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**Armchair Geography:
Speculation, Synthesis, and the Culture
of British Exploration, c.1830–c.1870**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

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I affectionately dedicate this work to my late Grandad, a great lover of history (and reading in armchairs), who inspired in me a lifelong passion for learning, language and literature.

Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

Abstract

This thesis recovers the practice of ‘armchair geography’ as an overlooked, yet significant aspect of the mid-nineteenth-century culture of exploration. These histories are popularly associated with such famed explorers as Dr David Livingstone and John Hanning Speke, who travelled across Africa. Yet, far from the field, there were other geographers, like William Desborough Cooley and James MacQueen, who spoke, wrote, theorised, and produced maps about the world based not on their own observations, but on the collation, interpretation, speculation, and synthesis of existing geographical sources.

The dominant historical trope of geography through the nineteenth century is one of transition, shifting from an early modern textual practice of the ‘armchair’ to a modern science in the ‘field’. This thesis challenges such a limited view by demonstrating how critical practices continued to be a pervasive presence in the period 1830–1870, and how these two modes of geography co-existed and overlapped, and were combined and contested. It seeks to dismantle the static binarism that positions the critical geographer as both separate and in opposition to the field explorer. The chapters move to survey explorers that sit; explorers that read; critical geographers that move; books that travel; and libraries that lay out the world. In so doing, it identifies and attends to the unsettled physical and spatial boundaries between modes and methods of geography. It examines the role of the ‘armchair geographer’ in developing geographical thought and practice, and in negotiations concerning credible knowledge at the newly founded Royal Geographical Society.

Crucially, this thesis expands the history of ‘armchair’ practices in geography beyond an entertaining tale of ‘conflict’ in exploration, and presents a critical examination of the many spatial manifestations of the ‘field’ and ‘fieldwork’ in geography’s disciplinary identity. This thesis contributes a spatially sensitive account of geographical knowledge making that interrupts and challenges current histories of the development of geography as a field of knowledge and set of practices in the nineteenth century.

Abbreviations

BL – British Library, London.

HEH – Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

JRGS – Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London.

NLS – National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

RGS-IBG – Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers),
London.

RFB – The Library of Richard Francis Burton, HEH.

Chapter 1

Introduction



Figure 1.1. James Rennell, 'Sketch of the Northern Part of Africa: Exhibiting the Geographical Information collected by the African Association', 1790 © Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

In 1895, the President of the Royal Geographical Society, Sir Clements R. Markham, posed the question: 'Who was the first and greatest of English geographers?' His own considered response was to confer this accolade on Major James Rennell, first Surveyor-General to the East India Company of the Bengal Provinces.¹ Rennell was judged by Markham to embody the 'essential qualifications' of the 'perfect geographer'; an idealised construct of a highly skilled, acutely scholarly, and demonstrably scientific

¹ Clements R. Markham, *Major James Rennell and the Rise of Modern English Geography* (London: Cassell and Company, 1895), p. 9.

geographer, who held comparative ability, cartographic training, and travel experience.² Whilst presenting this ‘geographer’ as one who could seamlessly move between surveying in the field and synthesising in the study, Markham placed a clear emphasis on Rennell as a precise and methodical purveyor of an emerging modern geographical science. In Markham’s view, such technical skills could never be in the possession of ‘the life-long worker [confined] within the four walls of his study’.³

However, the seemingly hagiographic depiction of Rennell by Markham appeared in sharp contrast to the earlier ‘sneers’ of his contemporary, explorer and geologist, Joseph Thomson, who, in reference to Rennell never having travelled to Africa, labelled him an ‘arm-chair geographer’ of the continent.⁴ Markham contested such a claim as being a ‘strange misconception’ because, in his opinion, unlike Rennell, an ‘armchair’ geographer was someone who had no experience of travel or working in the field, had never suffered physical hardships, and was intolerant of the opinions of others.⁵ Whilst the casting of Rennell as the ‘modern’ scientific geographer has been appropriated into the narrative of the history of geography, so too arguably, has this notion of the ‘untravelling armchair geographer’ as an outmoded and antagonistic figure. Yet, in moving beyond the frame of Markham’s ‘perfect geographer’, the ambiguous position of Rennell, as hinted at by Thomson, becomes apparent. Indeed, the issue surrounding where and how Rennell conducted his geographical work has more recently come under critical scrutiny.⁶ Historians, such as Robert Mayhew, have come to reposition Rennell in the historiography of geographical knowledge and practice, not as

² Markham, *Major James Rennell*, p. 93. For more recent biographical accounts, see Alan Downes, ‘James Rennell 1741–1830’, in T. W. Freeman, Marguerita Oughton and Philippe Pinchemel (eds), *Geographers: Biobibliographical Studies, Volume 1* (London: Bloomsbury, 1977), pp. 83–88; Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Rennell, James (1742–1830)’, *The Oxford Companion to World Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), online edition, 2007 [<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195149227.001.0001/acref-9780195149227-e-0556>, accessed February 2015].

³ Markham, *Major James Rennell*, p. 93.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143; Joseph Thomson, *Mungo Park and the Niger* (London: George Philip & Son, 1890), p. 192.

⁵ Markham, *Major James Rennell*, p. 143.

⁶ Robert J. Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography: The Political Languages of British Geography, 1650–1850* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

the symbol ‘for the rise of modern geography’, but rather as a ‘transitional sort of ... geographer’ sat ‘on the cusp of modernity’.⁷

Rennell became a prominent figure in the rise of West African exploration during the late eighteenth century. Drawing on his distinguished practical background, he constructed maps, commented on explorers’ reports, and contributed his own theories to the great geographical debate of the time, the course and termination of the River Niger. Critically though, he did not travel to Africa to substantiate his claims. As a consequence of a severe injury sustained in northern Bengal, Rennell had been forced to partially withdraw from his earlier active labour. This marked a change in his focus, away from surveying in the field to working in the study on his theoretical maps of Africa. His study at 23 Suffolk Street, London, had become his site of textual exploration and historical elucidation, where he read, wrote, and formed his geographies. This was more than simply a physical relocation, but was a re-siting of Rennell’s working practices.

Through critically re-reading his geographical works and examining the interstitial space between his pencil and paper, a more complex and entangled tale of geography as a field of knowledge and set of practices is revealed. Rennell did not physically survey Africa, but rather he recovered, compiled, and compared classical histories, Arab accounts, the recent accounts of European explorers, and testimonies from those he believed to be the ‘best informed amongst the travelled *natives*’.⁸ In forming his African geography, he melded methods and objectives that were traditionally seen as belonging to separate modes of enquiry: the textual and speculative practices of ‘early modern’ geography and the ocular demonstration of ‘modern’ science.

⁷ Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography*, p. 202.

⁸ James Rennell, ‘Construction of the Map of Africa’, 1790, cited in Robin Hallett (ed.), *Records of the African Association 1788–1831* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1964), pp. 246–248, p. 247 [italicised by author].

The contrast between the biographical formations of Rennell leads one to question the figure of the ‘geographer’ at the turn of the nineteenth century and to re-examine what this classifying term meant in this formative period of science; whether it was one who was ‘an explorer by sea and land, a map compiler, a physical geographer, a critical and comparative geographer ... a hydrographer’, or a combination of all of these practices.⁹ The early nineteenth century is characterised as an unsettled period, said to be on the ‘margins’ between Enlightenment humanism and modern empiricism.¹⁰ The central concern of this thesis is to extend this view and expound how speculative knowledge and synthetic surveys produced and advanced from the armchair continued to be pervasive features into the latter part of the century, as opposed to being simply remnants of an earlier age. In so doing, it is not the intention to premise this sketching of Rennell and the contours of this proto-disciplinary debate as a point of transition, as argued by Mayhew.¹¹ Rather, it is to embrace the liminality between practices in a bid to understand the contemporaneous relationship between travel and sedentary scholarship in the formation of geographical knowledge, and the different embodiments and spatial manifestations of the ‘modern geographer’.

The wider scientific and political context in which Rennell was operating in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a critical moment in the development and convergence of exploratory and imperial endeavours that would serve to institutionalise geography in Britain. These impulses were drawn to Africa and its many rivers, which had long eluded accurate description, to become what Philip D. Curtin has termed the ‘classic age of West African exploration’.¹² Many of these interests found

⁹ These are the many sides of the ‘science of geography’ according to Markham, *Major James Rennell*, preface.

¹⁰ Charles W. J. Withers, ‘On Enlightenment’s Margins: Geography, Imperialism and Mapping in Central Asia, c.1798–c.1838’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 39 (2013), pp. 3–18.

¹¹ Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography*, p. 202.

¹² Curtin dates this ‘age’ as the period 1790–1830, see Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Actions, 1780–1850, Volume 1* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), p. 206.

form in the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, founded in 1788, which has been seen as an ‘important albeit less formal stage in the creation of a geographical community’.¹³ Dominated by the powerful organiser of science, naturalist and traveller Sir Joseph Banks, this was a private organisation populated by ‘wealthy and influential men’ who sponsored expeditions with the view to improve European knowledge of African geography and its potential markets.¹⁴ This represented one part of a wider emerging network of collecting and disseminating geographical knowledge that comprised humanitarian institutions, such as the African Institution, and the sponsoring of geographical ‘discovery’ and exploration by the Admiralty and its Hydrographic Department.¹⁵

Rennell was physically positioned at the centre of this thriving salon scene in London and soon became one of the highest authorities on travel.¹⁶ He was appointed as the ‘resident geographical consultant’ to the Association, charged with compiling a series of maps and surveys to accompany their publications and elucidating and graphically demonstrating the routes of their sponsored expeditions, such as Mungo Park’s first journey to Africa.¹⁷ He began by showcasing the state of knowledge at the inception of the Society within their first *Proceedings* in 1790 (Figure 1.1). This was then ‘corrected’ in 1798 and again in 1802 in accordance with explorers’ reports. These maps made visible the intertwining of knowledge spaces as the observations of the Association’s travellers from the field was reinforced and made credible by the work of

¹³ Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography*, p. 196.

¹⁴ Hallett (ed.), *Records of the African Association*, p. 15. See also, Robin Hallett, *The Penetration of Africa: European Exploration in North and West Africa to 1815* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965).

¹⁵ The African Institution was founded in 1807, see Wayne Ackerson, *The African Institution (1807–1827) and the Antislavery Movement in Great Britain* (Ceredigion: Mellen Press, 2005). On the organisation of scientific exploration in nineteenth-century Britain, see Robert A. Stafford, ‘Scientific Exploration and Empire’, in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 222–238.

¹⁶ Michael T. Bravo, ‘Precision and Curiosity in Scientific Travel: James Rennell and the Orientalist Geography of the New Imperial Age (1760–1830)’, in Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés (eds), *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), pp. 162–183, p. 173.

¹⁷ Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Geography, Enlightenment and the Book: Authorship and Audience in Mungo Park’s African Texts’, in Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers (eds), *Geographies of the Book* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 191–220, p. 202.

Rennell in his London study.¹⁸ They also illuminate the role and labour of this particular ‘geographer’ at the turn of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Rennell saw the endeavours of the Association as being about confirming his theoretical claims, and not celebrating on the spot ‘discovery’.¹⁹ This demonstrates how geography at this time was a dynamic practice which was not simply synonymous with ‘travel’ or exploration, but employed multiple representational strategies and spatial constructions to enumerate and describe the world. Rennell’s own response to the elusive state of being a ‘geographer’ was that, as far as he ‘understood the subject, I always thought that the best historian is the best geographer ... For after all, whence does the geographer derive his Materials, but from the labours of the historian?’²⁰

Whilst many of his conclusions were wrong, Rennell’s ‘Geographical Illustrations’ were among the most significant geographical writings of the age for shaping ideas about Africa. The African Association lent immediate institutional support to his maps and thus enabled them to transform ‘conjecture into certainty’.²¹ When contemporary critical geographer James MacQueen challenged Rennell’s depiction of the termination of the River Niger, his contribution was viewed with scepticism.²² Despite MacQueen’s

¹⁸ The maps and their accompanying cartographic memoirs appeared in African Association, *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa* (London: Printed by C. Macrae, 1790); *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa; Containing an Abstract of Mr Park’s Account of his Travels and Observations, Abridged from his own Minutes by Bryan Edwards, Esq. Also, Geographical Illustrations of Mr Park’s Journey, and of North Africa, at large by Major Rennell* (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1798); *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa: Containing a Journal of F. Horneman and Geographical Illustrations of Mr Horneman’s Route and Additions to the General Geography of North Africa by Major Rennell*, 2 vols (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1802).

¹⁹ Withers, ‘Geography, Enlightenment and the Book’, p. 207.

²⁰ James Rennell, ‘Letter from Major Rennell to Dr Robertson, London, 2 July 1791’, in William Robertson, *The History of Scotland: During the Reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI, Until his Accession to the Crown of England: With a Review of the Scottish History Previous to that Period: and an Appendix Containing Original Papers, Volume 1* (London: Printed by A. Strahan for T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1802), pp. 130-131, p. 131.

²¹ Matthew H. Edney, ‘Reconsidering Enlightenment Geography and Map Making: Reconnaissance, Mapping, Archive’, in David N. Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers (eds), *Geography and Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 165-198, p. 187.

²² Rennell had advanced an inland termination theory and MacQueen challenged this with his correct claim that the River Niger terminated in the Atlantic Ocean between the Bights of Benin and Biafra. See, James MacQueen, ‘A Map of Africa North of the Parallel of 7° South Latitude. Glasgow 6 June 1820’, in James MacQueen, *A Geographical and Commercial View of Northern Central Africa, Containing a Particular Account of the Course and Termination of the Great River Niger in the Atlantic Ocean* (Edinburgh: Printed for

map eventually being confirmed correct by direct observation, he was not buttressed by the same weighty authority through Banks' circle as Rennell and his maps were, leaving this 'armchair' geographer marginalised in comparison to Rennell in this history.²³

However, as Rennell formed his geography from an intertextual web of discursive practices, coloured by strokes of speculation and synthesis in the repose of his Suffolk Street office, the transformation of circumnavigation from 'hit-and-miss adventuring to orchestrated expedition' was also underway.²⁴ The wider European Enlightenment context for geographical discovery saw the emergence of the 'prototypical modern scientific traveller', with Captain James Cook and his eighteenth-century voyages to the Pacific, and Alexander von Humboldt's travels to South America (1799–1804).²⁵ This expansion of knowledge was met with the emergence of geographical societies in Paris (1821) and Berlin (1828). The Royal Geographical Society in Britain was inaugurated in 1830 and this marks a significant point of departure for this study, particularly as it coincided with the final settling of the Niger problem.²⁶ Despite MacQueen having already offered the correct solution to the question of its course and termination, the RGS awarded their first Gold Medal to explorer Richard Lander in 1832 for this achievement. From the outset this appears to suggest that geography was shifting away from being a textual subject in the study, to one located

William Blackwood, 1821), opposite frontispiece. For a comparison of the methodologies and textual sources used by Rennell and MacQueen, see David Lambert, *Mastering the Niger: James MacQueen's African Geography and the Struggle over Atlantic Slavery* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), especially Chapter 1.

²³ For a discussion of the problems that MacQueen had in winning acceptance for his claims, see Charles W. J. Withers, 'Mapping the Niger, 1798–1832: Trust, Testimony and 'Ocular Demonstration' in the Late Enlightenment', *Imago Mundi*, 52, (2004), pp. 170-193.

²⁴ David N. Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 126.

²⁵ James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew, 'Introduction: The Far Side of the Ocean', in James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew (eds), *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1-28, p. 4. On Cook, see David Mackay, *In the Wake of Cook: Exploration, Science and Empire, 1780–1801* (London: Croom Helm, 1985). On Humboldt, see Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, The Last Hero of Science* (London: John Murray, 2015).

²⁶ The Royal Geographical Society is hereafter referred to as RGS.

and practised in the ‘field’, as the opinions of the ‘cabinet-bound’ geographers ‘became increasingly obsolete and scarcely interesting’.²⁷

With 1830 also being the year that Rennell passed away after he ‘slipped from an arm-chair’, there appears to be a poetic symbolism to his death.²⁸ As a martyr to exploration from the armchair, his death could be viewed as marking the break from comparative textual geography to embracing the new methodological reforms concurrent with the rise of modern empiricism. Yet this thesis argues that this was not a decisive point at which an ‘old’ mode of geography was superseded by a ‘new’ mode, as it will be shown that critical practices were not a residual presence, but were pervasive in this formative period of geographical science. This is where this study into the history of geography begins as this thesis focuses on the complex and entangled relations between the practices and places of the geographical practitioner, geographical knowledge, and cultures of exploration in the nineteenth century.

Sitting in the Shadow of the Explorer: On ‘modern geography’ and the nineteenth-century culture of British exploration

The aim of this thesis is to challenge our understanding of how geographical knowledge of the wider world was made in the nineteenth century, revealing a far more complex history than has previously been presented. The dominant historical trope of geography through the nineteenth century is that of transition, with its epistemological approach being seen to have shifted from the textual geography of the Enlightenment to an increasingly modern, scientific discipline emphasising field observation. As such, textual practices that took place in the study are typically understood as being leftovers from an

²⁷ Anne Godlewska, *Geography Unbound: French Geographic Science from Cassini to Humboldt* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), p. 6.

²⁸ Markham, *Major James Rennell*, p. 222.

early modern age and contributions made from the ‘armchair’ to the construction of geographies during this period have been mostly effaced.²⁹ Its histories are commonly associated with famed explorers such as Dr David Livingstone and John Hanning Speke, who travelled across Africa. Critically, this thesis seeks to expose these accounts as limited and insufficient. Rather, it shows how the sedentary practice of critical geography continued to play a crucial role in the expansion of geographical knowledge, the development of its methodological procedures, and the promotion of exploration. Far from the field, there remained other geographers, such as William Desborough Cooley and MacQueen, who spoke, wrote, theorised, and produced maps about the world based not on their own observations, but from the collation, interpretation and synthesis of existing sources, as well as through analogy, hypothesis, speculation and downright guesswork.³⁰

Couched in the wider intellectual and institutional context of the changing politics of science, with the rise of specialised, ‘professional’ sciences, this study draws out contemporary understandings of what constituted the nascent science of ‘geography’ and who could lay claim to the title of ‘geographer’.³¹ Such a discursive and epistemic reconstruction enables the crucial question to be raised as to whether ‘geography’ was firmly positioned as a practice in the field – physically engaging in the

²⁹ On ‘early modern geography’, see Robert J. Mayhew, ‘The Character of English Geography, c.1660–1800: A Textual Approach’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 24 (1998) pp. 285-412; ‘The Effacement of Early Modern Geography (c.1600–1850): A Historiographical Essay’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 25 (2001), pp. 383-401. This is addressed in more detail in Chapter 2.

³⁰ For biographical treatments of prominent ‘armchair geographers’, see Roy C. Bridges, ‘W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography in the Nineteenth Century: Part I: Cooley’s Contribution to the Geography of Eastern Africa’, *Geographical Journal*, 142 (1976) pp. 27-47; ‘W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography in the Nineteenth Century: Part II: Cooley’s Attitudes and Achievements’, *Geographical Journal*, 142 (1976) pp. 274-286; O. F. G. Sitwell, ‘John Pinkerton: An Armchair Geographer of the Early Nineteenth Century’, *The Geographical Journal*, 138 (1972), pp. 470-479; Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*.

³¹ On the changes occurring in science in the nineteenth century, see Morris Berman, *Social Change and Scientific Organisation: The Royal Institution, 1799–1844* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978); Ian Inkster and Jack Morrell (eds), *Metropolis and Province: Science in British Culture, 1780–1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); Bernard Lightman (ed.), *Victorian Science in Context* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997); William C. Lubenow, *‘Only Connect’: Learned Societies in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2015).

act of travel – or in the study – accumulating the facts of travel. In doing so, the focus is on the places of geographical investigation and how they present diverse spaces of knowledge production, through the individuals who worked within them, the methods they employed, and the knowledge battles they fought. A closer reading is therefore needed to resituate the materials used and the products produced by armchair practitioners within broader social and political structures and to uncover their authors' way of looking at the world. In turn, consideration is given to how armchair geographers produced knowledge about the world without exploring it, and how they challenged the claims of those who had.

