 1814 when he was preparing his *East India Gazetteer* (1815). He had initially arrived in India in 1791 as a cadet in the Bengal Army, and later served in the East India Company. He had returned to England in 1801, where he spent much of his time researching in the East India Company Library. A founder member of the Royal Asiatic Society, his *Gazetteer*, published by Murray and later adapted as *Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Description of Hindoostan, and the Adjacent Countries* (1820), was pioneering work. Murray appears to have formed a good impression of Hamilton's authority in the field and, by 1820, was seeking his advice on submissions. Recommending more rejections than publications, Hamilton could often be direct in his assessments, his reader's reports providing a clear sense of what the publisher and his readers' criteria were in the assessment of manuscripts. Two of the main purposes for which Murray seems to have relied on him was as a judge of the truthfulness, as well as the saleability, of various accounts. After reading one manuscript on Upper Canada, Hamilton was to comment that he had 'scarcely ever met with such silly mawkish nonsense'.<sup>5</sup> One author's memoirs he regarded as 'a very little truth, mixed up with a multitude of lies'.<sup>6</sup> A history of the Burmese War he considered 'mere Catchpenny'.<sup>7</sup> On at least one occasion he advised Murray on the deleterious effect that going into print might have. In assessing one work—most probably *The Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, published in translation by a number of London publishers through the 1820s—Hamilton cautioned that they were 'grossly calumnious against Sir Hudson Lowe [Napoleon's jailer in St Helena] [...] He is called a liar & a fool at least a dozen times.' Neither, he added, would the book do much good for the reputation of Napoleon 'in the public estimation'.<sup>8</sup> As the publisher of Scott and Byron, Murray had done much to contribute to the cult of the Emperor, one factor that likely prompted Hamilton's response.

Perhaps the company's most trusted, and powerful, advisor was John Barrow, someone who enjoyed a long and close association with the firm, publishing several books with Murrays and acting as a regular contributor to the *Quarterly Review*. In 1829, Barrow was called on to provide an estimate of the manuscript of John Lander's *Wanderings in Africa*, which the author had produced largely from the journals of Hugh Clapperton and John's brother, Richard. Barrow had been deeply distrustful of the expedition, and was incensed at what he regarded as its financial extravagance. He was also deeply distrustful of the explorers' claim to have discovered the source of the Niger. It is uncertain whether Murray knew that Lander was a *persona non grata* to Barrow when he turned to him to assess the younger man's manuscript. If not, he might have been surprised at the aggressive tone that his reader's report took. Over five pages, Barrow demolished the manuscript, which he called 'utterly unimportant and uninteresting to any reader', with nothing in it 'to redeem the deficiencies of style or the sins of egotism' that permeated the text. Not only were parts 'written in very bad taste', according to Barrow, but the story was riddled with inaccuracies and told with a degree of 'heartlessness [...] quite out of keeping

with the general test of the intelligent author.' Playing to Murray's bottom line, Barrow's concluding shot was his estimate of the commercial potential of Lander's text: 'his "Book" I am afraid, would have but little chance of ultimate consideration of immediate popularity'.<sup>9</sup> While Murray would go on to publish the Landers' later account, heavily edited in-house, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger* (1832), for the time being at least he was guided by his reader's advice.

As a book was in preparation for the press, Murray would often rely on these same readers to clean up the text stylistically, particularly when he was dealing with relatively inexperienced authors. In some instances, this could mean that the work was rearranged, in others severely redacted. Robert Fortune's *A Journey to the Tea Countries of China* (1846), thought the publisher, 'greatly needs the revision of some literary Friend' who could supply 'some simple verbal correction before it goes to press'.<sup>10</sup> The 'literary friend' mentioned here was Murray's standard euphemism for the anonymous expert whose responsibility it was to work up the text before going into print. Time and again, we find John Murray II turning to acquaintances close to the firm that he trusted to make a work's content and style suitable. Among his retainers were a handful of trusted stylists, the most prominent of whom included John Wilson Croker, John Barrow, William Gifford and Maria Graham.<sup>11</sup>

In 1841, John Murray III put this element in the process on a more professional footing by hiring Henry Milton, and later his son, John, as principal readers. Thereafter other members of Milton's family were often used for work of this kind. As Angus Fraser observes in his study of the Miltons and the Murrays, the details surrounding readers' activities can be somewhat sketchy, their contribution often treated with discretion by the publisher.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, some helpful details survive, and there is an indication in the Copy Day Books of some of the rates paid, as well as the number of hours work undertaken on specific titles by the company readers. In 1856, Henry's son, John, spent some 295 hours on William Napier's biography of his brother Sir Charles. Although it was unusual, it does nevertheless give some indication of the extent of the editorial hand at this stage.<sup>13</sup> Milton worked for twenty-four hours altogether in assessing for publication the manuscript of Herman Melville's *Typee* in 1845. When the work came to be edited, Milton spent over 162 hours at the task, receiving in payment £50 11s, which, observes Fraser, 'compared favourably [...] with what Melville was to receive for actually having written the book'.<sup>14</sup>

