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7 The Market for Travel Writing

Abstract: This chapter provides an overview of the way in which travel writing developed as a mass market at the end of the eighteenth century. In accordance with a host of technological developments, the production of British travel writing grew, assisted by the spread of national influence across the globe. In the process a number of key publishers developed extensive lists in the area of travel writing, not least the firms of John Murray, William Blackwood, and Smith & Elder. Another consequence was the emergence of a new kind of celebrity traveller, as authorship was put on a more professional footing. While the emphasis of historians and commentators has often been exclusively on books and their authors, the periodical press was perhaps an even more prolific source for travel writing throughout the nineteenth century. Since the advent of the twentieth century and despite the decline of British overseas influence, the travel market has continued to flourish. In the process, the market for travel writing has adapted itself to new readerships and new forms of communication technology. While on the one hand today's multimedial travel content can be seen as a break with the past, it might be argued that, in attempting to keep one step ahead of changing demands, it continues to represent just one more stage in a process that began with the industrialisation of print over two centuries ago.

Key Terms: Publishing, printing, market, readers, empire

1 Introduction

Shortly after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the *Edinburgh Review* reflected on how "the restoration of peace has, as might have been foreseen, produced a vast number of Books of Travels. [. . .] it could not but follow that the press should groan with many a Tour" (1817, 37). The end of the continental conflict had left the British government with a surplus of vessels and men, built up over previous decades. One alternative to decommissioning was for the Admiralty to redeploy ships and personnel in pursuit of expeditionary journeys and new international trading opportunities. Although there had been since the eighteenth century an antiquarian and social interest in descriptions closer to home – a period that gave the reading public celebrated tours of Great Britain and Ireland by Boswell and Johnson, Daniel Defoe, Thomas Pennant (↗ 10 Samuel Johnson, *A Voyage to Abyssinia*, ↗ 9 Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Tour Thro' The Whole Island of Great Britain*, ↗ 11 Thomas Pennant, Selected Works), and others – the new century inaugurated a

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period in which there was an exponential increase in published accounts of journeys to more distant lands, as Britain's overseas empire was becoming increasingly important to the way that the nation defined itself.

The increase, throughout the nineteenth century, in accounts of foreign travel, in Asia and Africa, and the furthest outposts of the growing empire, can best be seen in the reviewing press of the period, with items on the cultures and habits of foreign lands increasing exponentially, decade on decade. The vogue for travel writing was nothing new of course but from the early nineteenth century there was an unprecedented enthusiasm for accounts of far-flung journeys offering intimate insights into foreign life. They promised armchair travellers more than the conventional *grand recit* of history, providing instead vicarious views of the workings of peoples and societies from within.

Referring to the lack of a consensus around scholarly descriptions of how we might define travel writing, Carl Thompson goes on to assert that a more extensive definition might include many "forms of travel-related document or cultural artefact" (2011, 13). Difficult as clear distinctions may be, this chapter will be concerned with what Thompson identifies as the 'inclusive' products from the perspective of the commercial market. Put simply, laying emphasis on markets and their audiences, what follows is interested in any form of written content relating to travel produced for the purposes of financial return. Whether through eyewitness accounts, guidebooks, railway timetables, travelogues, letters, memoirs, and diaries written on the spot or through recollections of journeys taken, the writing of travel was to become big business throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and remains so today. Some of the highest earning fictional and poetical products over the last three centuries have featured itinerant characters – Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Byron's *Childe Harold* (↗ 9 Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Tour Thro' The Whole Island of Great Britain*, ↗ 18 Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*), Dickens's *David Copperfield*, Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* – and in doing so have often capitalised on detailed descriptions of foreign settings and cultures. While there were many affiliations between the so-called 'literary market' and its 'non-fiction' counterpart, it is possible to see these texts as part of a growing interest in reading matter engaging with geographical movement and observations. Suffice it to say that there are often close intertextual connections between these genres and the rest of the market for travel writing. Defoe wrote his tours; John Murray inserted lines from Byron in published guidebooks to the Continent; Thackeray's account of the Battle of Waterloo in *Vanity Fair* was to figure in later travel guides to Belgium; Trollope and Dickens used their success as novelists to write popular travelogues. What is certain is that, however we might choose to define it, no account of travel writing would be complete without a serious regard for what was, after all, its principal purpose: its role as commodity.