This study is inherently interdisciplinary, taking a contextual and constructivist approach that both draws on and contributes to developing strands in the historiography of geographical thought and practice: critical histories of geography; histories of science; historical geography; travel writing; and histories of empire and exploration. This intellectual context forms the key theoretical framework for reformulating the conventional opposition between field science and theoretical knowledge in nineteenth-century geography. Whilst this thesis does not seek to write a history of nineteenth-century geographical practice, it does seek to offer a critical and timely reinterpretation of the essentialist claims of how geographical knowledge developed in this period. It does this by asserting that textual practices and field methodologies coexisted and, in many cases, overlapped. This will be explored in four aspects of geography's history: the distinction between the 'armchair' and the 'field'; the role of 'armchair geographers' in developing geographical thought and practice; the presence and purpose of armchair geography in debates about exploration; and the negotiations concerning credible knowledge. As a result, this thesis enables a reflection on the wider 'culture of exploration' at work in the history of geographical science.

In drawing out these spatial and epistemic tensions between field exploration and sedentary geography, the discussions centre on the altered state of science during this period, the formation of specialist ‘geographical’ societies, such as the RGS in 1830 and the Hakluyt Society in 1846, and the attempts to solve the hydrographical mysteries of Central and East Africa. Whilst the history of the RGS’s foundation is somewhat contested, the Society played a central role in organising geographical science, promoting knowledge of distant places, and driving exploratory relations in the middle of the century, and has thus been associated with the wider British imperial project. One significant manifestation of this was the practical and ideological imperative to map Africa.³²

Although maritime discovery had advanced and led to the outlines of continental landmasses to be delineated, the interior of Africa remained largely a blank on the map. Following Enlightenment principles and the ‘positivist’ cartographic practice of Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville, cartographers, compilers, and comparative geographers often left the region south of classical authority Claudius Ptolemy’s fictitious ‘Mountains of the Moon’, empty of any topographical inscription or markings. John Pinkerton in his 1818 ‘Map of Africa’ provocatively labelled the blank as ‘unknown parts’ (Figure 1.2). The debates that ensued as to its contents are the best exemplification of ‘the eternal Renaissance dialogue between ancient authority and modern experience’.³³ This erasure of hearsay information or questionable testimony that had previously shaped European knowledge about the African interior came to be seen as little more than ‘speculative placeholders for the scientific knowledge that could come only from trained

³² For studies on how maps were implicated in imperialism and colonial projects, see Matthew E. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); D. Graham Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography and British El Dorado* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000); James R. Akerman (ed.), *The Imperial Map: Cartography and the Mastery of Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*.

³³ Francesc Relaño, *The Shaping of Africa: Cosmographic Discourse and Cartographic Science in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), p. 14.

European explorers'.³⁴ The epistemological differences in how to produce geographical knowledge and what was considered geographical knowledge continued throughout the nineteenth century and these came to be demonstrated in explicit tensions that John N. L. Baker has characterised as a 'violent clash between theory and fact'.³⁵

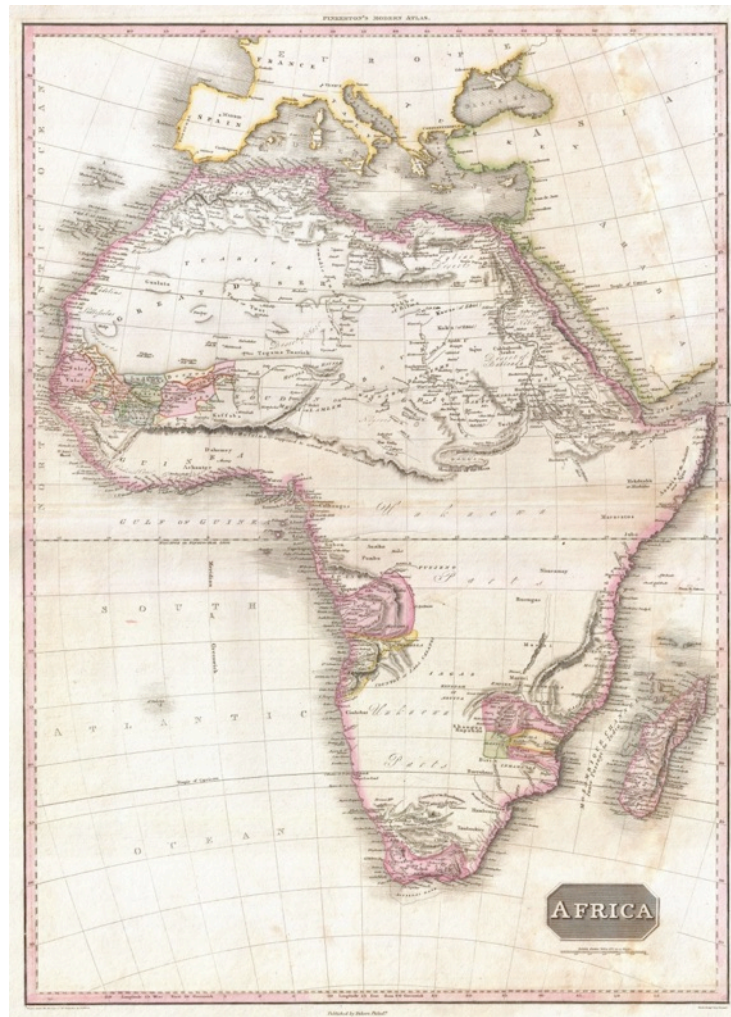


Figure 1.2. John Pinkerton, 'Map of Africa', 1818. From J. A. Pinkerton, *A Modern Atlas, from the Latest and Best Authorities, Exhibiting the Various Divisions of the World with its Chief Empires, Kingdoms, and States* (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson Edition, 1818). Courtesy of Geographicus Rare Antique Maps.

³⁴ Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 14.

³⁵ John N. L. Baker, 'Sir Richard Burton and the Nile Sources', *English Historical Review*, 59 (1944), pp. 48-61, p. 49.

As the century progressed, the ‘unexplored’ spaces on European maps were rapidly colonised with the lines of expeditionary routes taken and the names of the explorers who had penetrated the interior, recasting the topography as one of European authority.³⁶ Drawing on the romance and tragedy of Joseph Conrad, these explorers have been cast as the central proponents of ‘Geography Militant’, being ‘adventurous and devoted men ... conquering a bit of truth here and a bit of truth there’ to show the complex ways in which practices of exploration were implicated in forms of imperial power.³⁷ From the 1850s, under the Presidency of Roderick Impey Murchison, the RGS set upon an exploratory programme that made East Africa a key focus of its interest; sought to promote its explorers as celebrated public figures; and worked to persuade the government of the political importance of scientific exploration. Exploration was no longer merely a ‘knowledge producing’ practice, but it came to be an ideological and imperial enterprise that was defined by the imperative of active movement into and through the field.³⁸

The emerging western discourse of geographical science came to find visceral form in the body of the ‘explorer’.³⁹ It can be seen here in this ubiquitous image of RGS explorers John Hanning Speke and James Augustus Grant on their expedition to East Africa in search of the elusive source of the Nile (Figure 1.3). They are positioned triumphantly in the field, surrounded by the technical ‘tools’ of a practical and militant geography. Grant is captured sat, mid-observation, inscribing the scene in front of him onto the page, and Speke is shown with a rifle by his side. Together these are clear

³⁶ For example, see William Winwood Reade, ‘Map of African Literature’, in William Winwood Reade, *The African Sketchbook*, 2 vols, vol. 2 (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1873). For more on the projection and representation of British imperial power in Africa, see John McAleer, *Representing Africa: Landscape, Exploration and Empire in Southern Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

³⁷ Joseph Conrad, ‘Geography and Some Explorers’, in Harold Ray Stevens and J. H. Stape (eds), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad: Last Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 3-17, p. 12. The essay was originally published with the title ‘The Romance of Travel’, as a general introduction to a serial work entitled ‘Countries of the World’, no. 1 (1924), pp. 1-100.

³⁸ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, p. 1.

³⁹ On the contested history of the term ‘explorer’ and its emergence in the nineteenth century, see Adriana Craciun, ‘What is an Explorer?’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 45 (2011), pp. 29-51.

visual statements of method and of the technical skills that set the explorer apart from the mere traveller. Other iterations of this image show Speke as a solitary figure, pocket chronometer in his hand, a sextant and artificial horizon at his feet, and a rifle by his side.⁴⁰ Whilst these were tools for maintaining ‘positional consciousness’ in the field, their prominence in these representations supported the ideological image of the explorer in a particular cultural consciousness during the mid to late nineteenth century that was being cultivated by editors, institutional sponsors, and political factions.⁴¹ These images circulated, alongside accounts of expeditions, beyond the meeting rooms of metropolitan sponsors and into the public sphere through their exposition in broader popular culture. Such representational practices were part of what Felix Driver styles a modern ‘culture of exploration’. This involved the mobilisation of people, resources, ideas, images, and practices across many different spatial, social, and scientific registers, thereby denoting the multitude of practices and discursive constructions at work in the production and consumption of exploratory voyages.⁴²

Facilitated by a growing imperial infrastructure, the effect of this increasing western mobility on the discursive terrain of geographical science saw the imposition of a division between the modern, progressive, enlightening work of the mediating explorer and the stasis of the sedentary, stay-at-home man of science. The ‘contest’ between the explorer leading the ‘active life’ and the sedentary geographer contemplating and ‘languidly discoursing on theoretical and speculative geographies from a comfortable seat’ has become a great trope in modern literature on exploration, casting a long shadow in the histories of geography during this period.⁴³ Yet sitting

⁴⁰ See John Hanning Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London: William Blackwood, 1864), frontispiece. For further discussion, see David Finkelstein, *The House of Blackwood: Author-Publisher Relations in the Victorian Era* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2003), especially Chapter 3.

⁴¹ Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed*, p. 103.

⁴² Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 8-10.

⁴³ Felix Driver, ‘The Active Life: The Explorer as Biographical Subject’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), online edition, January 2016 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/94053>, accessed March 2016].

behind this shadow, obscured by this rhetoric, are the many bundles of movement and non-movement that produced geographical knowledge and this study seeks to bring them to light.

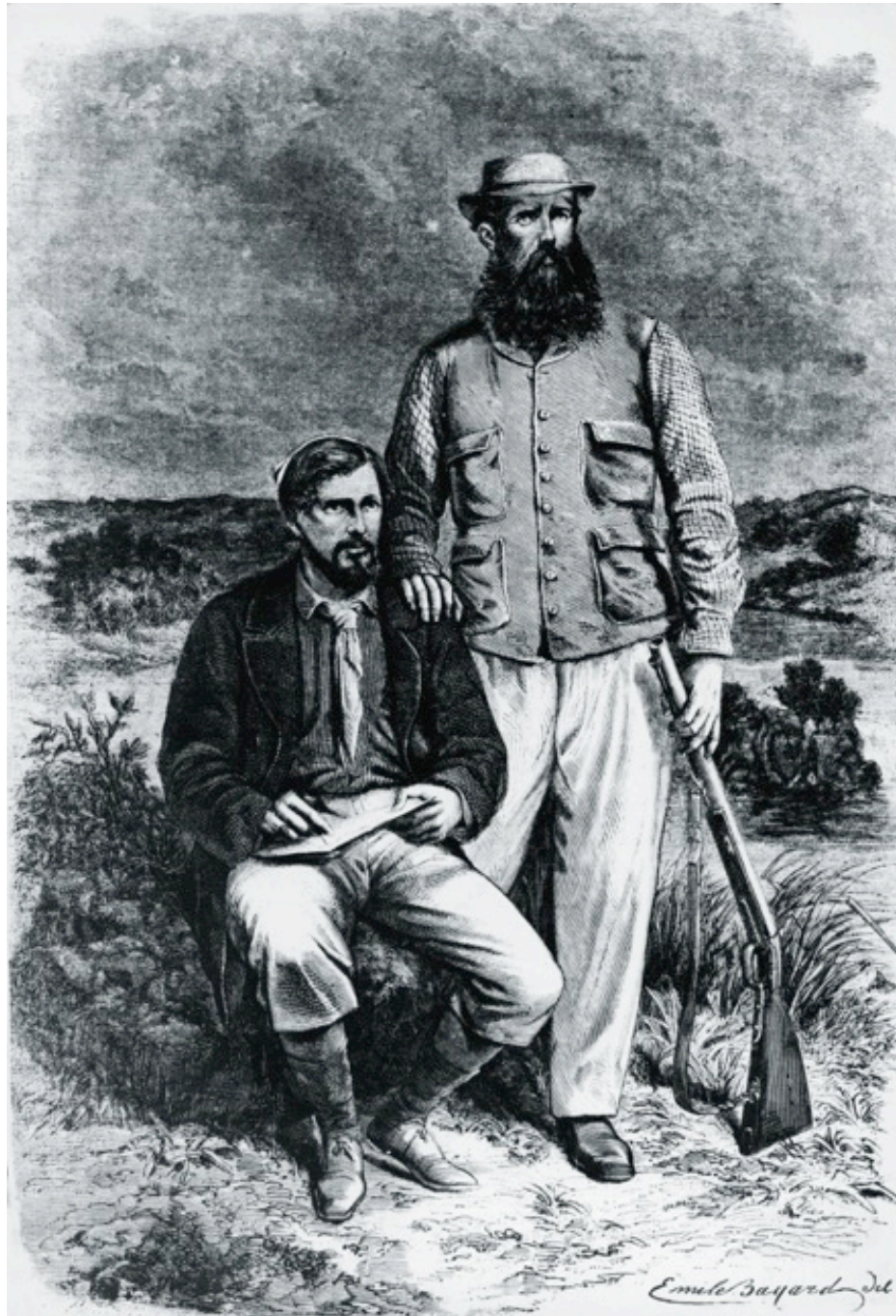


Figure 1.3. Explorers John Hanning Speke and James Augustus Grant, engraving by Emile-Antoine Bayard, *Le Tour du Monde*, 9 (1864), p. 27. Courtesy of De Agostini Picture Library.

In order to attend to these critical concerns, this thesis is chronologically situated in the liminal period between Rennell's death in 1830 and the promotion of these strong images of the scientific traveller up to the 1870s, at the height of debates concerning African geography and the search for the elusive source of the Nile. As such, this study is bookended by two imagined portrayals of 'modern' geographical science – from the geographer compiling knowledge in the study to textually fill in the blanks on the map, to the scientific explorer in the 'field' physically conquering the blanks – and seeks to more critically conceptualise the practices occurring within this period. This study argues that there is a need to complicate what is meant by 'armchair geography', as the received conceptualisation of this as being simply those who did not travel is insufficient and indiscriminating.

Whilst the critical lens of the 'culture of exploration' reveals the wider arena of Victorian attitudes to expeditions and the commercial processes of travel writing, this thesis also engages with recent significant work on 'exploration as practice'.⁴⁴ Where once Joseph Conrad heralded triumphantly that 'of all the sciences, geography finds its origin in action', studies have begun to break down this adventurous action into the many specific motions, postures, positions, places, and peoples that made geographical science happen.⁴⁵ Specifically, the recent recasting of exploration in histories of geography and histories of science militates against the romanticised narratives of the heroic and tragic lone explorer who set out to conquer harsh climates and natures. These re-evaluations of what exploration was are beginning to illuminate the multiple histories, diverse geographies, and material forms of its practice.⁴⁶ Attention has been drawn to the wider scientific network at work between the blank space in material reality

⁴⁴ Dane Kennedy, 'British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey', *History Compass*, 5 (2007), pp. 1879-1900.

⁴⁵ Conrad, 'Geography and Some Explorers', p. 3.

⁴⁶ Dane Kennedy (ed.), *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). These histories of broader cultures of encounter, the role of local knowledge, and material infrastructures are addressed in Chapter 2.

and its imagined geography back home. This can be clearly observed in the image of Grant and Speke. Whilst revealing the range of embodied practices that constituted geographical knowledge, it obscures the ‘correspondence between various forms of knowledge’.⁴⁷ Indeed, Grant could be holding a piece of speculative geography formed in the study and taken into the field, in order to compare what he saw with what he held in his hand. This precipitates a need to more definitively account for the networks and flows of information, knowledge, people, and objects. It prompts a research agenda to layer this topography over with the other names and research communities implicitly involved to illustrate how geographical practice was interconnected and how ideas travelled, even if the author of them did not. African exploration was not reducible to the moment of physical encounter itself, but rather an expedition occurred across a multitude of spaces: from distant metropolitan sites where they were planned to the circulation of information in reports sent from the field, and from the instructions written at home to the transformation of knowledge as it was distributed, dissected, and digested through many different public, scientific, and commercial channels.

The overall approach taken within this thesis is therefore to focus on the actions and practices of nineteenth-century self-proclaimed geographers and their particular sites of study. This thesis is not a historical narrative of what happened to ‘armchair geography’ during this period through the presentation of specific case studies of sedentary geographers, but rather, it offers a broader perspective on the sites of where exploration and discovery occurred in order to reveal how the relationship between the field and the armchair was far from physically distinct. As such, this study works to challenge the binary division that has been constructed between them. Whilst the contrast between knowledges of the field and the study is not a novel discussion, this thesis departs from other works to examine what the presence of ‘armchair geography’

⁴⁷ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 20.

can reveal about the practice of geography and its attendant culture of exploration in mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁸ It serves to enhance wider epistemological shifts around scientific credibility, instruments of authority, and truth throughout this period. The critical contribution of this thesis therefore goes beyond filling a blank in histories of geography and prompts a re-examination of geographical-knowledge making in this period, questioning how we have come to think of the historical development of geography as a field of knowledge and set of practices.

Directions: Route through the thesis

Chapter 2 positions this thesis in relation to the intellectual field it draws from and the historiographies to which it contributes. It works to highlight and understand the gaps in current knowledge about ‘armchair’ practices and textual modes of geography. It shows how work in histories of geography, histories of science, and historical geographies of science informs the theoretical route followed through this thesis and its central concern with spaces of knowledge: their constructed boundaries and situated practices. It signposts the direction taken in the subsequent chapters, as each one attends to a different spatial context.

Chapter 3 broadly traces the ongoing debates surrounding the purported spatial and physical distinctions between the active explorer and the sedentary scholar. Central to this discussion is the combative relationship between two contrasting geographers, armchair critic William Desborough Cooley and missionary explorer Dr David Livingstone. Drawing on recent work in mobility studies, the chapter seeks to understand the complex constructions of the ‘field’ and the ‘cabinet’ by examining how

⁴⁸ For example, see Dorinda Outram, ‘On being Perseus: New Knowledge, Dislocation, and Enlightenment Exploration’, in Withers and Livingstone (eds), *Geography and Enlightenment*, pp. 281-294; ‘New Spaces in Natural History’, in Nicholas Jardine, James Secord, and Emma Spary (eds), *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 249-265.

each space and the bodily movements occurring within them were materially constituted, culturally represented, and physically experienced. In viewing how Livingstone sat in the field and Cooley travelled in his ‘easy chair’, the chapter unsettles the distinction between these two spaces as being sites of either movement, in the case of the field, or non-movement, as with the cabinet.

Chapter 4 repositions the discussion within the Council Rooms of the RGS. Its central consideration is the first twenty years of the Society’s activities, which are often glossed over in historical accounts of the institution (1830–1850). They are brought to the fore to show that the speculations of the critical geographer were present from its foundation. In identifying the prominence of ‘speculative geography’, it traces the claims of Cooley from their conception in the cabinet, through to their realisation with the first RGS sponsored expedition to south-eastern Africa in 1834. This chapter gives voice to the two heated debates that followed the expedition, concerning the focus and purpose of geographical ‘labour’ at the RGS. It further shows the significance of sedentary practices in the Society’s early years by uncovering the underlying tensions that existed as to its purpose in defining and developing specific scientific and scholarly practices of geography, alongside supporting and promoting large-scale expeditions.