In response to this stage in the production process, some writers were more anxious to retain control of their work than others, and some were in a more powerful position to do so. George FitzClarence had to negotiate his reputation more vigilantly than most. The eldest, illegitimate, son of William of Hanover (later William IV) had distinguished himself from an early age in the Peninsular War, but had been stripped of his sword and dismissed from his regiment in 1813 for conspiracy against his commanding officer.<sup>15</sup> Sent to India in disgrace, he worked hard to re-establish his reputation, and spent the next few years

reinventing himself as an oriental scholar, beginning with the publication his *Journal of a Route across India, through Egypt, to England*, published by Murray in 1819. Ever mindful of others' perceptions of his social standing, and bruised by his earlier experiences, he was careful to assert the credibility of his Indian and Egyptian achievements. Anxious to win the favour of his family, with whom his relationship was always difficult, FitzClarence took care to dedicate the book to the Prince Regent, 'as a humble token' of his 'gratitude and attachment'. We can detect something of the delicacy of his position in a letter written to Murray late in 1818, when the book was in production: 'Whatever alterations you may desire to make should be therefore, commenced directly as it must be understood, whatever they may be, they must all depend on my final instruction & approval.'<sup>16</sup> Judging by the published preface to his account, in which he acknowledged that the work had 'incurred the imputation of prolixity', it is likely that the publisher's requested redactions were not altogether implemented. In his defence, FitzClarence maintained that the contents were entirely true and had not been worked up, adhering entirely to 'fidelity'.<sup>17</sup>

One of the strongest responses to one of John Murray's reader's reports came from Walter Hamilton, who was himself to become one of Murray's most trusted advisors, on the grounds that Murray's reader had an inadequate understanding of the facts that had informed Hamilton's two-volume *Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Description of Hindoostan, and the Adjacent Countries* (1820). Confident of his own knowledge of the region, over and above that of his anonymous critic's, Hamilton objected to his publisher in the strongest possible terms:

The Gentleman who has made the corrections, is sometimes misled by errors in the maps which he has consulted, for instance, instead of 'Ranjeshy' to read 'Bettooriah'—Now there is no such district as Bettooriah—There is a [...] landed estate of that name (where I have been) comprehended in the district of Ranjeshy, one of the permanent subdivisions of Bengal—a great many of my facts, as you know, are derived from original manuscripts, which no pay constructor ever saw, & from personal observation on the spot.

Much of what the annotator considers erroneous, is not so, & I could point out errors of magnitude that have escaped his research.<sup>18</sup>

Asserting his authority on the basis of personal experience and inside information gleaned 'on the spot', Hamilton sought to persuade Murray that the objections of the latter's expert—a mere 'pay constructor'—were less than credible. When it came to publication, Hamilton's objection was sustained, the relevant entry reading: 'BETTOORIAH (*Bhitoria*).—A subdivision of the zemindarry of Rajeshahy, in the province of Bengal.'<sup>19</sup> Soon after the establishment of the *zemindar* system in the early years of the nineteenth century, much of colonial India was in ferment as claims and counter-claims were made by landed families over hereditary rights. As an official of the East India Company, Hamilton



would have had professional loyalties to some of these claimants, of which his insistence was probably a consequence.

Sometimes, the stylistic changes to which a manuscript had been subjected by an attentive editor were objected to on the grounds that the overall tone of the authorial voice was lost. While the publisher was preparing his *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857) for the press, David Livingstone had assured him that he would not be 'cantankerous or difficult to deal with'. Once the process was under way, Livingstone's attitude became decidedly frosty towards John Milton's interventions, accusing him of the 'emasculat[i]on' of the manuscript. 'The liberties taken are unwarrantable', the author wrote to his publisher. 'Why must you pay for diluting what I say with namby pambyism. Excuse me, but you must give this man leave to quit.'<sup>20</sup> In this rare instance, Murray appears to have bowed to the wishes of an author whom he knew would prove to be a valuable property.

On rare occasions, the desire of the publisher for revisions prior to publication could cause a terminal break in relations. Negotiations came to a sticky end with Sir John Richardson, who balked at the redactions requested by the company in 1850. Richardson had enjoyed a good working relationship with Murray for several years, accompanying Parry to the Arctic, having contributed an extensive appendix to Parry's *Journal of a Second Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage* (1824). Between 1829 and 1837, Murray had also undertaken to publish Richardson's *Fauna boreali-americana; or, the Zoology of the Northern Parts of British America*. In 1848–49, Richardson travelled with John Rae in the search for Franklin, and on his return submitted the manuscript of the expedition to Murray for consideration, at which stage Murray requested substantial changes to the length and emphasis of the book. Thanking the publisher for his 'friendly criticisms', and reflecting on Murray's suggestion that in its current state it would not be a worthwhile speculation, Richardson went on in the most defensive of terms: 'As to abridging the work of a narrative of the latter part of the journey including our account of the natives, as you suggest, that would not meet with my wishes at all.' Nor, he added, would the 'very small remuneration that would accrue to me on the present such terms of publication [...] repay me for the trouble.' Referring to the scientific contribution that such a work would make, he insisted that he felt 'no inclination to alter them'. In the end, Richardson told Murray that their 'negotiation now ceases and I must trouble you to return the drawings at your earliest convenience.'<sup>21</sup> Although at this stage Richardson told Murray that he intended to try his luck with an American publisher, the book was to appear in two volumes the following year as *Antarctic Searching Expedition* (1851), published by Murray's London competitor, Longman.