2 A Technological Revolution

It is perhaps no coincidence that the golden age of British travel writing occurred at a time of increased industrialisation at home, when the nation's printers, publishers, and booksellers were discovering innovative ways to produce and circulate the printed word. If, in 1800, the mechanics of printing in Europe remained very much as they had been since the days of Gutenberg, by the second quarter of the century new technologies began to emerge that would make book work faster and cheaper. Papermaking, still a traditional handcraft until the late eighteenth century, became rapidly industrialised in France and new techniques were soon imported and improved upon by British producers. By the 1830s old-fashioned hand presses gave way to a variety of steel presses, and steam-driven machines were soon in operation across Britain. Although it was first invented in the early eighteenth century, the more general implementation of stereotyping allowed for the exponential efficiency of print production, while arduous engraving techniques were giving way to illustration by lithography. If at the beginning of the century, printing by hand was a painstaking and labour-intensive procedure, taking two operatives an hour to produce a single book, by the 1870s, newspaper presses were employed that could produce 12000 newspapers an hour.

Such economies of scale may have been responses to the increased demand for print, but they were also contributors to it. Travel publishing in the nineteenth century was quick to adopt advances in reproductive technology, exploiting the latest techniques in letterpress, illustration and cartography. The title pages of the most select books advertised the value added for the consumer, who was now promised illustration and other paratextual apparatus. Consequently, the consumer of travel accounts was coming increasingly to demand texts that not only told but showed what its author had seen. The importance of illustrations drawn in the field and the presence of reliable maps and charts were regarded as markers of quality and guarantors of reliability. Wood engraving gave way to copper as a medium and steel engraving by mid-century. Lithographic printing also allowed for the reproduction of photographic images by the end of the century. Maps, an important feature of travel works, benefitted from the detail made possible through lithography and later photolithography. In some instances the title-page itself read like an advertisement, promising its consumers maps, charts, and illustrations.

While it is possible to describe the changing geographical focus of nineteenth-century travel writing, an awareness of trends and subjects covered cannot tell us how many copies were actually printed, circulated, and read. In the hand press period before the 1830s, when the general norm was for a maximum run of 500 copies, titles tended to be prohibitively priced, pitched at relatively exclusive, not to say specialised, audiences. But by the early nineteenth century, as Roy Bridges observes, there was a marked transition from the production of large multi-volume works in the 'Hakluyt tradition' to increasingly more affordable and portable volumes (see Bridges

2002, 56). Throughout the century, improvements in binding and transportation links combined with printing and illustrative techniques, brought the latest titles within the reach of a growing reading public. What press figures we have are inconclusive, though can be indicative of how the British book trade was expanding. Although it does not account for home sales, a general sense of the growing publishing market in the second half of the century is indicated by the export figures for British books, which rose from £35,000 in 1828 to £1,336,549 in 1898 (see Weedon 2003, 39). In fact, the category of Travel has been compared with Religion and even Fiction for numbers of titles generated in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although this figure had dropped off by the 1870s, it appears to have remained consistently significant as a category of publishing thereafter (see Eliot 1994, 43–53). Much research remains to be undertaken on the volume of books published in nineteenth century Britain, let alone by those specialising in the field of travel writing. A statistical analysis of the copies of the 135 titles published by John Murray between 1860 and 1892 indicates an enormous variety in the size and prices of print runs. While most were issued in editions of 1000 copies or more, at the high end of the market the firm continued to produce more exclusive large format lavish editions throughout the same years. In 1849, John Murray sold over 7000 copies of Layard's *Nineveh and its Remains* at the cost of 36 shillings and two years later published a popular edition at 5 shillings, which within a decade had sold over 18000 copies. In the meantime, Murray issued a deluxe series of plates to accompany Layard's narrative, costing subscribers £12, the equivalent of £800 today, its subscribers including some of the wealthiest and most influential figures of the day (see Keighren et al. 2015, 171).