Chapter 5 concentrates on a significant consequence of the debates at the RGS: the formation of a ‘rival’ geographical society, the Hakluyt Society, in 1846. This was a reaction to what was seen as a deliberate negation on the part of the RGS to furnish a central geographical library, thereby depriving its members of the knowledge they sought. The chapter examines how the Hakluyt Society sought to redress these critical concerns through the preparation and publication of past voyages and travels. It concentrates on the role of the ‘editor’ and engages with the process of ‘editing’ the Hakluyt Society First Series (1847–1899). The chapter reveals how Hakluyt editors saw their work as a form of geographical labour – a wearying ‘travail’ – that required a

combination of both physical and intellectual exertion. Through attention to the paratextual apparatus constructed by individual editors, it is shown how they often framed their volumes as more than simply travel stories, instead compiling critical sources of geographical knowledge to present a textual tool for the sedentary surveyor, and, in the case of editor Richard Francis Burton, a completely new travel narrative.

Chapter 6 builds on the critical potential of books as ‘tools’ of travel, by accompanying the ‘travelling library’ of explorer Richard Francis Burton on his East Africa Expedition (1856–1859) and back into his study in Trieste, Italy. In opening up the understudied personal library of Burton, this chapter provides a novel perspective to the popular presentation of this intriguing character, famed in the history of geography for his active involvement in exploration and debates surrounding fieldwork. Through engaging with how Burton read and annotated his books, it offers a critical reconsideration of what is known about the materiality of travel and the place of reading and writing in forming geographies both in the field and in the cabinet. In so doing, this chapter complicates what is known about ‘explorers’ by showing Burton to be a bookish man.

The final chapter uses the facets of geographical science, as identified in each of the earlier chapters, and applies them to the debate surrounding the discovery of the elusive lakes of Central and East Africa. Situated in the debating halls of the RGS, Chapter 7 is an exhibition of the critical and tense dialogues that occurred between and within the metropolitan community of speculative geographers and recently returned field explorers. Its central concern is whether the increasing influx of observations and measurements from contemporary expeditions in the 1850s and 1860s signalled the retreat of armchair geography in the face of the field. It presents a series of maps, and the tussles that occurred around them, in order to draw out the marginalisation and eventual collapse of confidence in Cooley as a geographer. Yet, it also argues that the

social and scientific demise of Cooley was not the defeat of armchair geography as an entire practice by highlighting the continuing presence of critical geographers, namely Burton, James MacQueen, Charles Tilstone Beke, and Alexander George Findlay, within the debates over African exploration into the late 1860s.

Notes on Sources

In order to attend to the varying spaces and scales of geographical knowledge present in this thesis, a wide range of source materials are drawn upon. Whilst many of the published works cited herein have been disregarded as factually incorrect, they are exhumed here for an examination of how the ideas they contain were formed and presented. Despite not being the product of physical travel, the publications and maps of critical and comparative geography present an intertextual web of textual and oral testimonies that can be drawn out to reanimate the layers of reading and textual criticism that constituted their construction. An intertextual approach is taken within this thesis to the textual and cartographic products in order to trace the sources of armchair claims from and into other texts and maps. This makes lucid the epistemic transformations that took place in the making of geographical knowledge and the wider scientific context in which they were projected.⁴⁹ These maps and texts are not subject to a critical deconstruction as this is not a study of representation, but one of practice. As such, these sources are mobilised for how they help to illuminate the scientific practice of geography as one that was contested and spatially variegated.

Analysis of discussions occurring beyond texts enables the examination of the relations between differing forms of geographical labour. The presence of critical

⁴⁹ Such intertextual approaches are advanced in Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan (eds), *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992). On critical cartography and 'cartographic discourse', see J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, edited by Paul Laxton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

geographers within debates, and in shaping policies and procedures, can be drawn out from the minute books of the RGS Council and the *Proceedings* of their meetings. Whilst the content of this material does not always offer a complete picture of the exact conversations that occurred, it is possible to discern who was in attendance and what motions were made, or the topic of a paper that was read to the room. The wider social network of collaboration, patronage, and conflict within the emerging geographical community is animated through the lively correspondence between geographers. A fuller picture of the reception to speculative geographical claims is gained by engaging with periodicals, particularly the *Athenaeum*, *Punch*, and the *Quarterly Review*, which many geographers avidly contributed to, and voiced fuller and more critical opinions than are documented in the minutes of RGS meetings.

Whilst armchair geography has been seen as an immaterial and cerebral practice that occurred in interior isolation, the sources presented and interrogated here show how this was, in fact, a materially rich practice. Attention is therefore directed to these texts, not simply for their content, but for the intertextual and paratextual traces that other histories have overlooked or left behind.⁵⁰ The marginal note or the scribble on a map becomes significant in identifying the actions and moments of method that formed practices of cabinet ‘textwork’. This examination reaches beyond the finished, published text to reveal acts of construction, methodological approach, and particular instruments that are used. Indeed, just like field exploration, armchair geography left marks on the ground, and this thesis seeks to trace these journeys across the page and reconstruct these travels through text.

⁵⁰ For the seminal work on paratext, see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Chapter 2

Locating the Field: Historical geographies of geography

The historiographical analysis of geography as a science, discipline, discourse, and practice has changed significantly during the past half-century, reflecting broader transformations within the history of science, cultural studies, historical geography, and material culture. Where the history of geography began with uncritical notions of what ‘geography’ was, and hagiographic portraits of its ‘great men’ it has, particularly since the 1980s, begun to explain the multiple contexts shaping and forging the geographical theories, discourses, and practices that have constituted the ‘discipline’ at different times and in different places. Historians of geography have attempted to move ‘away from paradigmatic notions of change and conceptions of “grand theory”’ to more critically attend to the specific contexts and situated circumstances of geography’s making.¹ This ‘spatial turn’ informs the discussion of this chapter and its understanding of the history of nineteenth-century geography. Whilst David N. Livingstone stated that it was somewhat ‘disquieting’ and ‘ironic’ that ‘so little account of the spatial’ had been taken in histories of geography, this underdeveloped awareness of the ‘spaces’ of geography has begun to be redressed.² These partial stories are outlined to uncover the historiographical debates about the nature of geography, with a specific focus on its practices and where these were located.

¹ Charles W. J. Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland since 1520* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 7; David R. Stoddart, ‘The Paradigm Concept and the History of Geography’ in David R. Stoddart (ed.), *Geography, Ideology and Social Concern* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 70-80; Anne Buttimer, ‘On People, Paradigms and ‘Progress’ in Geography’, in Stoddart (ed.), *Geography, Ideology and Social Concern*, pp. 81-98.

² David N. Livingstone, ‘The Spaces of Knowledge: Contributions towards a Historical Geography of Science’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 13 (1995), pp. 3-34. p. 5.

In attempting to discern a historical geography of geographical practice as it came to be understood in the nineteenth century, this study draws upon work in the histories of geography and of geographical knowledge, histories of science, and historical geographies of science. This chapter presents a summary of these literatures, highlighting the key connections between each historiographical discussion, and also offers a description of how they have influenced the situated approach taken within this thesis for reformulating the conventional opposition between field science and theoretical knowledge in nineteenth-century geography.

The first section outlines the recent theoretical agenda that has been set in approaching the writing of geography's histories. This contextual approach is 'more concerned with mapping the lateral associations and social relations of geographical knowledge than with constructing a vision of the overall evolution of the modern discipline'.³ It calls for an examination of the ways in which geographical knowledge was both discursively complex and intellectually shaped in different places by different people at different times.⁴ This works not by privileging the present or insisting 'upon a genealogy for geographical knowledge', but by recovering 'its historical and geographical context as a question of historical geography'.⁵

The second section of this chapter examines the influence of these approaches on the historiography of geography and of geographical knowledge. With the shift to identifying plural discourses, this has led to the recovery of an 'early modern geography'; critical questioning of the nineteenth-century 'culture of exploration'; and an examination of the metropolitan landscape of a nascent geographical science. It shows,

³ Felix Driver, 'Geography's Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 10 (1992), pp. 23-40, p. 35.

⁴ Felix Driver, 'New Perspectives on the History and Philosophy of Geography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 18 (1994), pp. 92-100, p. 92.

⁵ Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, p. 6. See also, David Matless, 'Effects of History', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 20 (1995), pp. 405-406; Clive Barnett, 'Awakening the Dead: Who Needs the History of Geography?', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 20 (1995), pp. 417-419.

however, that despite these more critical readings on the cultural formation of the ‘explorer’ and ‘exploration’, the more sedentary practices of stay-at-home geographers have been mostly overlooked, and their practitioners mainly feature through their role as derisory critics.

The third section moves to view how histories of science have explored the development of science and scientific practice within the nineteenth century, and how these approaches have been intermittently applied to histories of geographical science. In so doing, it highlights many points of fruitful connection – methodologies, materialities, instruments, evidence, and credibilities – that move this debate beyond a discussion of the intellectual content of science and into focusing on its epistemology, as a question of both practice and procedure. The ‘material turn’ has entered these debates and emphasises how following an object or ‘thing’ – such as a travel guide, a book, or a map – from its formation in the metropolitan study, into the field, and then back home again – can reveal more intricate and enmeshed layers of the negotiations of scientific practices and cultures of credibility than have yet to be realised.

In highlighting such movements and the significance of place in encountering and creating knowledge, the fourth section of this chapter examines the debates taking place in historical geographies of science. Despite calls being made to write more ‘spatialised historiographies of science’, there remain clear gaps in its application to a nineteenth-century geographical science and to understandings of the location of the ‘field’ within its practice. It is shown therefore that this investigation into ‘armchair geography’ makes a critical contribution to a significant absence in the histories of geographical discourse and practice by complicating the presupposition of the centrality of field observation.

Venturing beyond the Boundaries of the 'Geographical Tradition'

In considering the history of geography, Livingstone has stated that one should always first ask: 'whose geography, which tradition?'⁶ Such questions encapsulate the recent concerns in the historiography of geography and of geographical knowledge with how to approach these histories and their situation in different times and places. Many have argued that the history of geography has been distorted because of presentism and internalism.⁷ These agenda-driven studies have produced selective histories that set out a 'triumphant, inevitable progress' towards a present state of the author's choice, with each supporting example made to 'tread the path of righteousness'.⁸

With a sense that there was little agreement among geographers as to the central focus and theme of the discipline, Richard Hartshorne in *The Nature of Geography* (1939) declared that the study of geography's history was imperative: 'if we wish to keep on the track – or return to the proper track ... we must first look back of us to see in what direction that track has led'.⁹ Yet this was a statement of historiographical intent based on a philosophical preference for a 'geography' understood exclusively as the study of areal differentiation. Hartshorne revealed more about how the character of geography was portrayed rather than how to write its histories and, without a justification for his approach that a discipline is defined by its historical origins, he 'committed geography to a museum-like existence'.¹⁰ Hartshorne's historical enquiries legitimated geography as a

⁶ David N. Livingstone, 'Classics in Human Geography Revisited', *Progress in Human Geography*, 28 (2004), pp. 227-234, p. 233.

⁷ 'Presentism' here refers to histories written to match the standards of the present day, with no attention to the context of the time under study. 'Internalist' histories are approached with a narrow or arbitrary view of how things appear, or should appear, from the perspective of a particular author. See Nick Spedding, 'The Geographical Tradition (1992): David Livingstone', in Paul Hubbard, Rob Kitchin, and Gill Valentine (eds), *Key Texts in Human Geography* (Sage: London, 2008), pp. 153-162.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁹ Richard Hartshorne, *The Nature of Geography: A Critical Survey of Current Geographical Thought in the Light of the Past* (Lancaster, PA: AAAG, 1939), p. 31.

¹⁰ Neil Smith, 'Geography as Museum: Private History and Conservative Idealism in *The Nature of Geography*', in J. N. Entrikin and S. D. Brunn (eds), *Reflections on Richard Hartshorne's The Nature of Geography*

continuous tradition, defined in his own tunnel-vision terms, and thereby enabled the clear identification of ‘deviations from the course of historical development’.¹¹ Such a presentist channelling of the history of geography in a specified direction is predicated on the assumption that ‘tradition’ is normative, and in writing its history, one can reveal its essential, stable, and consistent nature.¹²

Recent critics of these presentist histories have strongly advocated the employment of ‘contextual’ perspectives.¹³ Livingstone initiated this move in his *The Geographical Tradition* (1992) in which he seeks to expunge the definite article from presentist discourse in favour of expanding the distanced relationship between past and present. Specifically, he argues that ‘the idea that there is some eternal metaphysical core to geography independent of historical circumstances will simply have to go ... [T]he history of geography has always been contested and negotiated’.¹⁴ As such, this perspective promotes a ‘landscape of discontinuity’ to see ‘history as a series of spaces, rather than a single, seamless narrative’.¹⁵ Whilst not the first text to demonstrate the significance of writing geography’s histories by attending to subjective factors, Livingstone departs from these works to promote a more historically and geographically sensitive approach to the production and consumption of geographical knowledge.¹⁶ Livingstone’s revived account of five hundred years of European and North

(Washington, DC: Association of American Geographers, 1989), pp. 89-120, p. 92. For a direct response to Hartshorne and arguments against such exceptionalism in geography, see Fred K. Schaefer, ‘Exceptionalism in Geography: A Methodological Examination’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 43 (1953), pp. 226-249.

¹¹ Hartshorne, *The Nature of Geography*, pp. 102-129.

¹² Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition*, p. 8.

¹³ Ibid; David N. Livingstone, ‘The History of Science and the History of Geography: Interactions and Implications’, *History of Science*, 22 (1984), pp. 271-302; Trevor J. Barnes and Michael Curry, ‘Towards a Contextualist Approach to Geographical Knowledge’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 8 (1983), pp. 467-482; Driver, ‘Geography’s Empire’.

¹⁴ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition*, p. 28, 3. See also, David N. Livingstone, ‘In Defence of Situated Messiness: Geographical Knowledge and the History of Science’, *GeoJournal*, 26 (1992), pp. 228-229.

¹⁵ Driver, ‘Geography’s Empire’, p. 35.

¹⁶ For examples see, Peter J. Taylor, ‘An Interpretation of the Quantification Debate in British Geography’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 1 (1976), pp. 129-142; Richard Peet, ‘The Social Origins of Environmental Determinism’, 75 (1985), *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (1985), pp. 309-333.

American geography has become a key reference for historians of geography not because it is definitive, but because it demonstrates a new critical way of ‘doing’ the history of geography. It presents a situated geography that embraces its messy, partial and contested history across time and place.¹⁷ Through his use of Alisdair MacIntyre, Livingstone asserts this history as ‘an historically extended, socially embodied argument’; an argument precisely about what constitutes a ‘tradition’.¹⁸ His analyses of geography’s past practices and technologies alongside their conceptual landscapes have regarded them as the ‘expression of thought in action’.¹⁹ This work therefore remains one driven by intellectual text and questions have been raised as to whether it provides a history of geography’s skills, techniques and institutions, or is another history of ideas.²⁰

Livingstone’s semantic choice of ‘tradition’ has been a particular site of contention. Whilst it has been seen to initiate a move away from the Enlightenment strategy of encyclopedism, ‘tradition’ still connects this push to a more critical historiography with the past histories it is trying to rework. Livingstone claims that to ‘speak of a geographical tradition is to make certain claims about geography as an historically located mode of intellectual inquiry but it is also to make a kind of methodological claim about the doing of its history’.²¹ Its value is deemed justified by maintaining the notion that geographers belong to a tradition of inquiry that has a narrative, albeit contested, history.²²

David Matless has unpacked the productive conflict apparent in how Livingstone attempts to grapple with geography’s history as a ‘series of conversations’ and ‘a story of

¹⁷ Felix Driver, ‘Classics in Human Geography Revisited’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 28 (2004), pp. 227-234.

¹⁸ Driver, ‘Classics in Human Geography Revisited’, p. 420. For more on tradition as a socially embodied and living reality, see Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1985).

¹⁹ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition*, p. 3.

²⁰ Driver, ‘Classics in Human Geography Revisited’, p. 231.

²¹ David N. Livingstone, ‘Geographical Traditions’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 4 (1995), pp. 420-422, p. 420.

²² *Ibid.*

stories'.²³ Despite the exploration of these metaphors and the explicit rejection of a singular history, Livingstone raises difficult issues in the purposes of his own project. *The Geographical Tradition* still attempts to espouse clear fonts of thought and constructs an evolutionary metaphor for geography: 'it might be helpful if we were to think of geography as a tradition that evolves like a species over time'. This 'risky analogy' seeks to address a situated history of the form as well as the content of key categories of geography, whilst maintaining a sense of coherence in its story.²⁴ Matless interprets Livingstone's dispersal of the field of geography as having its own canonical effect, being both revisionary and re-assertive.²⁵ Robert Mayhew furthers that a crucial part of geography's history is recognising its complex and cloudy historical identity.²⁶ Yet, the raising of such issues prompts questions surrounding the boundaries of geographical knowledge. As Matless asks: 'is a history of geography to include all forms of geographical knowing?'²⁷ Clive Barnett has addressed concerns as to whether these critical histories written in the present can be productive, beyond producing a history that narrates the past of the 'discipline today', and obscures the issue of its historical relation behind the broad, seemingly catch-all notions of 'geographical knowledge' or 'geographical discourse'.²⁸

Feminist geographers have questioned the interests served by particular theoretical approaches, in terms of how they are framed and where their critical focus is located. Gillian Rose has explicated the discursive tension in the framing of 'tradition' and its epistemological prerogative to include and exclude.²⁹ Rose examines how the construction of geographical traditions simultaneously constructs the categories of

²³ Matless, 'Effects of History', p. 405.

²⁴ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition*, p. 30.

²⁵ Matless, 'Effects of History'.

²⁶ Mayhew, 'The Character of English Geography'; *Enlightenment Geography*.

²⁷ Matless, 'Effects of History', p. 405.

²⁸ Barnett, 'Awakening the Dead', p. 417.

²⁹ Gillian Rose, 'Tradition and Paternity: Same Difference?', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 20 (1995), pp. 414-416.

sameness and difference. Indeed, David Stoddart only includes examples that conformed to his notion of modern scientific research – those competent in exploratory fieldwork.³⁰ In response to Mona Domosh's discussion of Victorian female travellers, Stoddart retorted that none of those discussed were relevant to his history and 'there is therefore no reason to mention them'.³¹ The implication of these omissions from the tradition is a masking of the very practice of exclusion itself. As Rose contends:

Geography has so often defined itself against what it insists it is not, that writing its histories without considering what has been constructed as 'not-geography' is to tell only half the story and replicates the erasure of geographies' others.³²

In drawing these studies on writing the history of geography together, there is an overwhelming sense of the unsettled nature of the task and the continual struggle over how it should be articulated, as writing certain kinds of pasts is legitimated by, and legitimates, only certain kinds of presents.³³ Yet, such a research agenda has initiated a shift away from the heroic model of disciplinary history that had previously dominated and a destabilisation of the notion of a single, unified geographical tradition to address the writing of more inclusive histories of geography.³⁴ These studies reveal the different

³⁰ David R. Stoddart, 'Do We Need a Feminist Historiography of Geography – And If We Do, What Should It Be?', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 16 (1991), pp. 484-487.

³¹ Stoddart, 'Do We Need a Feminist Historiography of Geography', p. 484. A response to Mona Domosh, 'Towards a Feminist Historiography of Geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 16 (1991), pp. 95-104. See also, Mona Domosh, 'Beyond the Frontiers of Geographical Knowledge', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 16 (1991), pp. 488-490.

³² Rose, 'Tradition and Paternity', p. 414.