In other instances, authors accepted the publisher's requests without much resistance. Joseph Gurney, whose *Winter in the West Indies* (1840), which Murray was making ready for a new edition, wrote to encourage advice saying that



if the author of the little critique who thou sent [...] would have the kindness to draw his pencil through such passages, whether in prose or verse, as he thinks it would be best to omit—& at the same time makes his marginal remarks with the utmost freedom [...] it probably might lead to a considerable improvement of the volume.<sup>22</sup>

Mary Margaret Busk, when she received word from Murray that her manuscript of *Manners and Customs of the Japanese* (1841) had been rejected, wrote to explain that it was still a work-in-progress, inviting him to explain how she could ‘adapt it better to your views’. Asking the publisher for his advice about where else she might try it, she also gave him the option of ‘a new modelling of Japan’. Murray appears to have offered her the opportunity of revising the work in accordance with his recommendations, in response to which she assured him that she had shortened it, and sought to remove any material that he thought ‘awkward’.<sup>23</sup>

For the most part, Murray’s writers sought a *via media*, acceding to requests for revision while still seeking to retain the integrity of their authorial visions, and their commitments to tell their stories in credible ways. Henry Haygarth, in sending back his collected proofs for *Recollections of Bush Life in Australia* (1848), wrote to say that he had ‘endeavoured to avail myself of your hints as far as I could, consistently with fact’.<sup>24</sup> The second half of Haygarth’s response is telling, hinting that there were, on occasion, instances when Murray’s desire for more interesting copy might conflict with the truth of in-the-field experiences.

### *Printers*

Notwithstanding such complex negotiations, once the manuscript had undergone revision in accordance with the publisher’s (and to varying degrees the author’s) requirements, it would be sent to the printer for typesetting, or composition, where the text would go through various orthographic changes, in accordance with the convention of normalising punctuation and spelling. In earlier periods, it was customary for the publisher to be his own printer, and sometimes his own bookseller, insofar as bookmaking was a small-scale cottage industry that could take place under one roof. By the late eighteenth century, the book trade had become increasingly specialised, with publishers often acting as capital investors who performed as go-between for authors, printers and booksellers. In this capacity, Murray used a number of trade printers in the nineteenth century, well known for the quality of their work, the most notable of which was the firm of Clowes. In 1823, they had become one of the first printers to acquire a steam-driven power press and by 1839 were the largest printing house in the world.<sup>25</sup>

An account written in that same year by Francis Bond Head for Murray’s own *Quarterly Review*, one of the many publications for which Clowes had responsibility, provides some insight into the working practices of the factory. Describing the ‘heart-ache caused by “bad copy”’, Bond Head reported the

comments of printers, one remarking that some manuscripts could be 'almost illegible' and another that in many instances the author did not himself 'know what he means to say'. Thus, observed Bond Head, 'not only must the frame-work of their composition be altered, but a series of minute posthumous additions and subtractions are ordered, which are almost impossible to effect.' Often called upon to implement major corrections, the printer's readers had at times to operate almost as co-authors who

should be competent to correct, not only the press, but the author. It is requisite not only that they should possess a microscopic eye, capable of detecting the minutest errors, but be also enlightened judges of the purity of their own language. The general style of the author cannot, of course, be interfered with; but tiresome repetitions, incorrect assertions, intoxicated hyperbole, faults in grammar, and above all, in punctuation, it is his especial duty to point out.<sup>26</sup>

Well known to bibliographers, the role of printers in the process of making manuscripts ready for the press was more influential than is generally supposed.

Once the type was set, first proofs were printed to be corrected by an in-house reader. Often a first revise was run off, from which author's proofs were printed, to be forwarded to the writer for correction. The logistics of this stage in the process could vary greatly from printer to printer, and author to author. Sometimes the author had sight of one set of proofs, sometimes more—author's galley, author's revise, author's galley revise, author's page proof, author's second revise.<sup>27</sup> When there was not a clear idea of where the specific responsibility for polishing the manuscript lay, the process could break down: Mansfield Parkyns was not a great stylist and, after having hastily written his *Life in Abyssinia* (1853), gave Murray *carte blanche*, expecting that the publisher and printer would revise his manuscript to make it printworthy: 'As regards alterations I have always said that I yield everything to your superior judgement in these matters.' But Parkyns then went on to say that he did not want the book 'to appear "got up" but to remain as much as possible in my own style bad though it may be.'<sup>28</sup> Murray and his associates seem to have taken him at his word. When the proofs arrived, the author was horrified to learn that he had 'received the proof sheets of the whole notes with scarcely any alterations & of course in the most unintelligible language possible', something that made him 'heartily ashamed'.<sup>29</sup> After reworking the proofs with Norton Shaw, one of the firm's trusted editors, Parkyns asked the other man to write an preface offering an apology for the poor style, stating that it was 'hastily-written' and 'scarcely-corrected'. Such prefatory statements of modesty, as we will later see, were not unusual on Murray's list, but in this instance, even though not penned by the author himself, it appears to have been genuine.

Where a new edition of an already existing title was required, the author was usually asked to mark up a copy of the previous edition so that it could be reset in accordance with his or her wishes, sometimes with an opportunity to supplement the text with new manuscript copy. In looking over the copies of

his *Wanderings in North Africa* (1856), James Hamilton identified 'a few pages containing gross misprints'. These he proposed to replace in the new edition with 'a very interesting chapter containing an account of the barbarous, and still unavenged murder of a Sheikh who protected me'.<sup>30</sup> The number and significance of the changes that could be entered by the author at this stage varied considerably, depending on his or her prestige, or the nature of their working relationship with the publisher. Because large-scale changes cost the publisher (and in many instances the author) dearly, there was not surprisingly resistance in the publishing house to wholesale proof revisions. Substantive corrections could knock out the page, having consequences for many pages thereafter, necessitating expensive re-composition. Although one authority remarked in 1825 that authors should return the proofs 'with as few alterations as possible', this was often not the case.<sup>31</sup>