While it was not unusual for large-scale publishers to invest in the market for travel writing, as titles relating to exploration and travel poured from the presses in London and Edinburgh a number of major players came to distinguish themselves in the field, of which Murray's was the market leader. From the end of the 1800s the firm was to become the leviathan of travel and exploration. Founded in 1768, and continuing over seven generations, throughout the nineteenth century Murray was the first choice for serious travel writing. Because of the firm's ability to pay above the odds, and the connections it had for generations cultivated within government and learned societies, Murray often had first refusal on the latest expeditionary account. By the 1850s, Murray's travel list read like a who's who of celebrity travellers. The firm first introduced the works of Charles Darwin (↗ 20 Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle*), John Franklin, Austen Henry Layard, David Livingstone, Isabella Bird (↗ 21 Isabella Bird, Selected Works), and in the twentieth century Freya Stark (↗ 25 Freya Stark, Selected Works) and Patrick Leigh Fermor to the British public. One staple of the Murray's list, and a field in which they pioneered, was the guide books for travellers (see below). By the 1870s, the firm's traditional approach to publishing and refusal to compromise publishing standards saw it falling behind its major competitors. It discontinued trading as a family company in

2002 when the imprint was acquired by Hodder Headline but it is fair to say that for six decades, steered by generations of Murrays, the House virtually cornered the English language market for travel writing.

Another major competitor for this same market was the London firm of Smith & Elder. Although best known today as a literary publisher (their authors included Thackeray, Ruskin, the Brontës, the Brownings), under the direction of George Murray Smith the firm was to become one of the age's principal producers of travel literature. As publisher and supplier to the East India Company, the firm's longstanding colonial connections gave it access to a large number of titles relating to colonies. Between 1857 and 1914, the company was also responsible for *The Homeward Mail from India, China, and the East*, a newspaper that carried news of military, economic, and political affairs from the colonies to its global audience. From its establishment in 1817 up to the Indian Uprising of 1857, the firm's publications covered every part of the globe. Typical were titles such as Lieutenant-Colonel James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (1829), Mrs Prinsep's *Journal of a Voyage from Calcutta to Van Diemen's Land* (1833), John Dunmore Lang's *History of New South Wales* (1834), and Charles Darwin's *Zoology of the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle* (1838). Immediately after the events of 1857, in which it lost many of its investments in the Subcontinent, the company made virtue of necessity and led the market on publications relating to the Mutiny. Although in later years, its profile was more of a literary publisher, before mid-century the S&E colophon was synonymous with travel works.

A third significant player in the nineteenth-century travel market was Blackwoods of Edinburgh. Also best known as a major literary publisher (their stable including George Eliot, Joseph Conrad and others), most of their publications were also non-literary, not least their extensive list of imperial travel accounts. In the 1860s, John Blackwood outbid John Murray to secure a publishing sensation with John Hanning Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (1863), a work that was a runaway success. Many Blackwood titles had an unusually heavy military emphasis. James Hope Grant, who enjoyed a distinguished army career in the East, produced in the 1870s a popular account of *Incidents in the Sepoy War 1857–1858* (1873), followed two years later by *Incidents in the China War of 1860* (1875). Other successful titles included Alexander Kinglake's *The Invasion of the Crimea* (1863) and George Steevens' sketches on the Anglo-Boer War, *With Kitchener to Khartoum* (1898) and *From Capetown to Ladysmith* (1900), all of which enjoyed popular success.

3 The Profession of Travel Writing

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries authorship was often a by-product of other professional arrangements, and in the case of travel writing this was particularly so. In 1826, a somewhat peeved William Parry wrote to his publisher that "Too

much is, in these book-making days, expected of Naval Officers [. . .] for they are accustomed more to *act* than to *write* – but both are expected from us now" (n.p.; emphasis in the original). Parry may have prioritised his naval profession over his career as a writer but he also understood that it was through the latter that he was known by the public and on which his reputation would be established. And he was not alone. John Franklin, famous for his tragic attempt on the Northwest Passage, was also first and foremost a naval officer; David Livingstone, the famous author of African travels, was employed by the London Missionary Society; Charles Darwin was a natural scientist; many travel works in this period were written after hours by the wives and daughters of diplomats and missionaries.

By the end of the eighteenth century, books were becoming the products of a variety of production technologies, elements that would become increasingly segmented as time passed. While authorial style might have required writers to give the impression that they were working in an expressive mode, as they took their places in an industrial economy the role of the author became just one among many of professional trades, the final product involving a range of highly specialised labour practices: papermaking, colportage, bookselling, printing, being the most obvious. Despite the fact that print production was becoming transformed in this period from a cottage industry into a means of mass production, it was a period that saw the emergence of a new kind of celebrity writer, for whom it became incumbent to appeal to the quasi-romantic belief that they were no mere literary labourers but spoke honestly, in unmediated ways, to readers.