³³ Barnett, 'Awakening the Dead'.

³⁴ J. M. Powell, 'Historical Geography and the History of Geographical Thought', *GeoJournal*, 26 (1992), pp. 230-232; Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Polity: Cambridge, 1993); Felix Driver, 'Geographical Traditions: Rethinking the History of Geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 20 (1995), pp. 403-404; Cheryl McEwan, 'Cutting Power Lines within the Palace? Countering Paternity and Eurocentrism in the 'Geographical Tradition'', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 23 (1998), pp. 371-384; Hayden Lorimer and Nick Spedding, 'Excavating Geography's Hidden Spaces', *Area*, 34 (2002), pp. 294-302; Richard C. Powell, 'Becoming a geographical scientist: Oral histories of Arctic fieldwork', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33 (2008), pp. 545-565; Avril Maddrell, *Complex Locations: Women's Geographical Work in the UK, 1850-1970* (Oxford:

ways in which geographical knowledge has been made and secured, thereby setting the agenda to redress the lacuna of a critical account of the ‘armchair’ practitioner, rather than dismissing their role in linear narratives of geography’s history as ‘troublesome heretics’.³⁵

Histories of Geography and of Geographical Knowledge

Recovering the historical situation of ‘geography’ before its consolidation in the nineteenth century as a ‘discipline’ – both scientific and academic – has been the focus of sustained attention. Whilst the ‘marking out of itself’ of disciplinary geography has been apparent in many studies that focus on different historical and national contexts, recent histories have sought to challenge collectively the normative narrative that an independent discipline of ‘Geography’ in Europe originated in the late nineteenth century by introducing an ‘early modern geography’.³⁶ Led by Mayhew, these studies counterpoise the earlier and ‘very stable system of intellectual relationships in which geographical enquiry was enmeshed’ against its formal disciplinary identity.³⁷

The ‘early modern period’ for geography has been conceptualised as commencing in the Renaissance, with the humanist recovery of classical geographical texts, such as Ptolemy’s *Geography* (1410), and the discovery of the Americas, and

Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Felix Driver and Lowri Jones, ‘Hidden Histories?: Local knowledge and Indigenous Agency in the History of Geographical Exploration’, in *Proceedings of the 14th International Conference of Historical Geographers*, (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2010).

³⁵ Comment made in relation to Whiggish histories that omit examples that do not fit the favoured narrative, in Spedding, ‘The Geographical Tradition (1992)’, p. 155. See also, Innes M. Keighren, ‘History and Philosophy of Geography I: The slow, the turbulent, and the dissenting’, *Progress in Human Geography*, (online edition, 2016), pp. 1-10.

³⁶ Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, p. 7; Horacio Capel, ‘Institutionalisation of Geography and Strategies of Change’, in Stoddart (ed.), *Geography, Ideology and Social Concern*, pp. 37-69; Gary S. Dunbar (ed.), *Geography: Discipline, Profession and Subject since 1870: An International Survey* (London: Kluwer, 2001); Charles W. J. Withers and Robert J. Mayhew, ‘Rethinking “Disciplinary History: Geography in British Universities, c.1580–1887”’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 27 (2002), pp. 11-29.

³⁷ Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography*, p. 27. See also, Robert J. Mayhew, ‘The Effacement of Early Modern Geography (c.1600–1850): A Historiographical Essay’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 25 (2001), pp. 383-401. For studies on the historical practices of geography, see E. G. R. Taylor, *Tudor Geography, 1455–1583* (London: Meuthen, 1930); *Late Tudor and Early Stuart Geography* (London: Meuthen, 1934).

concluding with its codification as a discipline. Its nature within this period comprised ‘describing’ the whole earth through both mathematical and literary devices, which formed the ‘general’ and ‘special’ traditions of geography. General geography was centred on ascertaining the situation of places through their longitude and latitude, and followed the mathematics of Ptolemy. Special geography acquired descriptive information about the natural and human worlds; an approach exemplified by Strabo.³⁸ The discourse of geography as it moved into the nineteenth century has been presented as precise and constant, with an overwhelming consensus about its nature and relation to other enquiries.³⁹ Mayhew opines:

It is worth noting that the Enlightenment ... does not pick out a distinct era in the practice of geography ... [it] remained a practice defined by late humanism ... It did not involve fieldwork or the geographer gaining accreditation by doubling as explorer or colonial administrator.⁴⁰

This sedentary state of geographical work has been largely neglected and instead interpreted as lacking a critical epistemology to deal with nature’s questions.⁴¹ The traditional history of geography’s development has been approached in uncritical terms, being told as a teleological tale that legitimates the activities of geographers in the present. This historiographical structure is founded on a collective presupposition that until the nineteenth century, geography lacked a coherent definition and purpose. As Charles W. J. Withers contends, ‘early modern geography ... drew on a complex array

³⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁹ Lesley Cormack, “‘Good Fences make Good Neighbours’”: Geography as Self-Definition in Early Modern England’, *Isis*, 82 (1991), pp. 639-661; *Charting an Empire: Geography at the English Universities, 1580-1620* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997); Mayhew, ‘The Character of English Geography’.

⁴⁰ Robert J. Mayhew, cited in Charles W. J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 193.

⁴¹ Hartshorne, *The Nature of Geography*.

of data and should not be seen as possessing some clearly identifiable and immutable core'.⁴² The powerful influence over the ways in which histories of geography were written can be traced back to the first reader in Geography at Oxford, Halford Mackinder and his seminal essay, 'On the Scope and Methods of Geography', in which he outlined a clear vision for a 'new' geography which derided early modern geographical efforts as 'irrational'.⁴³ This was presented as a science of empire, rooted more in field observation than textual exegesis.

Histories of geographical thought took the work of Mackinder's generation and the establishment of 'Geography' in the reformed university as the starting point for writing its disciplinary history, with all previous incarnations of 'geography' being relegated to an unscientific mode, implicitly, and often explicitly, deemed wholly disconnected from Mackinder's project.⁴⁴ Carl Sauer cast this through his own idea of an autonomous geography: 'the establishment of a critical system which embraces the phenomenology of landscape'.⁴⁵ Hartshorne echoed Sauer in presenting early modern geography as a formless 'mother of the sciences'. Through a similar internalist approach to the writing of his history, he locates the point of transition to what he considers to be maturity, fit with his concern for an 'independent science' of geography as a synthesising

⁴² Charles W. J. Withers, 'Geography, Science and National Identity in Early-Modern Britain: The Case of Scotland and the Work of Sir Robert Sibbald', *Annals of Science*, 53 (1996), pp. 29-73, p. 63.

⁴³ Halford Mackinder, 'On the Scope and Methods of Geography', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, 9 (1887), pp. 141-174, p. 143.

⁴⁴ The politics and pedagogy of the formation of such a 'geographical canon' in geography's history have been the focus of recent sustained discussion and scholarly debate, see Innes M. Keighren, Christian Abrahamsson and Veronica della Dora, 'On Canonical Geographies', *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 2 (2012), pp. 296-312; 'We have never been canonical', *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 2 (2012), pp. 341-345; Robert J. Mayhew, 'On Canons, Cannons and the Rapier', *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 2 (2012), pp. 313-316; 'Enlightening Choices: A Century of Anglophone Canons of the Geographical Tradition', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 49 (2015), pp. 9-20; Richard C. Powell, 'Notes on a Geographical Canon? Measures, Models and Scholarly Enterprise', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 49 (2015), pp. 2-8; Avril Maddrell, 'To Read or not to Read? The Politics of Overlooking Gender in the Geographical Canon', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 49 (2015), pp. 31-38; Trevor J. Barnes, 'Afterword: Strategic Canonization?', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 49 (2015), pp. 94-95.

⁴⁵ Carl Sauer, 'The Morphology of Landscape', in John Leighly (ed.), *Land and Life: A Selection from the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 315-350, p. 319-320.

and regionalist discipline.⁴⁶ Yet, whilst Sauer and Hartshorne agreed that earlier geographical work was ‘pre-critical’, they also viewed it as a necessary stage in establishing the critical system and science of modern geography: ‘without such a preliminary synthesis of the facts of geography the work of the next period would have been impossible’.⁴⁷

This historiographical structure postulating geography as a science ‘in essence’ remains clearly imprinted on recent histories.⁴⁸ Indeed, Stoddart has advanced that the development of modern geography began in the late eighteenth century, with all prior thought being dismissed as irrelevant to a scientific form of geography:

Our standard histories speak of the work of Strabo and Eratosthenes, Varenius, Hakluyt, Purchas. But all these figures seem to us remote. Their contributions have meaning in the context of their own time, not of ours. Their significance to us is as precursors, its study largely antiquarian.⁴⁹

The essential core of geography, for Stoddart, is held to be fieldwork and that, in particular, was what made geography distinguishable from other branches of knowledge, due to ‘a set of attitudes, methods, techniques and questions, all of them developed in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century’.⁵⁰ While scientific discoveries had often emerged out of navigation projects, eighteenth-century Europe cultivated a purposeful culture and campaign of ‘scientific exploration’ that was driven by ‘planned and considered objectives ... [and] backed up by new cartographic and navigational

⁴⁶ Hartshorne, *The Nature of Geography*, p. 35.

⁴⁷ Sauer, ‘The Morphology of Landscape’, p. 319.

⁴⁸ Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography*, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Stoddart, *On Geography*, p. 30.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

techniques, and by the substantial resources of modern nation-states'.⁵¹ Indeed, Stoddart locates this form of geography as an experiential endeavour as originating in 1769 with Captain James Cook's first voyage to the Pacific, and continuing through the expeditions of Johann Reinhold Forster, Alexander von Humboldt, and Charles Darwin. He unashamedly declared that it comprised work 'written from the field and not from the armchair', and was based on quantification, comparative methods, ecological understanding, and social concern.⁵²

In recovering his essence of geography, Stoddart is critical about the normative character of debates over what geography was and its influence on field exploration. These histories are accused of being presented in an intellectual vacuum, giving 'little or no attention to philosophical or epistemological issues' and being 'unrelated to social, economic and political conditions'.⁵³ Whilst Stoddart took contextual history seriously, he falls victim to his own criticisms as he prescribed an experiential historiography and premised a stringent 'essence' of empirical scientific method; unlike Livingstone, who gave attention to matters of discourse and representation.⁵⁴

The hagiographic portrayal of geographical practitioners is more pronounced by Margarita Bowen. Her central claim is that the move away from the intellectual world of text and ancient authority and into the nature of the material world 'marked a crucial stage in the encounter between geography and scientific empiricism'.⁵⁵ Tracing the contours of arguments that the 'modern' science, which emerged from the later seventeenth century, depended more upon the testimony of nature than on the testimony of humans, has had clear historiographical implications for addressing the

⁵¹ Mike Heffernan, 'Histories of Geography', in Sarah Holloway, Stephen P. Rice, Gill Valentine (eds), *Key Concepts in Geography* (London: SAGE, 2006), pp. 3-22, p. 6.

⁵² Stoddart, *On Geography*, p. xi.

⁵³ D. R. Stoddart, 'Ideas and Interpretation in the History of Geography', in Stoddart (ed.), *Geography, ideology and social concern*, pp. 1-7, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition*.

⁵⁵ Margarita Bowen, *Empiricism and Geographical Thought: From Francis Bacon to Alexander von Humboldt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 107.

history of geographical knowledge, as it again places its history firmly in the ‘field’ and displaces knowledge as it moves from one site to another.⁵⁶ Specifically, Bowen used her historical survey to locate the roots of her ‘ecological vision of geography’ in the early nineteenth-century science of Humboldt.⁵⁷ Bowen justifies this presentist procedure by stating that ‘the task of geography ... is to make the most effective use of past traditions in responding to the issues of today’.⁵⁸ This task was, however, revoked, and reprimanded by her reviewer Roy Porter: ‘her historical discussions are throughout ... in the manner of the grand old Whiggish histories of science. Past geographers are dragooned into modern philosophical camps’.⁵⁹ The result of these histories has been derided as diminishing early modern geography and eliding the differentia of geography’s history.⁶⁰

Deploying the historical mode of enquiry devised by Michael Oakeshott, that to understand the past, one must view it in terms of a past society’s understanding of a specific sphere, rather than reading back in a genealogical fashion, Mayhew criticises these histories of geography for ‘attempting to draw on the categories of critical theory in an historical engagement’.⁶¹ He claims that if geography is defined solely in institutional terms, an early modern practice is a clear contradiction, because to uncover a formal discipline of ‘Geography’ at this time is to search for an anachronism, as the eighteenth century lacked the formal boundaries between subjects that have since progressively built up. In seeking to understand how geography was defined and used by its practitioners and understood by its audiences, Mayhew has advanced

⁵⁶ On the rise of ‘modern’ science, see Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996); John Henry, *The Scientific Revolution and the Origins of Modern Science* (New York: Macmillan, 1997); Peter Dear, *The Scientific Enterprise in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997); Jan Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Lisa Jardine, *Ingenious Pursuits: Building the Scientific Revolution* (London: Abacus, 1999).

⁵⁷ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition*, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Bowen, *Empiricism and Geographical Thought*, p. 275.

⁵⁹ Roy Porter, ‘Review of “Empiricism and Geographical Thought”, by Margarita Bowen’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 15 (1983), pp. 301-302.

⁶⁰ Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography*, p. 6.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13-17.

understandings of, what he has called, ‘the character of English geography’ within the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in several clear ways. Through identifying self-proclaimed geographical authors and their works, his focus on recovering a textual tradition of geography has illustrated its connections with classical education and a humanist and scholarly tradition, and disclosed a complex dialogue between scholarship and national politics.⁶² These are subtleties that are also recognised by Anne Godlewska in her discussion of French eighteenth-century Enlightenment geography, and the contributors to the collection on *Geography and Enlightenment*, edited by Livingstone and Withers.⁶³

Mayhew identified a ‘very stable system of intellectual relationships in which geographical enquiry was enmeshed’.⁶⁴ He indicates that early modern ‘geography’ held a different interpretation of science to that advanced in the modernist rhetoric. It was science as a form of knowledge – descriptive, locational and classificatory – not science as certainty grounded in experimental demonstration.⁶⁵ This stable definition of geography in England was matched by the continuity in the textual format in which geographical information was presented. The term ‘geographer’, at this time, was aligned with ‘writers of geography books’, who compiled, collated, and copied information about the earth in various forms of writing, such as encyclopedias and gazetteers. It was a practice that has been shown to be primarily textual, with the authority of these forms of geographical writing being derived from other texts, rather than from expeditionary encounters in the field.⁶⁶ Several other studies have also shown how although geography was not an independent ‘discipline’ in eighteenth-century England, it was clearly understood in particular intellectual contexts as a textual practice ‘designed to enlighten

⁶² Mayhew, ‘The Character of English Geography’.

⁶³ Godlewska, *Geography Unbound*; Livingstone and Withers (eds), *Geography and Enlightenment*.

⁶⁴ Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography*, p. 27.

⁶⁵ Mayhew, ‘The Character of English Geography’, p. 393.

⁶⁶ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*.

and to politicise civic society'.⁶⁷

Yet, those tracing geography as a form of knowledge before the nineteenth century have made it clear that geographical knowledge was 'altogether more complicated' than embracing either the textual or disciplinary tradition of geography.⁶⁸ Concerns have therefore turned to look at what Porter has termed the 'globalising discourses of terrestrial knowledge': the connections between geography and other forms of natural and social knowledge; the relationship between the discursive nature of geographical knowledge and the sites of its making, circulation, and reception; and the connections between geographical knowledge and empire.⁶⁹ Reflecting on these discourses of geography as formed from both experientially discovered and textually recovered knowledge, geography by the nineteenth century was diverse – enmeshed in wider scientific culture, political structures, imperial networks, and textual practice.⁷⁰ It prompts a need to form a historiography that introduces and embraces geography's discursive and practical identities as a 'passage of differences,' wherein what geography 'is', 'was', 'did', and 'does' has shifted over time and place.⁷¹

Histories addressing the practical and discursive history of geography as it moved into the nineteenth century have emphasised the role of its formal socialisation in learned societies. The concern of geographical knowledge as a discursive construct has led to a more critical understanding of its languages, institutions and the different 'modalities' through which it has emerged. Felix Driver and Gillian Rose posited that 'to argue that geographical knowledge is discursively constructed is to insist on the

⁶⁷ Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, p. 10. On geography books available before c.1800, see O. F. G. Sitwell, *Four Centuries of Special Geography: An Annotated Guide to Books that Purport to Describe all the Countries in the World Published in English before 1888, With a Critical Introduction* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1993).

⁶⁸ Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, p. 10. On studies of geographical knowledge in the Enlightenment, see Charles W. J. Withers and David N. Livingstone, 'Introduction: On Geography and Enlightenment', in Livingstone and Withers (eds), *Geography and Enlightenment*, pp. 1-28.

⁶⁹ Roy Porter, 'The Terraqueous Globe', in George Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds), *The Ferment of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 285-324.

⁷⁰ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 2.

⁷¹ Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography*, p. 12.

importance of practices and institutions as well as concepts. Discourses always do their work in specific social contexts and with material consequences'.⁷² Driver has asserted the pivotal part the RGS had in Victorian debates over the development of geography as a science, and the conduct and significance of exploration.⁷³ Other informal networks, such as the Hakluyt Society, have also been identified, but their relationships to the development of geographical knowledge at this time have not received the same intensity of attention.⁷⁴ Since Markham's first documentation of the Society's history in *The First Fifty Years' Work of the Royal Geographical Society* (1881), the orthodox narrative has been one of progress, emphasising how it aided in the rise of geographical science and its triumphs over the mysteries of nature.⁷⁵ More recent critical readings of this history have situated its emergence and development in its wider social and intellectual contexts.⁷⁶ The deconstruction of the RGS's founding programme shows how it coordinated the production of geographical knowledge in service of the imperial state and promoted geography as an active science of empire, not an intellectual pursuit.⁷⁷

⁷² Felix Driver and Gillian Rose (eds), *Nature and Science: Essays in the History of Geographical Knowledge*, *Historical Geography Research Series*, 28 (London: Historical Geography Research Series, RGS-IBG, 1992), p. 4.

⁷³ Driver, *Geography Militant*.

⁷⁴ For further discussion on wider Society involvement, see Roy C. Bridges and Peter E. H. Hair, *Compassing the Vaste Globe of the Earth: Studies in the History of the Hakluyt Society, 1846-1996* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1996); Charles, W. J. Withers, Diarmid Finnegan and Rebekah Higgitt, 'Geography's Other Histories? Geography and Science in the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1831-c.1933', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31 (2006), pp. 433-451; Charles W. J. Withers, *Geography and Science in Britain, 1831-1939: A Study of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

⁷⁵ Clements Markham, *The Fifty Years' Work of the Royal Geographical Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1881]). This was followed by a history written for the centenary of the RGS, see Hugh R. Mill, *Record of the Royal Geographical Society, 1830-1930* (London, 1930).

⁷⁶ Driver, *Geography Militant*; Stoddart, *On Geography*; Max Jones, 'Measuring the World: Exploration, Empire and the Reform of the Royal Geographical Society, c.1874-1893', in Martin Daunton (ed.), *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 313-336. For an account of the contested history of its foundation that is later developed in Chapter 4 see, Elizabeth Baigent, 'Founders of the Royal Geographical Society of London (act. 1828-1830)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) online edition, May 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/95334>, accessed 7 Oct 2013].

⁷⁷ Felix Driver, 'The Royal Geographical Society and the Empire of Science', in Driver, *Geography Militant*, pp. 24-48; 'Hints to Travellers: Observation in the Field', in Driver, *Geography Militant*, pp. 49-67; Stafford, 'Scientific Exploration and Empire'.