For most British authors this was not an inordinately complicated stage in the process, particularly from the 1840s, when the new postal system made for efficient delivery and return of proofs. Nevertheless, many and difficult were the struggles that nineteenth-century writers went through with their publishers and printers in order to maintain authorial control over their works as they were being made ready for the press. In 1840, *The Perils of Authorship* went so far as to advise authors of 'the necessity of remaining in town, and in the printing office ALL NIGHT rather than let a single sheet of his work go to press,' a practice that Dickens was known to employ.<sup>32</sup> In the case of many Murray authors, however—explorers, military and naval officers—the logistics could be complicated, if not almost impossible. Itinerant writers would sometimes have little time to correct proofs before they were off again on another long expedition. In such instances, they had to trust the final corrections to the publisher or one of his agents, or leave the job to a trusted friend or relative. Barron Field wrote from New South Wales to inform Murray that he had instructed his friend, Horace Field 'to offer his services in revising for the press', the appendix to be scrutinised by 'the eye of a scientific picker of weeds'.<sup>33</sup> The distance from London to Sydney posed the problem of a mail journey of many weeks, something that could potentially delay publication for several months, while his brother, a resident of Lincoln's Inn Fields, was close enough to drop in on Murray should it have been necessary.<sup>34</sup>

While copy was being prepared for final printing, the commissioning of accompanying illustrations was also a key element in the production process, and one in which authors had varying degrees of involvement and agency. Murray books were reputed for their use of finely engraved illustrations and maps. The adoption of new printing techniques from the 1820s on served to make the production of illustrations cheaper and more versatile. The move from wood block and copperplate to steel engraving and lithography provided material that was more durable, allowing for the continued use of the plates from edition to edition and the easier integration of text and image on the same page. Michael Twyman has observed how, as the nineteenth century progressed, there was

an increased emphasis on the illustration of 'representations of the visible or imagined world' which in an age of science increasingly 'required the quality of appearing true or real'.<sup>35</sup> Illustrations were often based on sketches taken in the field (by either the author or another) for later execution by artists and engravers. In some instances, the degree of artistic licence, as landscape was rendered more sublime or natives were presented in such a way as to appeal to the spectacle of exoticism, could be considerable. As Bernard Smith has observed, the contribution of engravers at this stage in the process 'mediate[d] between perception and representation in the secondary acts of draughtsmanship'.<sup>36</sup> In the light of which, Robert David has observed that 'the requirement to market the final image, within the parameters of accepted canons of taste, was as apparent in visual representation as it was in the published text'.<sup>37</sup> The legacy of eighteenth-century theories of the picturesque was still strong in topographical imagery, in accordance with William Gilpin's assertion that images could be rendered more affective on the imagination when they were 'properly disposed for the pencil'.<sup>38</sup> Some authors continued to be happy to be comply with these constructed spectacles; others objected to them on the grounds that they did not convey their own view in the field with suitable accuracy. In texts that were at pains to prove their verisimilitude, questions might well be raised about the impression that such reworked images might convey.

One copiously illustrated book was Joseph Hooker's *Himalayan Journals* (1854), which included five lithographed landscapes and forty-five wood engravings. When the book was being made ready for the press, Hooker wrote to Murray to complain that, of the plates that already been prepared, one was totally inadequate and 'the whole scene seems thrown out of perspective' while another was 'not well copied' from his original drawings.<sup>39</sup> Hooker was to return in his preface to offer one of the most detailed critiques of contemporary illustration and its truthfulness:

The landscapes &c. have been prepared chiefly from my own drawings, and will, I hope, be found to be tolerably faithful representations of the scenes. I have always endeavoured to overcome that tendency to exaggerate heights, and increase the angle of slopes, which is I believe the besetting sin, not of amateurs only, but of our most accomplished artists. As, however, I did not use instruments in projecting the outlines, I do not pretend to have wholly avoided this snare; nor, I regret to say, has the lithographer, in all cases, been content to abide by his copy. My drawings will be considered tame compared with most mountain landscapes, though the subjects comprise some of the grandest scenes in nature. Considering how conventional the treatment of such subjects is, and how unanimous artists seem to be as to the propriety of exaggerating those features which should predominate in the landscape, it may fairly be doubted whether the total effect of steepness and

elevation, especially in a mountain view, can, on a small scale, be conveyed by a strict adherence to truth.<sup>40</sup>

Behind Hooker's anxiety was a sense that the reading public, saturated with sublime imagery, had become indifferent to faithful representation. That lithographers had become accustomed to exaggeration in the light of such aesthetic imperatives presented an additional problem for the scientific artist whose chief objective was verisimilitude. Finally, there is also a strong sense that an impressive and colourful landscape could not adequately be rendered in black and white in two dimensions. In order to resolve these problems, the principal desideratum for publisher and author alike was a combination of accuracy and aesthetic appeal, in equal measure.

If David Livingstone's relations with his editor were fraught, his attitude towards his illustrator was just as difficult. Livingstone's highly acclaimed *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857) was to include forty-seven illustrations, including frontispiece and maps. While it was in preparation, Livingstone expressed severe objections to the pictorial treatment that had been given to some of the key episodes in the narrative. Extant evidence of Livingstone's wrangling over the illustrations is clearly visible in some of the marked up proofs of scenes from the book. The famous image of Livingstone's escape from the lion caused him particular annoyance, leading the author to complain that it was 'abominable' in its execution, and would lead readers familiar with the physiognomy of a lion to 'die with laughing at it'.<sup>41</sup> In at least one instance, observes Louise Henderson, Livingstone used his text to correct the impression given by the illustrator.<sup>42</sup>