An examination of the inner workings of the publishing industry in this period would suggest that the real situation was quite different. In reality, of course, many works originated not as simple accounts of the author's travel experiences but as editorial commissions, or were undertaken to defray the financial outlay of journeys. What is more, when a manuscript was eventually delivered to its publisher it had to undergo a highly mediated process, being modified at the recommendation of in-house readers, literary advisors, and the executive decisions of publishers and editors. The texts that emerged sometimes bore little resemblance to their original manuscripts. John Hanning Speke's sensationally successful *Journey of the Discovery for the Source of the Nile* (1863) was completely rewritten at the behest of his publisher William Blackwood. Speke's dreary prose, it was felt, would not appeal to the mainstream market and so would have to be reworked accordingly. So detailed were the changes made to Herman Melville's *Four Months' Residence* in the Marquesas (1846) when it was being made print ready the sum paid for the services of John Murray's in-house editor compared favourably with the money that Melville himself received for the original copy. While the editorial hand remained invisible in these and other printed texts, what remained of faithful reports from 'the field' was often a highly sophisticated commodity, co-produced by London editors, publishers, and literary advisors.

For all that, travelling authors were destined to become the principal celebrities of the age as the triumphs and tragedies of their stories were consumed by an eager public. Thanks to the impact of print, Park, Livingstone, and Burton were household names among adults and children alike. The loss of Sir John Franklin's expedition in 1845 created and subsequently captured an appetite for polar accounts for decades to come, both in the newspaper press and with the book reading public. Elsewhere there were other tales of derring-do like Alexander Burnes' clandestine escapades in Afghanistan in 1834 and Richard Burton's journey to Mecca in 1851. Austin Henry Layard's recovery of artefacts in the Middle East from 1849 fuelled a Nineveh-mania for archaeological discoveries. The trend for heroic travels was to continue well into the twentieth century with the Antarctic journeys of Robert Falcon Scott, first in *The Voyage of the Discovery* (1905) and later in *Scott's Last Expedition* (1912).

Generally speaking, it is possible to detect roughly three phases in the way in which the publishing of travel developed in regard to individual regions. The first phase might be called *mapping*, often involving scientific surveys and pioneering attempts to record cartographic details, almost invariably describing encounters with a new land and occasional reports of first contact with its peoples. The second *surveying* phase, reflecting a growing interest in the emergent fields of anthropological and geographical study, marked a period after European settlement when more detailed reportage about the everyday lives of others, as well as a more analytic survey was possible. As time passed, there appeared a third kind of travel writing, of a more *reflective* kind, namely memoirs and biographies as authors reflected back on their itinerant careers and experiences. These three modes were not exclusive of course but they can be helpful to describe the changing trends region by region.

The case of Africa provides a case in point. Public interest in African travel had been initiated by the popular success of Mungo Park's *Travels into the Interior of Africa* (1805), a pioneering account of the journey along the Niger and record of Park's encounter with what was for Europeans a hitherto unknown region. Thereafter, the 'dark continent' became the subject of works by some of the leading explorers of the age. In due course, these discovery narratives gave way to extensive studies of the life and manners of African peoples. It was a theme addressed by John Barrow, Hugh Clapperton, Francis Galton, and even Anthony Trollope, whose *South Africa* appeared in 1878. Perhaps the greatest cause celebres relating to African travel was the missionary David Livingstone's *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi* (1865). After his death in 1873, Livingstone's cult status was consolidated through works by the American journalist Henry Stanley, whose *Through the Dark Continent* (1873) and *In Darkest Africa* (1890) revived interest for a new generation of readers. In the final years of the century a number of important accounts of the experiences of European women found ready audiences, with classics such as Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897) (↗ 22 Mary Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* and *West African Studies*).

As British travel gave way to the mass movement of curious individuals, the production of travel writing was less the exclusive preserve of the professional explorer, the government-assisted scientist, and the diplomat. The relative ease and affordability of travel meant that the concept authorship for travel writers was expanding, not least in terms of class and gender. Despite the inroads made by celebrated eighteen century women like Lady Mary Wortley Montague and Mary Wollstonecraft (↗ 12 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, ↗ 15 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*), in the Victorian period women continued to find it relatively difficult to make their way in the largely masculine world of exploration and geographical observation. Where they took up the pen far from home, it was usually under cover of their diplomatic or military husbands. By 1845 Lady Eastlake (herself a prominent travel writer) championed in the pages of *The Quarterly Review* on how British women travellers had successfully adapted themselves to an ever widening and growing market:

> The truth is that no foreign nation possesses that same class of women from which the great body of our tourists are drafted. They have not the same well-read, solid thinking, early rising, sketch-loving, light-footed, trim-waisted, straw-hatted specimen of women, educated with the refinement of the highest classes, and with the usefulness of the lowest. (Eastlake 1845, 102)

Eastlake attributed the secret of these women's success to the security afforded by domestic infrastructure that afforded them time and space to write. At the height of what her London publisher, Richard Bentley, called 'Canadian mania,' the experiences of Susanne Moodie led her to write *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852). Recounting her life as the wife of a retired army officer, Moodie's narrative soon established itself as a North American classic. Also typical was Mary Anne Barker's *Life in South Africa* in 1877. The widow of a military officer who had served in India, Barker married a colonial administrator in 1865. She had found literary fame through her dispatches from the Pacific to *The Times*, describing the rough and ready life of a mistress on a remote sheep farm in *Station Life in New Zealand* (1883). A spectacular exception to such domesticated travel narratives is to be found in the works of Isabella Bird (↗ 21 Isabella Bird, Selected Works), probably the most prolific female traveller of the age. John Murray had begun to regale the British public with Bird's adventures in the Americas in the 1850s and by the end of her life she had brought the manners and customs of Australasia and the Far East – not least Japan (1880), Korea (1898), and China (1900) – to a delighted public.

4 Secondary Travel Writing

While the foregoing examples have received frequent consideration of scholars, they were not the sum total of the travel market. The growing vogue for travel was

also spawning a large number of apodemic or instructional works for the use of travellers, from gentleman adventurers to emigrants to a very modern kind of tourist. One quite distinct kind of *vade mecum* was the general instruction manual for the more intrepid traveller in foreign lands. In 1854, a series of articles under the title 'Hints to Travellers' appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, aimed at the experienced traveller who intended 'to visit the really wild countries.' One of its original authors, the polymath Francis Galton, half-cousin of Darwin and traveller in his own right, edited a book-length publication *The Art of Travel; or, Shifts and Contrivances Available in Wild Countries* in 1855. Including advice on locating water, lighting fire, bivouacking and the use of writing materials in the field, it remained the gold standard for travellers off the beaten track throughout the rest of the century, going into five editions in its first two decades. Published by Murray under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society, by the turn of the century, 'Galton' was in its eighth edition. It made a fortune for its publisher and a healthy income for its author.

Also related to such how-to guides is an often overlooked genre that enjoyed an increasing vogue as Britain became more and more a nation of migrants. One large category of *vade mecum* was the proliferation, particularly after the 1850s, of emigrant manuals for the instruction of the millions of British who were part of the vast migration, particularly to the Americas and, after mid-century, to Australasia. The publication history of the emigrant guide, not surprisingly, followed the changing trends of the flow of British migration. In the early nineteenth century works relating to the Americas proliferated as settlement schemes opened up in the West. The official encouragement of British North America produced hundreds of works relating to what, after Confederation in 1865, became Canada. By mid-century, bookshops were flooded with settlement guides to the Antipodes.

By far the most popular and remunerative apodemic works of the day were initiated by John Murray in the form of his Guidebooks. Offering advice on modes of conveyance, accommodation, sites of interest, often accompanied by maps and sailing times, the guidebook came into its own with the launch of John Murray's own *Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* (1836). With their emphasis on architectural gems, museums and galleries, Murray's intended reader was part of a patrician educated and polite audience, owing something to the grand tour tradition. As the guidebook gained in popularity Murray's famous red-bound volumes became the prototype for other yet more popular examples that were to come later: Baedeker, Guide Bleu, and Cook's Guides, all owe their existence to the pioneering venture of John Murray III.

5 The Periodical Press

Although book publications have attracted more attention from scholars and students of travel writing, it is often forgotten that the largest circulation for travel

writing up to the First World War was through the periodical press. Journalistic forays into the lives and habits of foreign natives were the standard fare of such publications, from the old-fashioned quarterlies early in the century to the monthlies, weeklies, and even dailies of mid-century and beyond. At the more select end of the scale, John Murray's *The Quarterly Review* became a vehicle for the promotion of the firm's extensive travel list, going so far as to commission reviews of the company's own publications. Elsewhere the pages of other conservative reviews provided successful venues for the leading travel writers of the day. From its inception, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* enjoyed its status as one of the major magazines of the day and was said to have been taken into every officer's mess throughout the Empire. It ran a regular column on 'Foreign Intelligence,' which offered accounts of contemporary culture, commerce, and politics.