Whilst the intellectual connections between geography, exploration, and empire have been shown as existing long before the RGS was founded, their heightened practical realisation in Britain from that date did much to associate geography with exploration, in-the-field empiricism, cartography, and the promotion of ‘secure knowledge’ of the world.⁷⁸ From the perspective of ‘the new imperial history’ with its emphasis on the synergy between domestic and imperial history, Philip J. Stern has traced the social and cultural history of, what has been termed a precursor to the RGS, the African Association. In viewing it as a ‘form of imperial activity that resided in a club’, his work assesses the complexity of motivations for the Association’s leaders, emphasising the connections between the emerging networks of institutionalised science, the rise of the ‘expert’, and an economy of gentility which sought to maintain the power of the gentlemanly class.⁷⁹

In attempting to draw out a discourse of geography and geographical science from within the confines of the RGS, Driver has presented its heterogeneous character as inscribed in the polymorphous social, political and cultural identity of the institution: it was part ‘social club, learned society, part imperial information exchange and part platform for the promotion of sensational feats of exploration’.⁸⁰ It is for these reasons that the Society is cast less as an assertive centre of calculation, but more as an information exchange.⁸¹ This interpretation elaborates that institutional expression during this period did not instil confidence in the scientific status of geography, but expressed uncertainty over its credibility and value. Whilst its existence in histories of science has been largely absent due to an uncertainty over the ‘scientific’ status of

⁷⁸ Withers, *Geography and Science in Britain*, p. 8.

⁷⁹ Philip J. Stern, “Rescuing the Age from a Charge of Ignorance”: Gentility, Knowledge, and the British Exploration of Africa in the Later Eighteenth-Century’, in Kathleen Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 115–134, p. 134.

⁸⁰ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 25.

⁸¹ Ibid. Driver draws on Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987).

geographical knowledge, the work of Withers on ‘Geography’ in ‘Section E’ at the British Association for the Advancement of Science has redressed this gap, as he considers geography’s place as a form of civic science.⁸²

Recent scholarship on geography’s ‘modern’, institutional history has been shown to be an established area of contemporary enquiry, yet the history of geography in Britain as a field of knowledge, its forms of practice, and its emergence as a discipline cannot be reduced to an institutional history.⁸³ Many studies have exposed gaps in what is known about the practices and procedures through which geography worked.⁸⁴ As Livingstone states:

The fact that geography has always been a *practical* science is of central significance in its history ... because the triumph of experience over authority is seen by many as the fundamental ingredient in the emergence of experimental science in the West.⁸⁵

This was not a simple practical evolution and there has been a concerted effort to attend more to the methodological processes in geography’s history, particularly in the

⁸² Withers, *Geography and Science in Britain*.

⁸³ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 30.

⁸⁴ For work on geography’s nineteenth-century institutionalisation in formal societies, see James Marshall-Cornwall, *History of the Geographical Club* (London: The Geographical Club, 1976); Ian Cameron, *To the Farthest Ends of the Earth: The History of the Royal Geographical Society* (London: Macdonald and Jane, 1980); Ron J. Johnston, ‘The Institutionalisation of Geography as an Academic Discipline’, in Ron J. Johnston and Michael William (eds), *A Century of British Geography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 45-90. On the content of geography’s ideas, see Dunbar, *Geography, Discipline, Profession and Subject since 1870*; Livingstone, ‘British geography 1500–1900: An Imprecise Review’, in Johnston and Williams (eds), *A Century of British Geography*, pp. 11-41. For studies on the connections between geography, empiricism, exploration and empire: Morag Bell, Robin A. Butlin and Michael Heffernan (eds), *Geography and Imperialism, 1820–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Jones, ‘Measuring the world’; Simon Naylor and James Ryan (eds), *New Spaces of Exploration: Geographies of Discovery in the Twentieth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010). On textual and intellectual pedagogies, see Godlewska, *Geography Unbound*; Mayhew, ‘The Effacement of Early Modern Geography’. On gendering of its ‘modernity’, see Mona Domosh, ‘With Stout Boots and a Stout Heart: Historical Methodology and Feminist Geography’, in John Paul Jones, Heidi Nast and Susan Roberts (eds), *Thresholds in Feminist Geography: Difference, Methodology, Representation* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), pp. 225-237; Cheryl McEwan, *Gender, Geography and Empire* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000); Avril Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.

⁸⁵ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition*, p. 45.

nineteenth century with the rise of instrumentation and in-the-field empiricism, and how and by whom these practical procedures came to be written and practically realised.⁸⁶

The ‘culture of exploration’ has formed a focal point for these discussions in order to denote the plethora of practices at work in the production and consumption of travel and scientific expeditions. The critical analysis of cultures of exploration and empire is central to Driver’s *Geography Militant*. This examination has a dual focus on nineteenth-century exploratory culture. Driver does not seek to praise the robust, ‘manly’ science of Joseph Conrad’s ‘Geography and Some Explorers’, but he works to illuminate geography’s technical – navigation and cartography – and cultural dimensions – rhetoric and iconography.⁸⁷ Exploration is exposed as consisting of very different forms of practice and knowledge as bodies moved into and through ‘the field’. Initiated by Driver, these cultural practices have been taken up in many scholarly quarters to deconstruct and reveal the changing nature of exploration and geography in the nineteenth century, acquiring new layers of meaning, styles, and scientific languages through which its findings could be expressed.⁸⁸ Whilst these studies have been wide ranging, they have initiated a need to consider more exactly how geography was a practical science as it moved into and through the nineteenth century, integrating the range of embodied practices in the field and at home that constituted geographical knowledge.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Heffernan, ‘Histories of Geography’. For more on the textual and epistemological spaces between ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’ geography, see Withers, ‘On Enlightenment’s Margins’.

⁸⁷ Conrad, ‘On Geography and Some Explorers’. For further interpretation, see Felix Driver, ‘Geography Triumphant? Joseph Conrad and the Imperial Adventure: A Review Essay’, *The Conradian*, 18 (1994), pp. 103-111. Cf. Stoddart, *On Geography*, pp. 142-143.

⁸⁸ Felix Driver, ‘Distance and Disturbance: Travel, Exploration and Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), pp. 73-92; ‘Geographical knowledge, exploration and empire’, in Thrift, Nigel and Whatmore, Sarah (eds), *Cultural Geography: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences, vol. 1* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 132-152; Kennedy (ed.), *Reinterpreting Exploration*.

⁸⁹ Felix Driver, ‘Editorial: Fieldwork in Geography’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 25 (2000), pp. 267-268.

In drawing connections between science, geography, and in-the-field discovery, Susan Cannon coined the phrase ‘Humboldtian science’ as an intellectual programme that placed an emphasis on ‘accurate, measured study of widespread but interconnected phenomenon in order to find a definite law and dynamic cause’.⁹⁰ This was to be achieved in practice by more precise observation in the field, using the latest advances in portable instrumentation, the urge to visualise numerical data in the form of graphs and maps, reflecting Humboldt’s own interest in isometric mapping, and a concern with the spatial relations between geology, biology and meteorology.⁹¹ Yet this has been critically received as a retrospective synthesis of Humboldt’s principles, rather than as a description of the actual conduct of men of science. In applying it to the site of geographical knowledge production in London, the RGS, Driver espouses that this Humboldtian framework is less applicable to the character of the Society as a whole.⁹² Its interests were seen to revolve around collecting information, collating travellers’ descriptions, producing regional surveys or writing narratives of voyages – ‘hardly the sort of knowledge that constituted “Humboldtian science”’.⁹³

Historians of geographical knowledge have embraced wider contexts for situating developments in geographical thought.⁹⁴ Postcolonial critiques have examined the intersection between geography and imperial history to assert a close association with the history of empire-making. These works emphasise geographical knowledge – both real and ‘imagined’ – as an imperial asset with utilitarian value being placed on

⁹⁰ Susan F. Cannon, *Science in Culture: The Early Victorian Period* (New York: Dawson and Science History Publications, 1978), p. 105.

⁹¹ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 35.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 36

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York: Guildford Press, 1995); James Duncan and Derek Gregory, *Writes of Passage: reading travel writing* (London: Routledge, 1999); Gerry Kearns, ‘The Imperial Subject: Geography and Travel in the work of Mary Kingsley and Halford Mackinder’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 22 (1997), pp. 450-472; Jeanne Guelke and Karen Morin, ‘Gender, Nature and Empire: Women Naturalists in Nineteenth-Century British travel literature’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 26 (2001), pp. 306-326.

exploration in the national enterprise of overseas expansion.⁹⁵ The power of geography to construct the ‘idea’ of Africa has been worked on by Francesc Relaño. This work emphasises a long cultural heritage rooted in classical legacy and how these ancient geographical ‘myths’ were prevalent in cartographic representations of Africa through into the eighteenth century.⁹⁶ Geographical knowledge projects have been shown as deeply motivated by imperial visions and politics to create an enduring imaginative geography of Africa as the ‘Dark Continent’.⁹⁷ It has been made clear that as exploration moved from sea to land in this period, geographical knowledge production was shaped by and for the commercial interests of empire. There has been a sustained focus in recent studies of exploration in recovering the complex and hidden histories of travel and exploration, particularly in Africa and Australia. These accounts have brought to light the perspectives and experiences of local intermediaries who guided and provided evidence for explorers, but whose contributions were often effaced from explorers’ accounts and have long been excluded from the historical narrative.⁹⁸ Alongside direct observation, the reliance on local knowledge demonstrates that the modern conception of a division between empirically based science and speculative knowledge was unstable with sources of information being effaced due to the influence of racialised discourses.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Eric Hobsbawm. *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Felix Driver, ‘Henry Morton Stanley and his Critics: Geography, Exploration and Empire’, *Past and Present*, 133 (1991), pp. 134–167; Anne Godlewska and Neil Smith (eds), *Geography and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Bell, and Heffernan, *Geography and Imperialism*.

⁹⁶ Relaño, *The Shaping of Africa*.

⁹⁷ Felix Driver, ‘The World and Africa: Rediscovering African Geographies’, 2011 [<http://www.rgs.org/NR/rdonlyres/F8CDD4F0-DA19-45C1-BFB669CF407567E1/0/FelixDriveressayRGSformat.pdf>, accessed 1 December 2012].

⁹⁸ On the role and perspectives of ‘go-betweens’ as vital intermediaries to explorers and scientists in the field and the knowledge politics involved, see Felix Driver and Lowri Jones, *Hidden Histories of Exploration* (Royal Holloway: University of London, 2009); Simon Schaffer, Lissa Roberts, Kapil Raj and James Delbourgo (eds), *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770–1820* (Sagamore Beach, MA.: Science and History Publications, 2009); Shino Konishi, Maria Nugent, Tiffany Shellam (eds), *Indigenous Intermediaries: New Perspectives on Exploration Archives* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015).

⁹⁹ Withers, ‘Mapping the Niger, 1798–1832’; Adrian S. Wisnicki, ‘Charting the Frontier: Indigenous Geography, Arab-Nyamwezi Caravans, and the East African Expedition of 1856–59’, *Victorian Studies*, 51 (2008), pp. 103–137; David Lambert, ‘“Taken Captive by the Mystery of the Great River”: Towards an Historical Geography of British Geography and Atlantic Slavery’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 25 (2009), pp. 44–65.

Studies on the lives and writings of explorers and scientific travellers in the Victorian period have emerged as an area of critical study, with research ranging from the politics and experience of encounter to the consideration of ‘located moments’ to the relationship between public reputation, and, in Janice Cavell’s terms, ‘manliness in life’.¹⁰⁰ Attention has been given to imperial masculinities and the construction of the ‘heroic’ explorer involved in adventurous and dangerous exploits.¹⁰¹ The imperial symbol of the ‘explorer’ has been the focus of sustained critical study, with Robert A. Stafford viewing the explorer an ‘agent’ in Europe’s confrontation with non-European places and peoples, and Driver unpacking Joseph Conrad’s conceptualisation of the explorer as a ‘foot soldier of empire’.¹⁰² This has been extended by work in literary studies and histories of art to view the convergence of romantic understandings of travel, imagined geographies, and the physical demonstration of new values of science

¹⁰⁰ Janice Cavell, ‘Manliness in Life and Posthumous Reputation of Robert Falcon Scott’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 45 (2010), pp. 537-564; Naylor and Ryan (eds), *New Spaces of Exploration*. On recent developments in life writing and biography in histories of geography and historical geography, see Cheryl McGeachan, ‘Historical Geography II: Traces Remain’, *Progress in Human Geography* (online edition, June 2016), pp. 1-14.

¹⁰¹ The first histories of East Africa saw explorers as a form of ‘proto-imperialism’, see Reginald Coupland, *East Africa and its Invaders: From the Earliest Times to the Death of Seyyid Said in 1856* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938); *The Exploitation of East Africa, 1856–1890: The Slave Trade and the Scramble* (London: Faber, 1939). Yet later works concerned with the history of Africa and Africans ignored explorers, see Roland Oliver and Gervase Mathew (eds), *The Oxford History of East Africa, vol. I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963). Recent historical appraisals have re-focused these views to more critically engage with the traveller as a subject of historical enquiry, their writings, and relations with the peoples and places they encountered, specifically with relation to East Africa, see Donald Simpson, *Dark Companions: The African Contribution to the European Exploration of East Africa* (London: Paul Elek, 1975); Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *Africa and its Explorers: Motives, Methods, and Impact* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); *Joseph Thomson and the Exploration of Africa* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971); Roy C. Bridges, ‘Explorers’ Texts and the Problem of Reactions by Non-Literate Peoples: Some Nineteenth-Century East African Examples’, *Studies in Travel Writing*, 2 (1998), pp. 65-84; ‘Europeans and East Africans in the Age of Exploration’, *The Geographical Journal*, 139 (1973), pp. 220-232; Tim Youngs, *Travellers in Africa: British Travelogues, 1850–1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994). For a reading of this changing interest and the multiple approaches being taken, see Dane Kennedy, ‘British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey’, *History Compass*, 5 (2007), pp. 1879-1900.

¹⁰² Stafford, ‘Scientific Exploration and Empire’, p. 294; Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 3. See also, Dane Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); David N. Livingstone, *Nathaniel Southgate Shaler and the Culture of American Science* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006); Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Tim Jeal, *Explorers of the Nile: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Great Victorian Adventure* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011).

and how these were represented.¹⁰³ In particular, Carl Thompson in his study of the ‘suffering traveller’ identifies the different tropes of dramatised suffering, ranging from the ‘Explorer as Exile’ as applied to James Bruce in Abyssinia to the ‘Explorer as Saint’ as Mungo Park was viewed in West Africa.¹⁰⁴ Whilst the work of Beau Riffenburgh has shown that with the appearance of a sensationalist tabloid press, the ‘myth of the explorer’ could be circulated in the latter part of the Victorian era, Thompson has demonstrated that the ‘explorer as celebrity’ was being mobilised earlier than this, as institutions learnt to use this figure for their own ideological ends and draw on the ‘inevitable public fascination with the more misadventurous aspects of the exploratory project’.¹⁰⁵

Burgeoning interest has developed in drawing out the many distinctive representations of scientific ‘heroes’ and shedding light on the historical instability of these diverse biographical identities. Driver states that in writing ‘the active life’ of the explorer as a biographical subject, we have to understand the culture that produces them and continues to sustain them.¹⁰⁶ The appearance of metabiographies of authoritative figures has been judged as precipitating profound historiographical and methodological implications for studies in memory and, for this context, within histories of geographical

¹⁰³ Travel writing is a broad field of study, for selected readings related to this study, see Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Felix Driver and Luciana Martins (eds), *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005); Tim Youngs, *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling in the Blank Spaces* (London: Anthem Press, 2006); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2nd edn, New York: Routledge, 2008); Clare Broome Saunders (ed.), *Women, Travel Writing, and Truth* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014). On art and visualisation in exploration, see Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature, and the Illustrated Travel Account, 1760–1840* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1984); Geoff Quilley and John Bonehill (eds), *William Hodges (1744–1797): Art of Exploration* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006); Leila Koivunen, *Visualising Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts* (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁰⁴ Carl Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 158.

¹⁰⁵ Beau Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism and Geographical Discovery* (London: Belhaven Press, 1993); Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller*, p. 82. For more on the publication and reception of Arctic exploration narratives in British print culture, see Janice Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative: Arctic Exploration in British Print Culture, 1818–1860* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). On media interest in Arctic explorers and exploration, see Adriana Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster: Authorship and Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹⁰⁶ Driver, ‘The Active Life’.

practice.¹⁰⁷ A particularly impressive study on the multiplicitous legacies of missionary-explorer David Livingstone has been undertaken by Justin D. Livingstone. This work adopts a metabiographical perspective on this ‘Victorian icon’ to draw out his many identities as being an unstable site of competing meanings, mobilised in different times, and for different intellectual purposes.¹⁰⁸ From this perspective of imperial masculinities, it has been suggested that the historiographical elision of labours of the armchair has occurred because they did not embody the popular image of the ‘hero’ of imperial science.¹⁰⁹ As Driver posits, in stories of exploration, the image of the stay-at-home theoriser sitting cosily in the comfort of their study did not compare to an explorer making a hazardous voyage through ice-ridden seas, and therefore the ‘armchair geographer’ did not make an exciting enough subject for literature on modern exploration.¹¹⁰

Whilst the same critical attention has not been paid to ‘armchair geography’, there are a small number of studies that have drawn attention to particular individuals, their publications, and professional affiliations. Alan Downes has recovered the compendious geographical texts compiled in Britain between the mid-seventeenth century and early nineteenth century by, what he referred to as ‘immobile Georgian geographical dinosaurs’.¹¹¹ Although he attended to a broad range of the systematic geographies produced between Varenus and Humboldt, his study ends in 1830 and does not enter the debates on presence of an ‘immobile’ geography in the institutional landscape.¹¹² Bibliographical studies on nineteenth-century geographers, such as William Desborough Cooley and John Pinkerton, have been drawn to examine their personal

¹⁰⁷ Nicolaas A. Rupke, *Alexander von Humboldt: A Metabiography* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁸ Justin D. Livingstone, *Livingstone's 'Lives': A Metabiography of a Victorian Icon* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

¹⁰⁹ Driver, *Geography Militant*; Lawrence Dritisas, *Zambesi: David Livingstone and Expeditionary Science in Africa* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

¹¹⁰ Driver, ‘The Active Life’.

¹¹¹ Alan Downes, ‘The Bibliographical Dinosaurs of Georgian Geography (1714–1830)’, *The Geographical Journal*, 137 (1971), p. 386.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

and professional interests as sedentary cultivators of knowledge, in the case of Cooley, or compilers and collectors of knowledge, as undertaken by Pinkerton.¹¹³ David Lambert's critical treatment of James MacQueen provides the only reconstruction and contextualisation of the life of an armchair geographer through the 'entangled nature of Atlantic slavery, African exploration, and geographical knowledge'.¹¹⁴ With a focus on how his geographical theories on the River Niger were formed, his use of 'captive knowledge' of African slaves in the Caribbean and their reception, Lambert complicates and unsettles the received notion of the 'armchair geographer' as being wholly untravelled. In so doing, this presents a significant challenge to how the formation of geographical knowledge has been previously conceived. Beyond these discussions in the history of geography, there have been attempts to redress this lack of engagement with 'armchair' discourses and practices in the Victorian period. In particular, attention has been given to the sedentary methods and associated issues of credibility within the emerging 'field sciences' of archaeology and anthropology.¹¹⁵

While the institutionalisation of geography and subsequent efforts to systematise how geographical information was gathered in the early nineteenth century has been seen as an attempt to replace the text-based authority of 'early modern' geographical writing with 'modern' field observation, Lambert has argued that this was 'a protracted

¹¹³ Bridges, 'W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part I'; 'W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part II'; Sitwell, 'John Pinkerton: An Armchair Geographer'. See also, Roy C. Bridges, 'Nineteenth-Century East African Travel Records with an Appendix on "Armchair Geographers" and Cartography', *Paideuma*, 33 (1987), pp. 179-196. Outside of the scope of this study, William Desborough Cooley has also been viewed as a prominent figure in the emergence of West African historiography and some of his works were reprinted in the 1960s as contributions to African history, but as his hypotheses were erroneous, they are viewed with scepticism. See Pekka Masonen, 'Historiography of Western Africa, 1790s-1860s', in Kevin Shillington (ed.), *Encyclopedia of African History, 3 volume set* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 633-636; Roy C. Bridges, 'William Desborough Cooley (1795-1883)', in Charles W. J. Withers and Hayden Lorimer (eds), *Geographers: Biobibliographical Studies, Volume 27* (London and New York: Continuum Books, 2008), pp. 43-62.