The admissions of Hooker and Livingstone regarding the inaccuracy of their illustrations was unusually frank for its time. By and large, it was incumbent for authors to maintain that the accuracy of their illustrations matched the veracity of their narratives. Sir Archibald Edmonstone paid tribute in *A Journey to Two of the Oases of Upper Egypt* (1822) to the pencil of Robert Master, who had provided the illustrations, for the results of which he could 'most willingly vouch for their faithfulness and accuracy'.<sup>43</sup> Dixon Denham's sketches, drawn on the spot during his travels through Africa in the 1820s, were worked up for publication by his friend Robert Ker Porter. Although Dixon confessed to having provided only 'sketchy' drawings from his travels, he was at pains to insist that the results were nevertheless 'faithful', as were Porter's reworked illustrations. Directing his readers to the latter's *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia* (1817–19) as evidence, Dixon asserted that Porter's eye was 'nearly as familiar as my own with the picturesque objects they display'.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, subtle and not so subtle changes could creep in while the text was being made press-ready and plates were being engraved from approved illustrations. This was especially so when substitutes for worn plates were being engraved for subsequent imprints or editions. Stylistic changes, aesthetic modifications and in some instances visual content could undergo subtle as well

as significant changes unanticipated by the author or illustrator at an earlier stage in a title's production, all making for instability over time.

In 1836, Edward Strutt Abdy wrote to Murray about the substandard presswork to which his recently published *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America* (1835) had been subjected by the printing firm of George Woodfall. One of Abdy's friends informed the author that he had discovered several typographical errors in the book: 'Howard the philanthropist has been changed into Homard & as is substituted as us.' To add insult to injury, the author had 'passed a few jokes on the Americans about grammar and spelling' and 'it is rather awkward that I should have laid myself open to a similar charge.' Asserting that the mistakes were not his—though, living in London, we may assume that the author had sight of the final proof—he had 'requested the printer to see that no change was made [...] but he has preferred his own mode of orthography to that adopted in [the American quotations] as well as to mine, which he was inclined to dispute.'<sup>45</sup>

A number of tensions could therefore arise between authors and printers, not only over the quality of engraving, composition and presswork but also about the slowness of the work's emergence into print. Phillip Parker King sent Murray the last section of the manuscript of his *Survey of the Intertropical Coasts of Australia* (1827) on in February 1825.<sup>46</sup> More than a year later, on 1 April 1826, he wrote to say that he would soon be setting sail for South America and would be gratified to see the book out before departure.<sup>47</sup> A month later King wrote with even more urgency:

I am quite disappointed at not seeing my book out before I sail [...] I hope you will produce it immediately—for I am sure it answers no good purpose of keeping it back [...] We are only waiting for a wind to leave Deptford.<sup>48</sup>

The book was not published until the following year, and King did not return to England until 1830, a full five years after the submission of the manuscript.

After a series of misfortunes in his attempt to reach the Northwest Passage, William Parry returned to England in October 1825, with a view to seeing his account of the expedition in print. In all likelihood he was following the instructions of the Admiralty, who, under the guidance of John Barrow, were keen to publicise the Arctic cause. In the meantime, throughout 1826, Parry was petitioning the Admiralty for permission to undertake another expedition to make Furthest North, and so it was incumbent on him to give a public account of himself, not least in the face of a number of rumours that were in circulation about his failure to complete the mission, after the beaching of one of the expedition's two ships. Parry was clearly anxious about the situation and his letters to Murray at this time are full of complaints about the time that his account, *Journal of a Third Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage* (1826), was taking in production. On 9 February 1826, Parry wrote to Murray in order to complain that Clowes the printer had not yet sent him the first sheet, nor had he replied to him, although Clowes had had the text 'ten weeks



in hand'.<sup>49</sup> For his part, Parry felt that if the matter were not expedited at once, Murray should commission another printer for the work. Two weeks later he wrote again to say that still nothing had moved. On 7 March, Parry spoke in plainer terms: not only had the delays kept him in London longer than he had intended, but he was beginning to feel extreme 'uneasiness' because it began to look to the Admiralty like 'a dereliction of duty' on his part and to the Public 'as if I was ashamed to publish it'.<sup>50</sup> As time dragged on and the book made slow progress, Parry wrote again to Murray on 14 August to say that 'It has been hinted to me, in no very agreeable manner, that an idea exists abroad, and especially among those of my own profession, that my book is withheld because I am ashamed to publish it.'<sup>51</sup>

As such examples demonstrate, adding a further layer in the compositional process, the intervention of the printer was an element that could further de-authorise a text that had already been subjected to a range of intercessions having little to do with the original writer's intentions. Where a book was to be printed from stereotype plates, which became increasingly the norm as the century progressed, moulds were taken from the final corrected text. One advantage of the rise of stereotyping was a more stable text, as the same plates could be used from 'edition' to 'edition'. Whereas, previously, textual variants routinely occurred between and sometimes within individual editions, insofar as the text was corrected, modified and updated, once stereoplates were cast, the text was more 'fixed' than it had ever been before. While it was possible at a later stage to make minor physical changes to stereoplates, this was avoided if possible because it was a laborious task and the results were often unsatisfactory. Therefore, while stereotyping may have represented an irresistible fiscal advantage for the publisher, for whom reprinting from existing plates was far cheaper than the commissioning of a newly composed edition, it had the inevitable effect of reducing the authorial control which had previously allowed writers to make significant changes to their texts as they were recomposed for a new edition.