By mid-century, there had emerged a considerable market for the middle-class family monthly, catering to an even larger reading public. The content pages of the new magazines were filled with articles on happenings in every region of the globe, as the travel writing of the next generation flooded the polite domestic sphere. Launched under the editorship of W. M. Thackeray *The Cornhill Magazine* achieved instant success in the early months of 1859 when there appeared in its pages a variety of articles combining travel with topical themes. In the first year these ranged from a piece on 'The Search for Sir John Franklin' to a glimpse 'Inside Canton' and an analysis of 'The Situation of the Moment in Italy.' *Household Words*, published by Bradbury and Evans but most famous for Charles Dickens's editorship took as a familiar feature travel accounts often accompanied by sensational observations. During its nine years of existence (1850–1859) the weekly production included contributors "from most parts of the British Isles and from various parts of the Empire – India, Ceylon, Australasia, as well as an occasional foreigner – American, German, Belgian, Italian, Polish, Hungarian" (Lohrli 1973, 24). Dickens, who had already found success with works such as *Pictures from Italy* (1846) personally penned many of the articles and, with Wilkie Collins, contributed the inland travelogue that came to be known as *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices* (1857).

At the even more popular end of the market, *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* (later *Chambers's Journal*), brought from their offices in Edinburgh the latest information from foreign lands to readers at home across the empire. In its 1832 prospectus, the weekly had promised to deliver articles about "travellers who went upon long and painful journeys in Asia and Africa, seeking for knowledge regarding the produce and peculiarities of unknown countries; and how they travelled among the most sublime ruins of empires [. . .] or across spacious burning deserts and wildernesses" (Chambers 1832, 2). Largely ignored by travel scholars, as the most popular publication for half a century, the magazine touched the lives of more readers in Britain and in the Empire, introducing them to more travel writing week after week than any other printed source.

If Chambers had, in their own day, led the way in travel writing for the common reader, its legacy was to continue in the productions of George Newnes who continued to offer common readers glimpses of faraway worlds deploying to great effect the latest photographic printing techniques. Newnes, who was the architect of *Titbits* and *The Strand*, brought a new kind of populist sensationalism to exploratory writing with the launch of *The Wide World Magazine* (whose motto was 'Truth is stranger than fiction'). Between its establishment in 1898 and its last number in 1965 it purported to provide "stories of weird adventure, more thrilling than any conceived by the novelist in the wildest flights." Fantastic as its contents may have seemed, "by means of the infallible camera and the responsible traveller" it promised to give its readers all of "the almost incredible wonders of the Wide World" (Preface to *The Wide World Magazine* 1898, 3). In doing so, *The Wide World* supplied travel writing with a steady flavour of imperialist fantasy for almost seven decades.

6 A National Endeavour?

Whatever travel writing might reveal about the changing literary tastes of the British reading public we might still wonder about the extent to which these publishing projects were part of the larger geopolitics of British imperial expansion. It is often said that 'trade follows the flag' but there is undoubtedly a sense in which such works encouraged and made possible greater outward expansion as the world came under the political sway of the British influence. While the principle interest of the major publishers and their authors in the field was clearly commercial, there is little doubt that they were both fed by and in turn fed the appetite for global nationalism at the height of Empire. George Staunton, Secretary to Britain's first ambassador to China, maintained that his experiences were "composed in obedience to the public voice" rather than "suggestions of his own mind" (Staunton 1797, n.p.). Staunton's appeal to 'duty' rather than literary ambition were to be echoed throughout the coming century. Another member of his expedition, Sir John Barrow, in his supplementary *Travels in China* in 1804, maintained that it had done everything "for promoting the interests of the British nation, and supporting the dignity of the British character" (Barrow 1804, 2).

John Murray's *Quarterly Review* was established in 1809 with the assistance of the then Foreign Secretary George Canning, later Prime Minister. Canning, who was a former Treasurer to the Navy contributed articles himself, as well as giving the journal access to the latest news from overseas. In its first two issues the *Quarterly,* alongside reviews of the latest works on theology and literature, included articles on the recently published official papers of Napoleon relating to Spain, Sir George Carr's tour through Scotland, a history of the Baptist Missionary Society, an account of the colony of Barbados, and Lewis and Clarke's American expeditions. The broad

sweep of its journalistic coverage continued thereafter to offer extensive coverage of subjects across the Empire and beyond.