¹¹⁴ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 218.

¹¹⁵ On 'armchair anthropology', see Efram Sera-Shriar, *The Making of British Anthropology, 1813-1871* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013); 'What is Armchair Anthropology? Observational Practices in Nineteenth-Century British Human Sciences', *History of the Human Sciences*, 27 (2014), pp. 26-40.

process'.¹¹⁶ This identifies the primacy for further critical study into how 'competing visions' of geography were debated and put into practice, through the clarification of the relationship between these two supposedly opposites of geographical practice – the textual geography of the cabinet and the muscular geography of the field – and the need to interrupt the assumption of the centrality of field observation to the development of geography in this unsettled period.¹¹⁷ This presents an elusive layer to the label 'armchair geographer' which has not yet been wholly deconstructed or sufficiently situated within these debates.

Histories of Science

Scientific knowledge has come to be understood as a social construction, 'made with locally situated cultural and material resources, rather than as simply the revelation of a pre-given order of nature'.¹¹⁸ This has given expression to the theoretical nature of power in society, the reflexivity of knowledge, an understanding of knowledge making as a practical activity and an 'emphasis on space'.¹¹⁹ The influential work of Thomas Kuhn has altered how scientific knowledge is viewed, away from being objective, universal and true to existing in 'paradigms'.¹²⁰ The sites of making science and the conduct of its practitioners have thus become the subjects of investigation. The sociology of scientific knowledge sets its focus on what 'scientists actually do', alongside

¹¹⁶ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 16.

¹¹⁷ Driver, 'Scientific Exploration and the Construction of Geographical Knowledge', p. 28.

¹¹⁸ Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, p. 14. See also, Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1959); *Conjectures and Refutations* (London: Routledge, 1963); Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 1974); Barry Barnes and David Bloor, 'Relativism, Rationalism, and the Sociology of Knowledge,' in Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes (eds), *Rationality and Relativism* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1982), pp. 21-47; Barry Barnes, David Bloor and John Henry, *Scientific Knowledge: A Sociological Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹¹⁹ Nigel Thrift, Felix Driver and David N. Livingstone, 'The Geography of Truth', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 13 (1995), pp. 1-3.

¹²⁰ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

attending to the social and the located nature of scientific knowledge making.¹²¹ This has led to the establishment of a dynamic definition of what one can consider scientific practice and culture, removing the boundaries of what can be considered ‘science’ and ‘scientific’, which were terms still under construction in the nineteenth century.¹²² These are questions that should be posed to the historical actors under discussion themselves in order to comprehend how the ‘armchair geographer’ and ‘field explorer’ viewed their scientific practice and how these researches were or were not conceived to be a constituent element of the wider ‘culture of exploration’ in the nineteenth century.¹²³

Such a constructivist historiography influenced by the sociology of scientific knowledge pays attention to social interests and contemporary identifications with certain practices and practical identities. Bernard Lightman positions the practice of Victorian science as inseparable from the social and economic changes occurring in Britain during nineteenth century, arguing:

Whereas modern scholars find it necessary to isolate a particular context in order to study the complex interaction with science, Victorian scientists, and those intellectuals and members of the popular reading audience who were influenced by science, may have seen all of these contexts as part of a single, seamless web.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, p. 14. See also, Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); Steven Shapin, ‘Here and Everywhere: Sociology of Scientific Knowledge’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 21 (1995), pp. 289-321; ‘Placing the View from Nowhere: Historical and Sociological Problems in the Location of Science’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 23 (1998), pp. 5-12.

¹²² On the coinage of the term ‘scientist’, see [William Whewell], ‘On the Connexion of the Physical Sciences. By Mrs Somerville’, *Quarterly Review*, 51 (1834), pp. 54-68. For critical histories of ‘explorer’ and ‘scientist’, see Vincenzo Ferrone, ‘The Man of Science’, in Michel Vovelle (ed.), *Enlightenment Portraits*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 190-225; Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, ‘The Explorer’, in Vovelle (ed.), *Enlightenment Portraits*, pp. 257-190; Andrew Pickering (ed.), *Science as Practice and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Craciun, ‘What is an Explorer?’.

¹²³ As advocated by Dritsas, *Zambesi*, and following Andrew Pickering, ‘The Mangle of Practice: Agency and Emergence in the Sociology of Science’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 99 (1993), pp. 559-589; *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency, and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹²⁴ Bernard Lightman, ‘Introduction’, in Lightman (ed.), *Victorian Science in Context*, pp. 1-12, p. 9.

Lawrence Dritisas employed such an outlook in his recovery of a ‘history of science’ in the Zambesi Expedition (1858-1864), retaining a sensitivity to the scientific culture of the Victorian period, which he broadly conceptualised as ‘all those “made things”... the skills, social relations, instruments, institutes, facts and theories’.¹²⁵ Such studies, as in the histories of geography, emphasise the role of institutions as being ‘vital’ to the formation, promotion, and regulation of scientific enterprise.

Discussions on institutions have also centred on the organisation and professionalisation of science during this period. Studies have emphasised the official commitment to a ‘programme of scientific exploration’ that whilst sporadic, gave a continuous link between Britain and its imperial and trading interests. Stafford highlights the role of physical infrastructure and the existence of imperial networks that sustained such a ‘decentralised structure’, citing the central parts played by the Royal Navy and the foundation of the Admiralty’s Hydrographic Department in 1795, and scientific societies, such as the RGS.¹²⁶ Much work has also been done in tracing the shifting boundaries between the amateur tradition of natural history and the emergence of the ‘professional scientist’ through the nineteenth century, as British science was being culturally and institutionally reconfigured.¹²⁷ A salient point that has emerged from such studies is that with the attempts to reform the politics of the Royal Society in the 1830s and present science as a pursuit that transcended class, the constructed discourse

¹²⁵ Lawrence Dritisas, ‘The Zambesi Expedition, 1858–64: African Nature in the British Scientific Metropolis’, (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2005), p. 30.

¹²⁶ Stafford, ‘Scientific Exploration and Empire’, p. 295.

¹²⁷ Anne Secord, ‘Science in the pub: Artisan Botanists in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire’, *History of Science*, 32 (1994), pp. 269-315; Adrian Desmond, ‘Redefining the X-Axis: “Professionals”, “Amateurs” and the Making of Mid-Victorian Biology: A Progress Report’, *Journal of the History of Biology*, 34 (2001), pp. 3-50; Gowan Dawson, Chris Lintott and Sally Shuttleworth, ‘Constructing Scientific Communities: Citizen Science in the Nineteenth and Twenty-First Centuries’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20 (2015), pp. 246-254.

of the ‘professional scientist’ came to be imbued with ideals of elite masculinity.¹²⁸ This raises particularly pertinent questions for this study as to the unsettled distinctions and confrontations between a ‘profession’ of geography and the stay-at-home man of science, and the underlying, yet crucial presence of a masculinising discourse that influenced how these scientific identities were presented and received.¹²⁹

An examination of the changing contexts of science over time and space has led to a sustained focus on ‘methodology’, as scientific practice and performance and as disciplined and regulated procedure. Studies have come to examine the styles, methods, and impacts of scientific exploration, drawing attention to developments in natural philosophy regarding that combination of plainness in speech and print, adoption of mathematics, and regulation in method and experimental procedure, that have developed out of a long tradition of empiricism and the Scientific Revolution. Michael T. Bravo has identified and deconstructed the pervading discourses of ‘precision’ and ‘accuracy’ in the eighteenth century, in which the ingredients of precision are quite familiar: ‘the use of exact instruments, the keeping of meticulous records, the development of new techniques of sketching, and the emergence of new forms for organising substantial amounts of information in travel narratives’.¹³⁰ However, these attempts to collect and gather measurements, aided by calibrated scientific instruments to add authority, were ‘rarely entirely convincing’. Consequently, Bravo advocates not for the identification of instances of precision, but for a discussion of the ‘ubiquity of precision, its valorisation and its widespread acceptance as a meta-discourse’ in order to unpack the meaning and significance of ‘precise’ knowledge in scientific travel.¹³¹ It has

¹²⁸ Heather Ellis, ‘Knowledge, Character and Professionalisation in Nineteenth-Century British Science’, *History of Education*, 43 (2014), pp. 777-792.

¹²⁹ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*; Ruth Barton, ‘Men of Science: Language, Identity, and Professionalisation in the Mid-Victorian Scientific Community’, *History of Science*, 41 (2003), pp. 73-119.

¹³⁰ Bravo, ‘Precision and Curiosity in Scientific Travel’, p. 181. See also, Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, Christian Licoppe, and H. Otto Sibum (eds), *Instruments, Travel and Science: Itineraries of Precision from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹³¹ Bravo, ‘Precision and Curiosity in Scientific Travel’, p. 181.

become increasingly apparent that there was not a straightforward shift to modern empiricism. Specifically, Withers has shown how in the early decades of the nineteenth century there was an ‘uncertainty and epistemic’ hesitancy that was intrinsic to geographical and cartographic work as it was put into practice. In his study of how British Colonial Officers mapped Central Asia, it is revealed that the comparative practices of Enlightenment reasoning and the ‘scientific methods’ of empirical encounter and direct observation were both relied upon to suggest that ‘something between the two was underway’.¹³²

The issue of ‘understanding’ has become central to these debates over scientific method, particularly in histories of travel and exploration, as much of the world was being made visible for the first time to European audiences. Approaching this history of scientific travel from a post colonial perspective, Gayatri Spivak claims that discovery was a transformative performance that sought to legitimise the divergent approaches to knowing the world and whose motivations proved constant: ‘this worlding actually is also a texting, textualising, a making into art, making into an object to be understood’.¹³³

Knowledge emerging from travel has been viewed as special not only because it attempted to capture and reconstruct unseen places, but also because it was actively ‘inscribed in space’.¹³⁴ It was the product of a mediating, mobile actor who facilitated the translation of a distant reality into a proximate representation. As descriptions of distant places could not be tested or demonstrated before a metropolitan audience in order to verify the truth and reliability of captured knowledges, much attention has been given to these problems of communicating ‘at a distance’ and the representations

¹³² Withers, ‘On Enlightenment’s Margins’, p. 5.

¹³³ Gayatri Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic* (New York: Routledge), p. 1.

¹³⁴ Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), p. 245.

and inscriptions that emerged in support of knowledge claims.¹³⁵ The credibility of field observations is the subject of a burgeoning literature. Historians and philosophers of science have become increasingly interested in ‘trust’, and questions of how it was engendered and maintained and how it shaped the making and transmission of new knowledge about the world. This has come to inform many histories about the new forms of scientific travel that emerged from the seventeenth into the nineteenth century.¹³⁶ As Dorinda Outram has outlined, explorers’ knowledge can be viewed as:

The exemplification of Enlightenment concerns about the difficulty of knowing anything securely about the external world of making a secure relationship between knowledge and the knower, or of persuading others of the validity of knowledge gathered through ineluctably individual sense impressions.¹³⁷

Steven Shapin has shown how a judgement on the ‘accuracy’ of travellers’ testimonies was arrived at not just through assessment of methodological precision, but also by evaluating the traveller’s social standing, or, what he has termed, their ‘epistemological decorum’. In relation to seventeenth-century science and following John Locke’s maxims on trust, Shapin has demonstrated how trust was ascribed to ‘gentleman’, with

¹³⁵ Driver, ‘Distance and Disturbance’; Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*.

¹³⁶ On ‘truthfulness’ and ‘trustworthiness’ in scientific enquiry, see Steven Shapin, ‘The House of Experiment in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Isis*, 79 (1988), pp. 373-404; “‘A Scholar and a Gentleman’”: The Problematic Identity of the Scientific Practitioner in Early Modern England’, *History of Science*, 29 (1991), pp. 279-327; Lorraine Daston, ‘Marvellous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe’, *Critical Inquiry*, 18 (1991), pp. 93-124; Daniel Carey, ‘Complicating Nature’s History: Travellers and Travel Narratives in the Early Royal Society’, *Annals of Science*, 54 (1997), pp. 269-292; Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Reporting, Mapping, Trusting: Making Geographical Knowledge in the late Seventeenth Century’, *Isis*, 90 (1999), pp. 497-521; Mario Biagioli and Peter Galison (eds), *Scientific Authorship: Credit and Intellectual Property in Science* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Daniela Bleichmar, ‘The Geography of Observation: Distance and Visibility in Eighteenth-Century Botanical Travel’, in Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck (eds), *Histories of Scientific Observation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 373-395.

¹³⁷ Outram, ‘New Spaces in Natural History’, pp. 284-285.

credibility being mapped onto the ‘contours ... of society’.¹³⁸ Yet, credibility as forming an accepted belief was also a maxim of method, with practical rigour, logical consistency, and rhetorical appropriateness also being shown to be as significant as social worth in the evaluation of an individual’s testimony.¹³⁹ Most travellers at this time were young, unknown men who held little scientific training, so there was a pressing need to expose fictional tales and expunge fabricated evidence from their accounts. Indeed, a number of studies have critically examined the notion of the ‘travel liar’, and the literary strategies through which both exaggerated and wholly fictitious claims were presented as fact.¹⁴⁰ Judgements about the reliability of the representation of ‘new’ knowledge, therefore, came from a consideration of the character of the person who assembled the evidence, as well as the nature of evidence itself.

These concerns have also seen historians of science shift their emphasis away from ‘character’ to view credibility as being inscribed on the physical body of the explorer. The rhetoric of science, travel, and sacrifice have become central to examining these histories of truth making in relation to eighteenth and nineteenth-century knowledge. Within this, much attention has been paid to drawing out ‘physical courage and ‘bodily comportment’ as significant modes of assessing explorers’ claims to

¹³⁸ Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, p. 62, 212; John Dunn, ‘The Concept of “Trust” in the Politics of John Locke’, in Richard Rorty, Jerome B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner (eds), *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 279-301. More specifically in relation to ‘epistemological decorum’, Shapin outlines ‘seven maxims for the evaluation of testimony canvassed in the seventeenth-century literature: (i) assent to testimony which is plausible; (ii) assent to testimony which is multiple; (iii) assent to testimony which is consistent; (iv) assent to testimony which is immediate; (v) assent to testimony from knowledgeable or skilled sources; (vi) assent to testimony given in a manner which inspires a just confidence; and (vii) assent to testimony from sources of acknowledged integrity and disinterestedness’. See Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, p. 212.

¹³⁹ Palmira Fontes da Costa, ‘The Making of Extraordinary Facts: Authentication of Singularities of Nature at the Royal Society of London in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 33 (2002), pp. 265-288.

¹⁴⁰ Percy G. Adams, *Travellers and Travel Liars, 1660–1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington, KY.: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), especially Chapter 3; Zweder R. W. M. von Martels (ed.), *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery, and Observation in Travel Writing* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

scientific credibility and moral authority.¹⁴¹ The works of Outram and Michael Heffernan have shown how the body became the ‘stigmata of truth’ for the explorer; but this was a layered representation that also sought to illustrate ‘tragic vulnerability’.¹⁴² As Outram has indicated, ‘without that vulnerability the explorer could not manifest in his own person the moral economy which made his reporting acceptable as authentic knowledge’.¹⁴³ Such rhetoric has been identified in the ‘peculiarly British valorisation’ of injury and death as a form of martyrdom to science.¹⁴⁴ This has been particularly levelled at studying the almost deification of Dr David Livingstone and Captain Robert Falcon Scott.¹⁴⁵

Whilst the figure of the explorer has been read as a ‘romantic travel script’, the variations in the agenda underpinning exploratory expeditions led to the image of the explorer being represented in subtly different ways. Thompson warns that exploration was not always ‘constructed as a feat of suffering and endurance’ and the exploratory discourse of the mid-nineteenth century followed ‘a much more objectivist paradigm’, in line with the empirical underpinnings of many of the nineteenth-century expeditions.¹⁴⁶ In relation to the portrayal of Livingstone, Driver has drawn out the tensions between the explorer's persona as ‘(mis)adventurer’ and as ‘scientist’.¹⁴⁷ Such views contend that

¹⁴¹ Michael Heffernan, “A Dream as Frail as those of Ancient Time”: The In-Credible Geographies of Timbuctoo’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 19 (2001), pp. 203-225, p. 203. For work on the body, forms of embodied inscription, European authority and indigenous difference in the late Enlightenment, see Simon Schaffer, ‘On Seeing Me Write: Inscription Devices in the South Seas’, *Representations*, 97 (2007), pp. 90-122.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 216; Outram, ‘On being Perseus’; Christopher Lawrence and Steven Shapin (eds), *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹⁴³ Outram, ‘On being Perseus’, p. 292.

¹⁴⁴ Heffernan, “A Dream as Frail as those of Ancient Time”, p. 218.

¹⁴⁵ Justin D. Livingstone, ‘A “Body” of Evidence: The Posthumous Presentation of David Livingstone’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 40 (2012), pp. 1-24; John Wylie, ‘Earthly Poles: The Antarctic Voyages of Scott and Amundsen’, in Alison Blunt and Cheryl McEwan (eds), *Postcolonial Geographies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 169-183.

¹⁴⁶ Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller*, p. 183.

¹⁴⁷ Driver, *Geography Militant*.

this balance between objective scientific observer and the tragically vulnerable traveller were ‘fundamental’ to exploration as both a popular and credible pursuit.¹⁴⁸

Although these studies of the ‘marked’ body initiate a clear corporeal dialectic between the ‘active’ life of the explorer and the ‘comfortable’ life of the untravelled geographer, it is a distinction that remains insufficiently examined.¹⁴⁹ As Livingstone notes, in relation to the exploring geographer, the body was a site of contestation.¹⁵⁰ Such an approach, levelled at the sedentary geographer to how they developed credible knowledge, would reveal much about the extension and application of trust. This would move beyond the uncomplicated view of the ‘armchair’ geographer as ‘languidly discoursing on theoretical geography from the comfort of his salon or study’, in order to add critical depth to the studies of Lambert and Withers by showing how these armchair geographers were able to assert theories of knowledge made at a distance, in the face of those who had traversed that distance.¹⁵¹

Where attention has been paid to ‘armchair’ geographers, the focus has been on their role in the judgement of credibility as part of the metropolitan science community. As Dane Kennedy characterises, they assumed a ‘disciplinary role that inevitably led them into conflict with explorers’.¹⁵² These assessments of ‘new’ geographical information were influenced, if not determined, by a complex and shifting rhetoric of adjudication in which scrutiny of evidence and methodological procedure occurred alongside moral judgements about the character and status of rival claimants. The role of institutions and their collective construction and evaluation of a claimant’s credibility

¹⁴⁸ Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller*, p. 183.

¹⁴⁹ Driver, ‘The Active Life’.

¹⁵⁰ Livingstone, ‘A “Body” of Evidence’.

¹⁵¹ Driver, ‘The Active Life’; Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*; Withers, ‘Mapping the Niger, 1798–1832’.