### *Advertising*

The final step in bringing a book to its public, from the publisher's perspective at least, was its marketing. While the text, with all of its accompanying apparatus, was being printed, bound and made ready for the warehouse, its advertising was often a carefully orchestrated process. Copy had to be written for insertion in journals and newspapers, and for binding-in with Murray's other titles, as the firm gathered together endorsements from experts and well-known names in the relevant field. Murray kept a weather eye on reviews as they appeared and was always on the lookout for favourable blurbs that would give his titles more credibility. Although it was rare for an author to offer advice on this score, there were one or two instances where individuals expressed their views. One endorsement that Murray was keen to use for the advertisement to Edward Robinson's *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia*



*Petraea* (1841) was from an article that had appeared in the *London Geographical Journal*, in which the German cartographer Hermann Berghaus had praised Robinson's notes, of which he had had sight and on which he based his map. To the suggestion that Berghaus's assessment be included in the advertisement, Robinson wrote that he

would rather not make use of the extract from Berghaus in the announcement [...] It is not necessary, after Ritter, as he is a much smaller light. Besides, I was not well satisfied with his conduct toward me; & would rather not put it in his power to say that after all I had made up his name & authority in my favour.<sup>52</sup>

By this time, Berghaus had prepared his newly corrected map of Palestine from Robinson's notes for inclusion in the book. Without consulting Robinson himself, it seems, he had gone into print reproducing the map and offering fulsome praise of the accuracy of Robinson's survey. All of this was, for Robinson, a precipitous way of proceeding. Consequently, the author determined to correct Berghaus's map when the *Biblical Researches* appeared, and did so in a passage laying out the inaccuracy of the German cartographer's interpretation of Robinson's observations.<sup>53</sup> Robinson's preference for the endorsement of Ritter relates to Carl Ritter, the distinguished Professor of Geography in Berlin, who had written to Robinson in 1840 privately to compliment him on his achievements, saying that the author ought not to regard it as 'a puff, but as the result of his sincere & unbiased judgment'. Balking at the way in which Berghaus had gone public without consulting him, Robinson remarked that Ritter's views were of 'so much more value'. Ritter, in his turn, had suggested that Robinson's work would have lasting value for an understanding of the Holy Land, being responsible for major advancements in the accuracy of the region's cartography.<sup>54</sup> Following his author's advice, Murray included Ritter's private endorsement in the advertisement when it finally appeared, and not Berghaus's public proclamation.

As a work was being advertised, advance copies were sent out for review, strategically targeted at individuals who might have good words to say. Nineteenth-century publishers' ledgers are replete with evidence of the careful placement of advance copies, sent gratis to reviewers and influential individuals (often at the request of the author). While some publishers made it a policy not to review their own titles in their own periodicals, Murray was not above arranging for a prominent notice of his own books in the company's influential *Quarterly Review*. While their strategies might not compare with the worst excesses of eighteenth-century puffery, the firm could steer very close to the wind in the methods that it used to market its own titles. That Murray authors understood this is clear from a letter in 1847 from Sir James Clark Ross in which he thanked the publisher for a notice of his *A Voyage of Discovery and Research in the Southern and Antarctic Regions* in the *Quarterly*, saying that he was 'indebted to the author of it to whom I should feel obliged by your conveying the expression of my sincere thanks.'<sup>55</sup>

The influence that the firm held over the literary world by the 1840s put it in an advantageous position to get its books noticed by the reviewing press, with or without the foreknowledge of their authors. In rare instances, however, authors might themselves initiate advertisements and reviews. Frederick Heniker advised Murray to advertise his *Notes, during a Visit to Egypt* (1823) in 'the following local papers, viz. Cambridge, Oxford, Bath, Ipswich, Colchester, Chelmsford and Ramsgate', his name being 'so well known in all of those places.'<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in 1834, Alexander Burnes told Murray that the *Edinburgh Review* intended to notice his *Travels in Bokhara* and requested that a copy be sent to the editor.<sup>57</sup> For the most part, however, Murray went ahead with the marketing process without consulting his authors. In 1849, we find him working his networks to generate favourable publicity for Layard's *Nineveh and its Remains*. Writing to the author in February he reported: 'If you were to step over to England at this moment, you would find yourself famous.' Murray enclosed with his letter a number of reviews, including 'one from *The Times* [which] was drawn up by a friend of mine.' The 'friend' was in fact Sara Austen, the wife of Layard's uncle, Benjamin. Layard had taken Austen as his first name to please his uncle and had been close to his aunt from his childhood, and on occasions had stayed with the family, while they had years before visited the Layards at their home on the continent.<sup>58</sup> Knowing that Austen had an entrée to *The Times*, and having observed her close relations with her nephew, Murray showed her a 'monstrous' review of Layard that was then about to run in the newspaper, inciting her to write another that could be substituted for the offending item. Austen's review was enthusiastic but it caused Layard grief because in her enthusiasm she had been too unbuttoned about the lack of government financial backing for Layard that had caused severe difficulties for his archaeological work. To his uncle, Layard wrote from Constantinople to say how embarrassing the review had been to him personally and that it might prove damaging in his relations with the embassy, to the extent that 'I was ashamed to show it here.'<sup>59</sup>

### *Authorial Self-Fashioning*

It is clear that an increasingly professionalised book trade had brought financial advantages to the publisher, driving down the cost per unit of production and giving authors access to ever-growing nineteenth-century markets. Yet the same advantages came at a cost to authors and the control that they felt they had over their texts after they entered the industrial process. As Allan C. Dooley has shown, these same authors found their works

partially controlled by printers, who had to operate within the limits of their technologies, who strongly preferred to uphold established linguistic practices, and who attempted to make their work easier and more profitable by bending the author to their will.<sup>60</sup>

Early nineteenth-century authors and their readers still operated under the belief that the author was the seat of expressive meaning and that books were gifts to

the world written under personal inspiration. This was a romantic myth that Karl Marx sought to explode when he claimed that the natural genius that had characterised Greek art and Shakespearean drama was no longer possible in an age of 'self-acting mule spindles and railways and locomotives and electrical telegraphs'. In the modern age, literature was no longer immune from the alienating effects of advanced industrialisation:

What chance has Vulcan against Roberts and Co., Jupiter against the lightning-rod and Hermes against the Credit Mobilier? All mythology overcomes and dominates and shapes the forces of nature in the imagination and by the imagination; it therefore vanishes with the advent of real mastery over them. What becomes of Fama alongside Printing House Square? [...] Or the Iliad with the printing press, not to mention the printing machine?<sup>61</sup>

For Marx, literature in an industrial economy had become a commodity for sale like any other, subject to the demands of the market and the economies of scale that turned a creative act into a material commodity. In such an economic context, authors were no longer solitary makers of meaning but little more than wage labourers. While Marx might regard the condition of the author as one which denied him access to the real means of production, others articulated the anxiety of authorship in terms that emphasised the lack of agency on the part of writers.

Richard Horne, in his aptly named *False Mediums and Barriers excluding Men of Genius from the Public* (1833), gave the following piece of sardonic advice to publishers:

The fame or reputation of a man's name is what you purchase and speculate upon [...] Your business is solely to sell books [...] You are to look upon authors as the 'raw material.' You are to work them up by the machinery of your business, and apply them to such purposes as your peculiar line and connection require.<sup>62</sup>

Horne's polemic and its provocative title indicate the continued purchase the myth of originary genius still had well into the nineteenth century. It is in this context that we can begin to understand many of the discursive strategies deployed by Murray and his authors as they attempted to fashion themselves for readers who did not want to be reminded that their encounters with literary texts were part of an industrial process and mere commodity exchanges.

Prefatory remarks that accompanied published works frequently included comments on the means by which the text had come into the world. As Gerard Genette observes, nineteenth-century prefaces often employed 'the topos of modesty' through the rhetorical device of the *excusatio propter infirmitatem*, or the excuse of mental weakness, in which the writer confesses to stylistic or intellectual incapacity, or both.<sup>63</sup> While Genette sees the function of such gestures as essentially pre-emptive forms of defence against potential critical opponents, it may also be that—in saying 'here I am warts and all'—the real relations of production through which the authorial voice is mediated could be

evaded in the text, allowing for the establishment of a more intimate, direct and 'authentic' discourse. Despite all of the interventions behind the scenes, arguing for the authenticity of accounts that had not been subject to an industrial process—characterised by the 'working up' of in-house editors, compositors, illustrators and advertisers—was a fairly routine practice in nineteenth-century prefaces. In many instances, even where Murray and his agents undoubtedly had a considerable hand, the conventions of the genre required the disavowal of the very trade mechanisms that governed their presentation to the public.

This tendency towards what we might call the *author effect* is most evident in sometimes startlingly modest prefatory confessions. In the preface to *Cairo, Petra, and Damascus* (1841), John Kinnear confessed that '[t]hese are little more than a transcript of letters written to my own family during my absence.' Although Kinnear went on to admit that he suppressed 'those passages which were of a purely domestic character', as well as adding additional notes which he had taken on his journey, the overriding emphasis is on the unadorned, spontaneous and uncommercial origins of the text.<sup>64</sup>

William Hamilton, in preparing the manuscript of *Researches in Asia Minor, Pontus, and Armenia* (1842), told Murray that he had gone over the manuscript 'very carefully and cut out as much as I could', recognising that the book would 'require considerable pruning'.<sup>65</sup> Yet, when he came to write his preface, Hamilton claimed that 'the form and style of my own Journal have been preserved as closely as possible.'<sup>66</sup> Whatever the reality of the situation, and no matter how rigorous the constraints on authors and their texts, the display of authorial directness had become a stock convention in nineteenth-century preface writing, and should lead us to approach and such claims with a healthy degree of scepticism.

The journals of Richard and John Lander, which were eventually combined and heavily edited as *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger* (1832), nevertheless bore a preface that claimed, 'we have made no alterations, nor introduced a single sentence in the original manuscript of our travels.'<sup>67</sup> Justifying a work that was confessedly 'faulty in style' by claiming that, with all its stylistic shortcomings, it would retain its 'accuracy and vividness of description', once again the text disguises the heavy extra-authorial hand behind the final version.

One of the most direct deployments of this technique, unusual for the directness with which it addresses the effect of the publishing process on the transformation of manuscripts, is to be found in the preface to Sarah Gascoyne Lushington's *Narrative of a Journey from Calcutta to Europe* (1829):


The Author is deeply sensible how much the defects of her Book will demand indulgence, as it has not been revised by any Literary person, but was at once delivered by herself into the hands of the publisher; indeed, little alteration has been made in the original journal, beyond adapting its contents into a narrative form, and

omitting details that might prove tedious, and descriptions which had better been executed by established authorities.<sup>68</sup>

The wholesale reshaping of the text, identified by Lushington as adaptation to the 'narrative form', as well as the use of redaction and excision, constitute more than a 'little alteration'. Nor do we know just how much influence others might have had over the manuscript by the time it reached the hands of Murray. The author's husband, Charles Lushington, had been Secretary to the Governor of Bengal between 1823 and 1827, when his wife's diary had been composed. He was a published author himself, having written a history of British institutions in India in 1825 and may very well have advised her on the manuscript in the two years between its original completion and its final publication. Another, more fundamental, problem is that, where the original manuscript is not extant, we cannot tell from such authorial statements how carefully the text was in fact 'worked up' after the submission of the autograph in which these same claims are made. Statements affirming the authorial innocence of texts could thus mask the very mechanisms by which its discourse was actually framed. One of the most excessive acts of dissembling by a Murray author is to be found in Frederick Henniker's *Notes, during a Visit to Egypt* (1823):

I have been persuaded to make a book:—but I have made it as short as possible, and to this accidents have contributed. Part of the following was written to a friend, to whom, verbum sat:—the amusements of drawing and shooting prevented me from the trouble of making long notes:—what I did write has but lately arrived in England: and part of my papers have been lost.<sup>69</sup>

It seems remarkable today that an author would introduce an expensive work to its customers by saying that he had too much of an appetite for leisure to offer them a work of serious labour. Just as remarkable is the confession that much of the original copy had become accidentally lost. The title alone bears witness to the fragmentary and incomplete state of the final text. Thus, an overtly displayed lack of sophistication in writing could belie the many acts of sophistication that the text underwent in its movement from writer to reader.