Launched as a serious Tory quarterly in 1817, *Blackwood's Magazine*, many of whose contributors were diplomats and military attaches, had the reputation of finding its way into every officers' mess in the Empire. From the beginning, its content pages read like a roll call of Britain's foreign interests at any given moment. As well as featuring long articles on matters of overseas importance, every issue included a digest of Foreign Intelligence. The first number included items on the state of politics throughout Europe, a report from the Admiralty on the progress of Tuckey's expedition in the Congo, news from Calcutta on British expeditions in Asia, and the latest information from North and South America.

The fact that Murray's authors were frequently military and naval men gave him first refusal on subsequent expeditions involving the Admiralty, that many of the most influential establishment figures were in the stable – for instance literary advisor John Barrow was second Lord to the Admiralty – would suggest that the commercial operation was in part an extension of Britain's strategic overseas aims. John Murray's relocation to Albemarle Street in 1812 created one of the most famous meeting places for writers in the capital. The proximity of Murray's new premises was strategically important to the way in which the firm and its list would develop over the coming years. The shop and domestic dwelling was a stone's throw from the Admiralty. Through his cultivation of Sir John Barrow who had become Second Secretary to the Admiralty in 1804, Murray was given first refusal on every expeditionary account with which the Navy was associated. Into Murray's list Barrow brought Franklin, Lyon, Parry, and many others in the 1820s. Close to Murray's West End premises the Royal Geographical Society met. Founded in 1830 by Murray authors, Barrow, Franklin, and Sir Francis Beaufort, the publisher enjoyed close relations with the RGS from its inception. Also important for cultivating prestigious associations was the firm's location in the heart of Clubland. The Athenaeum, which was founded in 1824 by John Wilson Croker (a regular dinner guest at 50 Albemarle Street), is said to have been a direct offshoot of Murray's soirees. Croker was another prolific contributor to *The Quarterly Review*, Secretary to the Admiralty for over two decades, and another of Murray's most trusted literary advisors. As a tried and tested, solidly conservative and conventionally old-fashioned family firm, it was hardly surprising that Murray was entrusted with the publication of three volumes of *The Letters of Queen Victoria* in 1908.

One of Murray's business neighbours in Pall Mall was Smith & Elder, as we have seen a firm that distinguished itself for its imperial connections. Like Murray they had the distinction of being publishers to Queen Victoria, whose memoirs *Our Life in the Highlands* was an immediate and spectacular success. Even where such political aims were not immediately evident, travel writers more often than not operated in accordance with what Bruno Latour calls "centres of calculation" insofar as they provided a form of information gathering that was useful to the furtherance

of British foreign policy (1987, 215). From its offices in Waterloo Place, a street away from the Murrays in Albemarle Street, Smith courted many writers who operated from the heart of imperial power. Through its publications, Smith & Elder reflected and consolidated a symbiotic relationship in which its perpetuation of the romance of military and naval experiences lent public and political support to official government policy.

With premises in the fashionable New Burlington Street the House of Henry Colburn epitomised a similar breed of gentleman publisher, situating himself at the heart of imperial power among the great and the good. One of Colburn's most successful titles of the age was Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* (1839) (↗ 20 Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle*). Ostensibly a work of natural history and geology, the expedition's principle aim was in fact to map unknown territories for the Admiralty. The additional observations of local political arrangements and trade resources relating to South America and the Pacific must also have served the interests of foreign policy. As the initiator of *Burke's Peerage*, a work originally dedicated to George IV, Colburn was explicitly invested in the British ruling class, his publishing activities closely affiliated to official government policy.

Beyond personal connections between cultural producers and the institutions of international governance, the more general effect of print culture contributed to what Benedict Anderson famously called the 'imagined community.' In his description of British national consciousness, Anderson connects explicitly the growth of nationalism with the development of the British press. As Rudy Koshar observes in the instance of guidebooks, publications relating to foreign cultures served by their very perspectives to reinforce what it meant to be British and to instil for their readers "a sense of national belonging" (1998, 339). In this process, as the principle agent for the circulation of information about the world and its cultures, the international travel market, it could be argued, was one of the most potent means for reinforcing a consolidated view of Britain in the world.