¹⁵² Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, p. 45.

have been at the fore of these studies as the doctrine of the solitary individual traveller has been broken down.¹⁵³

Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar have demonstrated how scientific ‘facts’ were the result of consensus and the application of agreed epistemological criteria, as much as the act of discovery itself.¹⁵⁴ These systems of ordered procedures have been examined through the patronage cultures of institutions and individuals, who formed and circulated particular ‘economies of truth’.¹⁵⁵ The notion of a single scientific method has been rejected in favour of local constructions of credibility and particular epistemic cultures.¹⁵⁶ The knowledge of the individual is taken as firmly rooted in the authoritative knowledge of their community, which has been historically mediated from the accepted knowledge of preceding communities.¹⁵⁷ The phenomenological insistence on the social character of truth connects it with Foucauldian notions of power, in which truth is formed and maintained through ‘a system of ordered procedures for the production, circulation and operation of statements’.¹⁵⁸ The Royal Society performed an exercise in collective action through the circulation of manuals, which provided systems of ordered procedures to guide travellers in the correct scientific method. David Lux and Harold Cook note that ‘without the ability to place trust in reports of matters of fact that had

¹⁵³ Driver, *Geography Militant*; Jones, ‘Measuring the World’; Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Science, Scientific Instruments, and Questions of Method in Nineteenth-Century British Geography’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 38 (2013), pp. 167-179.

¹⁵⁴ Bruno Latour and Simon Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (New York: Sage Publications, 1979).

¹⁵⁵ Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ John A. Schuster and Richard R. Yeo, *The Politics and Rhetoric of Scientific Method: Historical Studies* (Dordrecht: Reidel/Kluwer, 1986); Thomas F. Gieryn, *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Karin Knorr Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences make Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹⁵⁷ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*; Philip Kitcher, *The Nature of Mathematical Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); ‘Authority, Deference and the Role of Individual Reason’, in Ernan McMullin (ed), *The Social Dimensions of Science* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 244-271.

¹⁵⁸ Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*, p. 36.

not been personally experienced by people like oneself, the new philosophy would have remained fragmented and isolated in local social and geographical spaces'.¹⁵⁹

The 'exploration establishment' as a network of agencies and individuals has not only been the focus of studies looking at both the commercial and strategic applications of the information gathered by explorers, but also how it operated as a powerful system in the extension and circulation of trust.¹⁶⁰ David Miller's work on the scientific empire of Joseph Banks examines how he functioned as a 'centre of calculation' by constructing and controlling an international network of people and things, and came to decide which knowledges could be accepted by the metropolitan community.¹⁶⁰ The break up of the Royal Society alongside Banks' death have been observed by many as the decline in the power of this knowledge empire. Yet biographical studies of later powerful patrons of science, who straddled many authoritative scientific and political offices, have also emphasised their significant role in controlling the organisation of exploration and negotiating the credibility of explorers. Fergus Fleming uncovered the system of exploration set up and managed by Sir John Barrow for trialling his speculations on the Arctic.¹⁶¹ Long standing RGS President, Roderick Murchison, also had an extensive network of exchange, which has led Stafford to characterise him as the 'scientist of empire'.¹⁶²

Attention to the making and reception of geographical knowledge has also been more recently examined in relation to travel writing, with Innes M. Keighren, Charles W. J. Withers, and Bill Bell drawing out the 'regime of credibility' that was employed by

¹⁵⁹ David S. Lux and Harold J. Cook, 'Closed Circles or Open Networks?: Communicating at a Distance During the Scientific Revolution', *History of Science*, 36 (1998), pp. 179-211, p. 181.

¹⁶⁰ David P. Miller, 'Joseph Banks, Empire and "Centres of Calculation" in Late Hanoverian London', in David P. Miller and Peter H. Reill (eds), *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany and Representations of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 21-37; David Mackay, 'Agents of Empire: The Banksian Collectors and the Evaluation of New Lands', in Miller and Reill (eds), *Visions of Empire*, pp. 38-57.

¹⁶¹ Fergus Fleming, *Barrow's Boys: A Stirring Story of Daring, Fortitude and Outright Lunacy* (New York: Grove Press, 2001).

¹⁶² Robert A. Stafford, *Scientist of Empire: Sir Robert Murchison, Scientific Exploration and Victorian Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

the prolific nineteenth-century travel publishing house of John Murray. This study shows how credibility in print encompassed three overlapping activities and strategies; namely, ‘scholarly citation; authenticity and self representation (including disguise); and instrumentation’.¹⁶³

Interpretations of geography’s history as a science have viewed these shifting social and scientific relations as a period of ambivalence, in which the performance of observation as a form of ‘ocular demonstration’ held a major role. Stoddart asserts this ascendancy of vision through his description of fieldwork as taking many forms, yet ‘one of the geographer’s greatest gifts is good trained eye sight, to apprehend as well as comprehend’ and its history is one of ‘critical observation’.¹⁶⁴ Yet, as Alix Cooper remarks, ‘little consensus had in fact been forged by [the eighteenth] century’s end on how to distinguish the truly scientific fieldworker from the dilettante ... beyond the standard injunction to ‘observe nature’’.¹⁶⁵ Individual empiricism was dealt with suspiciously and critically as the traveller was seen as an ‘almost always imprecise observer’.¹⁶⁶ Historians of geography and of science have begun to examine the politics of this vision, and how the practical epistemology of science was embedded in the practical social theory of truth. The question of the ‘geographer’ being recognised as a professional scientific practitioner remained unanswered by the nineteenth century, but it was a category that was to be made by the ‘correct’ method. In addressing how geography as a scientific subject was, in practice, ‘disciplining’ itself, critical engagements have focused on the proliferation of travel guides being written and circulated,

¹⁶³ Innes M. Keighren, Charles W. J. Withers and Bill Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773–1859* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015), p. 75.

¹⁶⁴ Stoddart, *On Geography*, p. 56; Richard C. Powell, ‘The Sirens’ Voices? Field Practices and Dialogue in Geography’, *Area*, 34 (2002), pp. 261-271.

¹⁶⁵ Alix Cooper, ‘From the Alps to Egypt (and back again): Dolomieu, Scientific Voyaging and the Construction of the Field in Eighteenth-Century Natural History’, in Crosbie Smith and J. Agar (eds), *Making Space for Science: Territorial Themes in the Shaping of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1998), pp. 39-63, p. 44.

¹⁶⁶ Condorcet, 1795, cited in Neil Safier, *Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Science and South America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 9.

particularly under the auspices of the RGS.¹⁶⁷ These studies work to deconstruct how they functioned as texts of disciplining and training of the eye and body, alongside their encouragement of the use of scientific instruments in the ‘regulation of observation, inscription and measurement’.¹⁶⁸ These disciplinary discourses have been deconstructed to address how the form and conduct of direct observation, reliable authorisation, and the use of instrumentation was constructed and presented. Set within this wider context of instructive rhetoric of early science, Driver’s analysis of the RGS’s 1854 publication *Hints to Travellers* reveals how it sought to ‘resolve some fundamental dilemmas about the means and status of observation in the field’.¹⁶⁹ His examination unveils how the RGS itself struggled to impose authority over geography as an emergent, yet far from coherent, field of enquiry.

The recent work by Withers has called for a historiography of geographical science that brings together scholarship in the history of technology and the history of science. Such a revived critical history seeks to shift attention beyond the cognitive content and institutional context of geography’s history and embrace ‘matters of epistemological procedure, moral conduct and authorial regimen in relation to precision instrumentation’— as a matter of practicality and procedure.¹⁷⁰ This draws influence from Davis Baird and his ‘philosophy of scientific instruments’, which urges consideration to

¹⁶⁷ Felix Driver, ‘Scientific Exploration and the Construction of Geographical Knowledge: Hints to Travellers’, *Finisterra: Revista Portuguesa de Geografia*, 33, no. 65 (1998), pp. 21-30.

¹⁶⁸ Withers, ‘Science, Scientific Instruments, and Questions of Method’, p. 168.

¹⁶⁹ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 66; ‘Scientific Exploration and the Construction of Geographical Knowledge’.

¹⁷⁰ Withers, ‘Science, Scientific Instruments, and Questions of Method’, p. 167; Fraser MacDonald and Charles W. J. Withers (eds), *Geography, Technology and Instruments of Exploration* (London: Ashgate, 2015); Simon Schaffer, ‘Easily Cracked: Scientific Instruments in States of Disrepair’, *Isis*, 102, (2011), pp. 706-717. For other studies that focus not just on the ‘idea’ of a geographical science, but also on its actions and products as forms of scientific practice, see David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain: A Social History* (London: Penguin Books, 1976); Jane Camerini, ‘Remains of the Day: Early Victorians in the Field’, in Lightman (ed.), *Victorian Science in Context*, pp. 354-377.

be given to ‘thing knowledge’, and not to judge truth claims on the authority of texts alone.¹⁷¹

Despite other studies of these instruction manuals and guides recognising that they stress the need for calibration, regulation and standardisation, relatively little attention has been given to the technologies, instruments, and objects involved in achieving these scientific aims.¹⁷² Fraser MacDonald and Charles Withers explicate that geography’s histories should examine ‘the ways in which “instrument epistemology” works to produce representations of the object under study’.¹⁷³ This combination of historiographical threads marks the initiation of a move to more interdisciplinary study of instruments and instrumental performance by illuminating the ‘many differently configured connections between science, technology, geography, and exploration today, in the future, and in the past’.¹⁷⁴ In embracing the material turn and attending to histories of technology, the active role of material culture, agency, and artifactuality can be viewed more clearly, through objects, instruments, and embodiments, as both real and imagined. As such, this emphasis on these technological bases to the emergence of practice signals a move away from the centrality of the practitioner and their bodily exertions towards the role of ‘things’, such as machines, props, photos, clothing and devices. Within this frame, these objects are, according to Trevor Barnes, no longer the ‘props’, but the ‘stuff’ of exploration.¹⁷⁵ Such instrument-centred analyses work to

¹⁷¹ Davis Baird, *Thing Knowledge: A Philosophy of Scientific Instruments* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004). See also, Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Biographies of Scientific Objects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); *Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004).

¹⁷² Deborah Jean Warner, ‘What is a Scientific Instrument, When Did it Become One, and Why?’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 23 (1990), pp. 83-93.

¹⁷³ Fraser MacDonald and Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Introduction: Geography, Technology and Instruments of Exploration’, in MacDonald and Withers (eds), *Geography, Technology and Instruments*, pp. 1-13, p. 6.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁵ Trevor Barnes, in MacDonald and Withers (eds), *Geography, Technology and Instruments of Exploration*, outside back cover.

‘document moments in the active working life of the devices and consider what the instruments’ travels reveal about the nature of exploration’.¹⁷⁶

These analyses of the material culture of exploratory technologies have implications for this study of ‘armchair geography’ and the identification of ‘armchair’ practices in nineteenth-century geographical science. Rather than viewing these sedentary practices as contemplative and cerebral, which implies that they were immaterial, an engagement with the processes and products of armchair geography – books, maps, papers – would reveal the instruments and methods used in their formation, and also show how they circulated as objects of contestation or perhaps clarification and correction. This brings the role of the ‘book’ as an instrument further into view. Whilst references are made to certain travellers who journey with ‘book in hand’, these entries are limited in the histories of nineteenth-century geography as it was often unclear whether books that were cited on book lists or within published works had actually been read in motion.¹⁷⁷ Through the reconstitution of the home and field libraries of eighteenth-century naturalists and travellers, Daniela Bleichmar and Neil Safier have attended to the relationships between travellers and their libraries.¹⁷⁸ Bleichmar charts how books in the field became books to ‘see with’ and that they were often involved in corroborating or challenging published statements or the drafted conjectures of others, which has led to her observation that ‘books mediated between

¹⁷⁶ Eugene Rae, Catherine Souch and Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Instruments in the Hands of Others: The Life and Liveliness of Instruments of British Geographical Exploration, c.1860–c.1930’, in MacDonald and Withers (eds), *Geography, Technology and Instruments of Exploration*, pp. 139–159, p. 140.

¹⁷⁷ Keighren, Withers and Bell, *Travels into Print*, p. 80. See also, Maria Frasca-Spada and Nicholas Jardine (eds), *Books and the Sciences in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁷⁸ Daniela Bleichmar, ‘Exploration in Print: Books and Botanical Travel from Spain to the Americas in the Late Eighteenth Century’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 70 (2007), pp. 129–151; *Visible Empire: Botanical Expeditions and Visual Culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Neil Safier, ‘“Every day that I travel ... is a page that I turn”: Reading and Observing in Eighteenth-Century Amazonia’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 70 (2007), pp. 103–128; *Measuring the New World*, especially Chapter 3; Anne Secord, ‘Pressed into Service: Specimens, Space, and Seeing in Botanical Practice’, in David N. Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers (eds), *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 283–310.

the cabinet and the field'; it brought them into dialogue and made the cabinet potentially as mobile as the field.¹⁷⁹

Historical Geographies of Science

Despite science once being taken to be 'the view from nowhere' with its knowledge being presented as separate from and unaffected by the situated and social conditions of its making, circulation, and reception, it is now acknowledged that science everywhere bears the mark of its specific, local circumstances.¹⁸⁰ The imprint of this spatial turn in the history and geography of science has led to science being viewed as reflecting the 'local conditions in its making, cognitive content, mobility, and reception', and that science is a social construction, that is made from specific and located social and political interests. The discussion by David Turnbull on how cartographic knowledge in early modern Europe was made in particular places for precise purposes states that 'all knowledge is constructed at specific sites ... Thus a fundamental characteristic of scientific knowledge is its localness'.¹⁸¹ This attention to the importance of 'locality' has built upon the agenda of the sociology of scientific knowledge, of science as a social practice. Significantly, the work of Henri Lefebvre has influenced how we view space, as something that is 'produced' and is itself 'productive of different social and material relationships'. This constructivist view shows spaces to not be a mere 'container', but rather a social production in which social relationships are embedded.¹⁸² As such, the primacy of space in understanding relations has been predicated on the sense that,

¹⁷⁹ Bleichmar, 'Exploration in Print', p. 148. On the wider nineteenth-century cultures of reading, science, literature, and book materiality, see James A. Secord, *Visions of Science: Books and Readers at the Dawn of the Victorian Age* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015).

¹⁸⁰ Shapin, 'Placing the View from Nowhere'; Withers, *Geography and Science in Britain*, p. 4.

¹⁸¹ David Turnbull, 'Cartography and Science in Early Modern Europe: Mapping the Construction of Knowledge Spaces', *Imago Mundi*, 46 (1996), pp. 5-24, p. 6.

¹⁸² Charles W. J. Withers and David N. Livingstone, 'Thinking Geographically about Nineteenth-Century Science', in Livingstone and Withers, *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science*, pp. 1-19, p. 1; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 89, 142.

‘geography matters, not for the simplistic and overly used reason that everything happens in space, but because *where* things happen is crucial to knowing *how* and *why* they happen’.¹⁸³

The direction of this spatial turn in science was signed in the relativist agenda of the ‘place of knowledge’, formulated by notable sociologists of scientific knowledge, Adi Ophir and Steven Shapin; namely that ‘relativism can be practically defined through the notion that all knowledge claims and judgments secure their credibility not through absolute standards but through the workings of *local* causes operating in contexts of judgment’.¹⁸⁴ Consideration to the local nature of science’s making therefore indicates that it should not be taken for granted.¹⁸⁵ Shapin’s critical attention to the establishment of systematic experimentation in the late seventeenth century illustrates how it was always a situated practical activity.¹⁸⁶ Most notably, Livingstone has worked to revoke the idea that science has ever been a disembodied and universal enterprise. He moves towards the ‘cultivation of a spatialised historiography of science’, which he refined as one which concentrates on the venues where science was produced and consumed, asserting that ‘in important ways, scientific knowledge is always a product of specific spaces’ and that ‘to claim otherwise is to displace science from the culture of which it is so profoundly a part’.¹⁸⁷ These ideas have influenced a variety of ideas on how to conceptualise, approach, organise, and classify the geography of science, while seeking

¹⁸³ Barney Wharf and Santa Arias, ‘Introduction: The Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences’, in Barney Wharf and Santa Arias (eds), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1-10, p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ Adi Ophir and Steven Shapin, ‘The Place of Knowledge: A Methodological Survey’, *Science in Context*, 4 (1991), pp. 3-21, pp. 5-6.

¹⁸⁵ Shapin, ‘Placing the View from Nowhere’, pp. 6-7.

¹⁸⁶ Steven Shapin, ‘The Mind is Its Own Place: Science and Solitude in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Science in Context*, 4 (1991), pp. 191-218; Crosbie Smith and Jon Agar, ‘Introduction: Making Space for Science’, in Crosbie Smith and Jon Agar (eds), *Making Space for Science: Territorial Themes in the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 1-23. Golinski’s *Making Natural Knowledge*; David N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003).

¹⁸⁷ Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, p. 86. See also, David N. Livingstone, ‘The Spaces of Knowledge: Contributions Towards a Historical Geography of Science’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 13 (1995), pp. 5-34; Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Place and the ‘Spatial Turn’ in Geography and History’, *Journal for the History of Ideas*, 70 (2009), pp. 637-658.

to attend to its complex and interconnected spatiality, social practices, and politics of mobility, and issues of embodiment, reception, and credibility.¹⁸⁸

The effect of these endeavours from within the history of science and from within geography has been a number of narratives that attend to specific spaces in which science was made, circulated, and received, such as museums, laboratories, botanical gardens, and ships.¹⁸⁹ Yet, differentiating the problematic terms ‘production’ and ‘reception’ of knowledge within and between these spaces has been a central concern. Whilst James Secord has discussed the different spatial manifestations and geographies of reception and interpretation – what he has called, ‘knowledge in transit’ – these are not always readily apparent and discernable for examination.¹⁹⁰ Attention has been paid to the different scales of science’s production and to what ‘local’ means, and criticisms have been levied at this ‘local emphasis’ which, Steven Harris asserts, has led researchers to choose ‘research sites that are spatially and temporally circumscribed ... [and] the selection of scientific practices that were themselves spatially and temporally circumscribed’.¹⁹¹ This has raised important areas of inquiry on the exact nature of ‘the

¹⁸⁸ Withers and Livingstone, ‘Thinking Geographically about Nineteenth-Century Science’, p. 2. For examples, see Smith and Agar (eds), *Making Space for Science*; Steven J. Harris, ‘Long Distance Corporations, Big Sciences, and the Geography of Knowledge’, *Configurations* 6 (1998), pp. 269-305; Richard C. Powell, ‘Geographies of Science: Histories, Localities, Practices, Futures’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 31 (2007), pp. 309-330.

¹⁸⁹ Donald L. Opitz, ‘“This House is a Temple of Research”: Country-House Centres for Late Victorian Science’, in David Clifford, Elisabeth Wadge, Alex Warwick and Martin Willis (eds) *Repositioning Victorian Sciences: Shifting Centres in Nineteenth-Century Scientific Thinking* (London: Anthem Press, 2006), pp. 143-153; ‘“Behind Folding Shutters in Whittingehame House”: Alice Blanche Balfour (1850–1936) and Amateur Natural History’, *Archives of Natural History*, 31 (2004), pp. 330-348; Richard Sorrenson, ‘The Ship as a Scientific Instrument in the Eighteenth Century’, *Osiris*, 11 (1996), pp. 221-236; Secord, ‘Science in the Pub’; Robert E. Kohler, ‘Lab History: Reflections’, *Isis*, 99 (2008), pp. 761-768. Cf. Graeme Gooday, ‘Placing or Replacing the Laboratory in the History of Science?’, *Isis*, 99 (2008), pp. 783-795. For a spatially sensitive approach to the global history of knowledge, see Diarmid A. Finnegan and Jonathan Jeffrey Wright (eds), *Spaces of Global Knowledge: Exhibition, Encounter and Exchange in an Age of Empire* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2016).