In their highly professional performances of amateur authorship, Murray's travel writers were operating within a *modus operandi* which required not only the disavowal of the real economics of production, but also the need to present the work as an unmediated exchange between the writer and the reader, untrammelled by the complex and sometimes contradictory forces that gave shape to the final product. 

## NOTES

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1. A parallel discussion of this subject is provided by Richard Hill in 'Scott, Hogg, and the Gift-Book Editors: Authorship in the Face of Industrial Production', *Romantic Textualities*, 19 (Winter 2009) <[www.romtext.org.uk/articles/rt19\\_n01/](http://www.romtext.org.uk/articles/rt19_n01/)> [accessed 15 Nov 2013].
2. Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?' *Daedalus*, III.3 (Summer 1982), 65–83 (p. 67).
3. National Library of Scotland, John Murray Archive, MS 41020: James Riley to John Murray, 10 Jan 1817.
4. Renshaw's letter appears in full as a preface to Riley's account. James Riley, *The Loss of the American Brig Commerce* (London: John Murray, 1817), pp. vii–ix.
5. Murray MS 40516: Walter Hamilton to John Murray, n.d.
6. Murray MS 40516: Walter Hamilton to John Murray, 15 Jan 1822.
7. Murray MS 40516: Walter Hamilton to John Murray, n.d.
8. Murray MS 40516: Walter Hamilton to John Murray, n.d.
9. Murray MS 40057: John Barrow to John Murray, 1829.
10. Murray MS 41912: John Murray to Fortune, 14 Nov 1846.
11. Murray was not alone in this regard. As David Finkelstein has shown, the Edinburgh firm of William Blackwood, also distinguished as a publisher of travel writing, were similarly interventionist in their editorial practices. See 'Unraveling Speke: The Blackwoods and the Construction of John Hanning Speke', *Bibliothek*, 18 (1992–93), 40–57.
12. Angus Fraser, 'A Publishing House and its Readers, 1841–1889: The Murrays and the Miltons,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 90.1 (Mar 1996), 4–43 (p. 17).
13. Fraser, 'A Publishing House and its Readers', p. 19.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
15. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
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18. Murray MS 40516: Walter Hamilton to John Murray, 25 Nov 1816.
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20. Quoted in Fraser, 'A Publishing House and its Readers', p. 33.
21. Murray MS 41017: John Richardson to John Murray, 13 Dec 1850.
22. Murray MS 40499: Joseph John Gurney to John Murray, 17 Jan 1841.
23. Murray MS 40433: Mary Margaret Busk to John Murray, Apr 1838 and Jan 1839
24. Murray MS 40538: Henry Haygarth to John Murray, 15 May 1848.
25. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
26. Frances Bond Head, 'The Printer's Devil', *Quarterly Review*, 129 (Dec 1839), 1–18 (pp. 5–6).
27. Allan C. Dooley, *Author and Printer in Victorian England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), p. 24.
28. Murray MS 12604/1917: Mansfield Parkyns to John Murray, 27 May 1853.
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32. Dooley, *Author and Printer in Victorian England*, p. 83.
33. Murray MS 40401: Barron Field to John Murray, 13 Dec 1821.
34. Horace Field is identified in *The Directory of British Architects, 1834–1914*, ed. by Alison Felstead and Jonathan Franklin, 2 vols (London: Continuum, 2001), 1, 647.
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39. Murray MS 40573: Joseph Hooker to John Murray, [1854].
40. Joseph Hooker, *Himalayan Journals* (London: John Murray, 1854), pp. xvii–xviii.
41. Murray MS 42420: David Livingstone to John Murray, 22 May 1857.
42. Louise Henderson, 'John Murray and the Publication of David Livingstone's Missionary Travels', *Livingstone Online* <[www.livingstoneonline.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.livingstoneonline.ucl.ac.uk)> [accessed 6 Jan 2012].
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44. Dixon Denham, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa, in the Years 1822, 1823, and 1824* (London: John Murray, 1826), p. viii.
45. Murray MS 40002: Edward Strutt Abdy to John Murray, 1836.
46. Murray MS 40650: Phillip King to John Murray, Feb 1825.
47. Murray MS 40650: Phillip King to John Murray, 1 Apr 1825.
48. Murray MS 40650: Phillip King to John Murray, 26 May 1825.
49. Murray MS 40921: William Parry to John Murray, 9 Feb 1826.
50. Murray MS 40921: William Parry to John Murray, 7 Mar 1826.
51. Murray MS 40921: William Parry to John Murray, 14 Aug 1826.
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68. Sarah Gascoyne Lushington, *Narrative of a Journey from Calcutta to Europe* (London: John Murray, 1829), pp. x–xi.
69. Frederick Henniker, *Notes, during a Visit to Egypt* (London: John Murray, 1823), p. v.

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