7 The Twentieth Century and Beyond

By the end of the nineteenth century, as imperial motives gave way to ever more commercial imperatives, even 'gentlemen publishers' like Murray and Blackwood found their markets eclipsed by newer players in the field, of which Newnes was only the most conspicuous among many. Just as the Napoleonic Wars had interrupted the unfettered ability of writers to travel, the effect of the two world wars on British travel writing was similarly complex. In many respects, twentieth century military events in Europe and the East might be said to have produced a veritable explosion of travel writing. Leighton James has argued that memoirs focusing on the observation and experiences of British combatants in the Napoleonic Wars, and

one might add subsequent wars, have often been classified as "military history" and have therefore been overlooked by students of travel writing (see James 2009, n.p.). Military classics like T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926) and Robert Graves' *Good-Bye to All That* (1929), while not primarily regarded as works of travel writing, are among many obvious examples through which travel writing was enabled by war. Military service has long been regarded as an opportunity, in the familiar phrase, 'to see the world.' For the most part, though, at a time when more British than ever found themselves overseas in the services of King and Country, narratives touching on life at the front have often been classified as military memoirs.

Paul Fussell has observed that throughout the twenties and thirties – what he calls "the last age of travel writing" (1979, vii) – the self-imposed exile of many British authors who had hitherto not been particularly engaged in the genre produced a remarkably fruitful period in the literature of travel, engaging some of the most influential and high-earning literary labourers of the period. Although Fussell tends to overlook women travellers in his analysis, his belief that Britain provided some of the most interesting voices of the age can be seen from the many itinerant memoirs appearing from the London press in the years up to the Second World War: Freya Stark's *The Southern Gates of Arabia* (1936) (↗ 25 Freya Stark, Selected Works), W. H. Auden, *Letters from Iceland* (1937) and *Journey to a War* (1939) (↗ 26 W. H. Auden, *Journey to a War*); Robert Byron 's *The Road to Oxiana* (1937) (↗ 24 Robert Byron, *The Road to Oxiana*); George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1939); Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), to name a very few.

With the resumption of the peace in 1945, travel writing was ready to take on the market once again. After two world wars, the decline of empire, and the resulting modern outlook towards the world and its peoples there were major changes to the genre and its market. One of the biggest differences is that the modern concept of the professional author who travels to write would have been alien to some of the most celebrated travellers two hundred years ago, for whom the production of a book was an incidental (if sometimes predetermined) outcome of the journey. More recent celebrity writers – one thinks of Jan Morris, Dervla Murphy (↗ 28 Dervla Murphy, Selected Works), Bruce Chatwin, Paul Theroux, Bill Bryson – unlike their predecessors for whom travel writing was more of a coincidental, if sometimes predictable, result, can be seen as travellers to press deadlines and functionaries of an electronic media industry. In an age of increased professionalisation, by the 1950s a new kind of travel journalist had begun to appear. For over three decades, until the 1990s *Whicker's World* was essential TV viewing as its host, Alan Whicker, earned the reputation as the 'world's most travelled man.' The number of books written by Whicker was relatively slight compared to his television appearances, but in more recent years the popular TV series and documentary have almost invariably been part of a suite of products of which written content has been just one aspect. The extent to which for its author travel writing is now part of a multimedial profile is apparent in

the following description of one of the most successful writers of the genre by his publisher:

> Clive James is the author of more than forty books. As well as essays, he has published collections of literary and television criticism, travel writing, verse and novels, plus five volumes of autobiography [. . .]. As a television performer he appeared regularly for both the BBC and ITV, most notably as writer and presenter of the *Postcard* series of travel documentaries.
>
> (Author Page, Pan Macmillan Website)

Thus, for James and others, careers in travel writing are today embedded in other forms of celebrity: the latest best-selling travel title by Michael Palin is more likely to be the spin-off of a BBC television documentary by an ex-Python as a work in its own right.

In the meantime, the field of secondary travel literature continues to develop in accordance with the changing demands of the demography of travel. In the same way that the old-fashioned travel market cultivated by Murray's guidebooks eventually yielded its position as market leader to the more popular products of Baedeker, since the 1980s popular titles such as the Lonely Planet, launched in 1972 and the Rough Guide series (initiated in 1982 and aimed at the backpacker market) have come to dominate the guide book market. Both products, aimed at younger audiences, have developed into new parallel digital platforms, while still continuing to service the more traditional world of print. In the end, while travel blogs, Trip Advisor, and online travel advisories might appear to demonstrate a break with the past, it might be argued that, in attempting to keep one step ahead of changing demands, they represent one more stage in a process that began with the industrialisation of print over two centuries ago.

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