¹⁹⁰ James A. Secord, ‘Knowledge in Transit’, *Isis*, 95 (2004), pp. 654-672; *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

¹⁹¹ Harris, ‘Long Distance Corporations’, p. 297.

local' and the scale at which these studies of the geographies of science, its movements, and forms of transmission should be conducted.¹⁹²

This exhibition of the spatiality of scientific enterprise has initiated a research agenda charged with examining the geography of geographical knowledge. Withers attests that these claims 'offer themselves to empirical testing' in geography, as the making of its knowledge also depends upon knowing in which sites it was made, what the connections were between them, and upon illustrating the epistemological procedure in and between given sites.¹⁹³ This was a call that echoed Driver's appeal to geographers to redirect their attention to the place of the 'field' in geography's collective disciplinary imagination. Reflecting on the field as a category of 'scientific place', it is clear that it does not conform to a simple or static definition.¹⁹⁴

The 'field' has long been regarded as central to geographical practice and its historiography emerged with, and is firmly situated in, the exploratory tradition. This spatial referent has been conceptualised as both a material and imaginative space: a 'fusion of the physical and representational'.¹⁹⁵ Epistemic virtue came to be decided by the rhetoric that insisted that no source of factual information possessed greater reliability than the direct experience of an individual. Such narratives have been subject to sustained analytical and historical reflection within both geography and the history and philosophy of science, initiating a disruption to the conventional notions of fieldwork.¹⁹⁶ It has been shown to be at once and always a complex enterprise which

¹⁹² Withers and Livingstone, 'Thinking Geographically about Nineteenth-Century Science'.

¹⁹³ Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁴ Driver, 'Editorial: Fieldwork in Geography'. For a further iteration of Driver's appeal and a response to it, see David R. Stoddart and William M. Adams, 'Fieldwork and Unity in Geography', in John Anthony Matthews and David T. Herbert (eds), *Unifying Geography: Common Heritage, Shared Future* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 46-61.

¹⁹⁵ Driver, 'Editorial: Fieldwork in Geography', p. 267.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 267-268; Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Teresa Ploszajska, *Geographical Education, Empire and Citizenship: Geographical Teaching and Learning in English Schools, 1870-1944* (Cambridge: Historical Geography Research Series, no. 33, 1999); Kristian H. Nielsen, Michael Harbsmeier and Christopher J. Ries (eds), *Scientists and Scholars in the Field: Studies in the History of Fieldwork and Expeditions* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2012);

gives it great critical purchase for examining histories of how geography was constructed at a distance, and the process of constituting legitimate ‘fields’ and ways of being in the ‘field’ in order to legitimately gather and make credible geographical knowledge.

As a space of experiment and encounter, the field has been shown to be a liminal site of continual construction by both inhabitants of the field itself and those elsewhere, working through ‘a variety of spatial practices ... the field in this sense is not just “there”’.¹⁹⁷ A need has been identified to discover the more particular ways in which the ‘field’ is produced and reproduced through physical and cultural practices.¹⁹⁸ As Anna Skeels has urged:

Once we move beyond the seamless authority of geographic texts, legitimated by calls to the ‘field’, and actually look at what work “in the field” entails ... the geographer is forced to come down from a privileged position on the hill and face up to a more critical perspective on the authority of field work amidst “culture”.¹⁹⁹

It has become evident that to understand scientific endeavour one needs to attend to the various spaces in which it was conducted as ‘geography matters in scientific inquiry’.²⁰⁰ These revived historical geographies of knowledge have, however, had less impact on the historiography of geographical knowledge. Whilst attempts have been

Isla Forsyth, ‘The More-Than-Human Geographies of Field Science’, *Geography Compass*, 7 (2013), pp. 527-539.

¹⁹⁷ Driver, ‘Editorial: Fieldwork in Geography’, p. 267.

¹⁹⁸ Outlined as required in Powell, *Siren’s Voices*, p. 264.

¹⁹⁹ Anna C. Skeels, ‘A Passage to Premodernity: Carl Sauer Repositioned in the Field’ (MA Thesis, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, 1993), p. 229.

²⁰⁰ Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, p. 16; Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989); Richard C. Powell, ‘The Rigours of an Arctic Experiment: The Precarious Authority of Field Practices in the Canadian High Arctic, 1958–1970’, *Environment and Planning A*, 39 (2007), pp. 1794-1811.

made to understand the precise epistemic and ontic nature of geographical science, the sites of its own experiment are only just emerging as a central area of concern. It has been noted that ‘the image of science as a placeless activity has bitten deep’ and led to a neglect of ‘the spaces of geographical knowledge’.²⁰¹ A closer engagement with historians of science is therefore required to foster a greater historiographical sophistication within the history of geography and its practices as ‘we miss something important if we regard fieldwork as merely the projection of thought, or a way of seeing’.²⁰²

A notable study in considering the sites of knowledge making was undertaken by Dorinda Outram, in which she exhumes where natural science was produced in the nineteenth century. This examination illustrates the alternative associations of varying forms of knowledge, ethics and authority. Specifically, it asserts how ‘reliable’ knowledge was made and inscribed in space through visceral movement across it, as opposed to ascetic study within a bounded site.²⁰³ The contentious relationship between knowledges of the field and of the study is not novel to historians of geography.²⁰⁴ In particular, Numa Broc has attended to the contrasting claims made by eighteenth-century French geographers. He identified differing typologies of the ‘traveller’, which were dependent on their spatial manifestation; namely the ‘scholarly’ geographer of the cabinet, who compiled maps and the ‘adventurous’ geographer, who actively searched

²⁰¹ Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, p. 184.

²⁰² Driver, ‘Editorial: Fieldwork in Geography’, p. 268. See also, Robert E. Kohler, ‘Labs: Naturalising the Lab’, *History of Science*, 40 (2002), pp. 473-501; *Landscapes and Labs: Exploring the Lab – Field Border in Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); ‘Place and Practice in Field Biology’, *History of Science*, 40 (2002), pp. 189-210; Diarmid A. Finnegan, ‘The Spatial Turn: Geographical Approaches in the History of Science’, *Journal of the History of Biology*, 41 (2008), pp. 369-388.

²⁰³ Outram, ‘New Spaces in Natural History’. For more on the concern with spaces of knowledge: Roger Cooter and Stephen Pumfrey, ‘Separate Spheres and Public Places: Reflections on the History of Science Popularisation and Science in Popular Culture’, *History of Science*, 32 (1994), pp. 237-67; Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Towards a History of Geography in the Public Sphere’, *History of Science*, 36 (1998), pp. 45-78.

²⁰⁴ Driver, *Geography Militant*.

for new knowledge.²⁰⁵ Outram moved this debate into the nineteenth century to suggest that whilst the emergent culture of exploration marked its identity as spatially distinct, it was not a stable and fixed boundary between the field and the cabinet.²⁰⁶

The notion of ‘fieldwork’ as a matter of sites and movement has been further examined not simply through its products, but by following the journey of the ‘geographer’ through blank space. Through his reconstruction of the social and individual geographies of the Zambesi Expedition (1858–1864), Dritsas has identified the distributed methodologies necessary, in the nineteenth century, for a project to succeed.²⁰⁷ This thoroughly ‘spatialised historiography of scientific practice’ urges one to treat an expedition as a historical object itself and not just a backdrop against which practices happened, with the sites of experiment acting as the arenas where fieldwork takes place and workers interact.²⁰⁸ These were not unified projects but suites of projects, dispersed through layers of activity and inhabited by networks of practitioners. By locating science in particular spaces, one can query where and how geographical factors came to play in the construction of scientific knowledge, and thereby chart their material effect.

These centralised metropolitan locations for the organisation of science and expeditions have also been viewed as social spaces: sites of presentation; exchange; discussion; and contestation that brought together many different people and views.²⁰⁹ Victorian science has been characterised as a ‘club science’, which emphasises the discursive nature of these spaces, as well as their empirical and technical objectives.²¹⁰ As

²⁰⁵ Numa Broc, *La Géographie des Philosophes. Géographes et voyageurs français au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Editions Ophrys, 1974).

²⁰⁶ Outram, ‘New Spaces in Natural History’.

²⁰⁷ Dritsas, *Zambesi*.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43, 110.

²⁰⁹ Clive Barnett, ‘Impure and Worldly Geography: The Africanist Discourse of the Royal Geographical Society, 1831–1873’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 23 (1998), pp. 239-251; Driver, *Geography Militant*.

²¹⁰ J. V. Jensen, ‘The X-Club: Fraternity of Victorian Scientists’, *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 5 (1970), pp. 63-72; Roy M. MacLeod, ‘The X-Club: A Social Network of Science in Late-Victorian

highlighted within histories of science, the results of expeditions could not be accepted as complete and credible until they had been subject to critical discussion and debate, were subsequently published and reviewed within reputable scientific journals, and the makers of its knowledge being credited with the accuracy of their claim. Dritsas has also examined how scientific authoritativeness and the methods used to secure it were implicated in the spaces that knowledge was produced, by attending to the ‘conflicts’ apparent in expeditionary science as findings were received from the field by the metropolitan community. He shows how the discussions at RGS meetings between explorers and critical geographers revealed ‘a distributed geography of credibility, production, and reception: produced, partly, in the field as specimens and reported tales and, also in part, upon returning home to be scrutinised’.²¹¹ The extension of knowledge from home communities unpacks further the epistemological relationships that connected the geographical narrative – how, where and why work was undertaken – to experiences in the field, and back again.

The spatially dispersed and distributed nature of exploration as existing between the field and the metropole has been examined in reference to the authoring, editing, and publication of travel literature. In addressing the specific authorial and editorial processes of Joseph Banks in the publication of Mungo Park’s *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1795), issues of geographical displacement and epistemological discontinuity have been exposed.²¹² Withers has shown how Banks established Parks’ authorial credibility and attributed certainty to the content and literary style of this travel

England’, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 24 (1970), pp. 305-322; David Cahan, ‘Institutions and Communities’, in David Cahan (ed.), *From Natural Philosophy to the Sciences: Writing the History of Nineteenth-Century Science* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), pp. 291-328.

²¹¹ Lawrence Dritsas, ‘Expeditionary Science: Conflicts of Method in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Geographical Discovery’, in Livingstone and Withers (eds), *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science*, pp. 255-278; Withers and Livingstone, ‘Thinking Geographically about Nineteenth-Century Science’, p. 10.

²¹² Withers, ‘Geography, Enlightenment and the Book’; Charles W. J. Withers and Innes M. Keighren, ‘Travels into Print: Authoring, Editing and Narratives of Travel and Exploration, c.1815–c.1857’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36 (2011), pp. 560-573.

book, without making the journey himself.²¹³ Whilst highlighting how authorship should be seen as a process, it also unsettles the physical facts of fieldwork; rather, the edits and amendments made by the untravelled editor present the illusion of fieldwork.

The site of the ‘armchair’ is significant for this investigation, yet it has been mostly used by others as a spatial referent to counterpoise knowledge formed in the study from compilation and textual synthesis against knowledge ‘actively’ gathered in the field. This has led to its consignment as a site of inaction, interiority, and immobility. In many ways, ‘armchair’ has been employed as an almost catchall term to capture a wide array of different spaces of study for those that did not venture ‘out’ into the field. It was an anachronism within the context of mid-nineteenth-century geography, as contemporaries termed it ‘critical geography’. Lambert draws out the politically loaded spatial referent of the ‘closet’ in a geographical debate between John Barrow and James MacQueen, which he shows was employed as a derogatory and dismissive term for discrediting the knowledge claims formed in the sedentary site of the study.²¹⁴ Whilst interest has been extended to the symbolic significance of the centrally located homes, such as Banks’ home at Soho Square, to view them as meeting places and locations where scientific works were written, received, and negotiated, these

²¹³ Others have addressed the complexities of geographical authorship and editing, and the epistemic practices and places of geographical writing in geography’s history, see Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Writing in Geography’s History: *Caledonia*, Networks of Correspondence and Geographical Knowledge in the Late Enlightenment’, *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 120 (2004), pp. 33-45; Miles Ogborn, ‘*Geographia*’s Pen: Writing, Geography and the Arts of Commerce, 1660–1760’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 30 (2004), pp. 294-315; *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Robert J. Mayhew, ‘Mapping Science’s Imagined Community: Geography as a Republic of Letters, 1600–1800’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 38 (2005), pp. 73-92; ‘Materialist Hermeneutics, Textuality and the History of Geography: Print Spaces in British Geography, c.1500–1900’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33 (2007), pp. 466-488; ‘Printing Posterity: Editing Varenus and the Construction of Geography’s History’, in Ogborn and Withers (eds), *Geographies of the Book*, pp. 157-187; Innes M. Keighren and Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Questions of Inscription and Epistemology in British Travellers’ Accounts of Early Nineteenth-Century South America’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101 (2011), pp. 1331-1346.

²¹⁴ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, pp. 125-127. For one of the few studies of making geographical knowledge ‘at home’ during the Enlightenment, see Dean W. Bond, ‘Enlightenment Geography in the Study: A. F. Büsching, J. D. Michaelis and the place of geographical knowledge in the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia, 1761–1761’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 51 (2016), pp. 64-75.

spaces have not yet been explicitly considered as sites of knowledge production in this context.²¹⁵

In order to illuminate the site of the ‘study’ or ‘cabinet’ as an active site of experiment, work in literary studies can be drawn on. The work of Diana Fuss into the domestic interiors of famed authors has shown them to be animated spaces of composition and creativity.²¹⁶ Bernd Stiegler has given attention to the room as holding the critical potential for travel showing how, through the entangled notions of travel, movement, and space, ‘room travellers’ were able to ‘travel in place’ in the context of their own domestic interior, and they could also explore the ‘familiar’ as previously unencountered. This study emphasises how travel is a ‘state of mind, rather than a physical activity’, further complicating the static nature of the ‘study room’ within the ‘armchair’ discourse which pervades current histories of geography.²¹⁷ Furthermore, studies in literary geographies have drawn on Sheila Hones’ conceptualisation of literary creation – as practice and process – as a ‘spatial event’.²¹⁸ This has led to research being undertaken into understanding how the act of reading and writing was a situated practice and lived experience: ‘a set of spatial practices that combine in different ways to bring the text into being’.²¹⁹ The inflection of this view has been made in studies of travel literature that have revealed how they open up ‘other spaces, dimensions and patterns of movement’ which enable the reader to travel through them, without having

²¹⁵ John Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Neil Chambers, *Joseph Banks and the British Museum: The World of Collecting, 1770–1830* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007). One study examines the significance of the garden for Charles Darwin at his home in Kent, where he wrote *On the Origin of the Species* (1859), see Michael Boulter, *Darwin’s Garden: Down House and the Origin of the Species* (London: Constable, 2008).

²¹⁶ Diana Fuss, *The Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them* (London: Routledge, 2004).

²¹⁷ Bernd Stiegler, *A History of Armchair Travel: Travelling in Place*, trans. Peter Filkins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 4, back cover.

²¹⁸ Sheila Hones, ‘Text as it Happens: Literary Geography’, *Geography Compass*, 2 (2008), pp. 1301-1307; ‘Literary Geography: The Novel as a Spatial Event’, in Stephen Daniels, Dydia Delyser, J. Nicholas Entrikin and Douglas Richardson (eds), *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 247-255.

²¹⁹ Angharad Saunders, ‘The Spatial Event of Writing: John Galsworthy and the creation of *Fraternity*’, *Cultural Geographies*, 20 (2013), pp. 285-298, p. 285.

to physically travel themselves.²²⁰ Clearly, much more remains to be done in reconstructing how the study of the stay-at-home geographer was physically constituted, inhabited, and used in the formation and reception of geographical knowledges.

Conclusion: Observations in and out of the field

This chapter has driven a critical route through histories of geography and histories and geographies of science as they now stand, showing not all have fully explored their links and connections with each other. In particular, there still exists a gap in addressing the historical geography of geography in the nineteenth century. The historiography of nineteenth-century geographical field practices requires further reflection and to be critically treated as a subject ‘worthy of historical enquiry in itself’.²²¹

Despite these relations, no studies have firmly situated themselves in the metropolitan study spaces of self-proclaimed geographers in the nineteenth century as they set out to read, write, and map places and peoples, drawn from the observations of others. Whilst these did not always produce reliable or accurate knowledge, the assumption that these synthetic surveys were static, irrelevant, and left overs from a previous age is to exclude significant questions about how geographical knowledge was formed and received, and the spaces through which exploration operated within the nineteenth century. This thesis, therefore, seeks to fill some of these gaps, and also to signpost directions and approaches for further study and historiographical developments by not viewing this period as one of ‘transition’, but one in which both earlier textual practices overlapped, co-existed, and connected with modern empiricism. In this way, it is not simply a ‘historical geography of armchair geography’, but a further elaboration of the multiple sites and practices of the early-to-mid Victorian ‘culture of

²²⁰ Ottmar Ette, *Literature on the Move*, trans. Katharina Vester (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), p. 9.

²²¹ Driver, ‘Editorial: Fieldwork in Geography’, p. 267.

exploration'. Such a research agenda speaks to the contention that the 'most pressing task for historians of geography' is to write the historical geography of geography, and this is taken forward in the main body of the thesis in order to re-territorialise this history.²²² In embarking on this task, the next chapter engages directly with the unsettled frontier between the 'field' *out there* and the 'cabinet' *in here*, and examines how they were materially constructed, physically experienced, and culturally represented in order to question their received status as conflicting sites of movement and non-movement.

²²² Lambert, "Taken Captive by the Mystery of the Great River", p. 45. The original injunction was first opined in Livingstone, 'The Spaces of Knowledge'.

Chapter 3

‘They travel not, but sit still a great way’:

Materiality and movement in nineteenth-century geography

In the early nineteenth century, there was still debate as to whether the seventeenth-century travel writer Samuel Purchas, the self-appointed successor to Richard Hakluyt, had travelled to make his ‘pilgrimage Asia, Africa, and America, with the islands adjacent!’¹ Literary critic and antiquary Bolton Corney revealed the state of this confusion over Purchas’ ‘traveller’ status in 1838, questioning: ‘Did Purchas really practise the art of transport by land and by water? Or did he pilgrimize in his library chair? Has he given us, like Humboldt, a *personal narrative* of travels? Or is the volume a mere compilation?’² Corney went on to confirm that Purchas had actually worked as a ‘static collector’ of materials from other countries, and had undertaken *His Pilgrimage* from the village of Eastwood.³ Indeed, he ‘never travelled two hundred miles’ from his hometown of Thaxted in Essex.⁴ Purchas himself poetically detailed that this had been a metaphorical voyage of discovery. He had sailed on an ‘inkie sea with a quill mast’, navigating his way through the pages of preceding geographical writers: Giovanni Battista Ramusio, Richard Hakluyt, and ‘seven hundred authors’. Purchas averred that his route to knowledge was ‘easier to be sailed by the Poet ... than by the ruder Sea-

¹ Bolton Corney, *Curiosities of Literature by I. D’Israeli, Esq.* (2nd edn, London: Richard Bentley, 1838), p. 94.

² *Ibid.*

³ Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimage; or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in All Ages and Places Discovered, from the Creation unto this Present, in Foure Parts* (London: William Stansby, 1613).

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

men of those times'.⁵ However, Robert Creswell in his 1777 poem sought to disrupt this 'inkie sea' by mobilising his verse as a defetishising critique of Purchas' *Pilgrimage*:

Though most Geographers have the good hap
To travel in a safe expenceless Map,
And while the World to us they represent,
No further yet than Pilgrim *Purchas* went,
Past *Dovers* dreadful cliffe afraid to go,
...
They travel not, but sit still a great way.
I must applaud whither they choise, or lot
Which hath beyond their lazie knowledge got,
Who onely in the Globe do crosse the Line,
There raise the Pole, and draw whole Maps in wine
Spil'd on the Table; measure seas and Lands
By scale of miles wherein the Compasse stands.
But you the truths eye-witnesse have not been
Homer i'th' dark, but what you write have seen
While the glad world, by you instructed, sings,
'Wisdom's the noblest ware that travel brings'⁶

⁵ Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or, Purchas his Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and Others*, 20 vols, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 193.

⁶ Robert Creswell, cited in Edward Terry, *A Voyage to East India: Wherein Some Things are taken Notice of, In our Passage Thither, But Many More in Our Abode There, Within that Rich and most Spacious Empire of the Great Mogul. Reprinted from the Edition of 1655*. (London: Printed for J. Wilkie, W. Cater; and E. Easton, 1777), p. xvi. This poem was used by David Stoddart as a partial justification for premising field exploration over armchair practices, see Stoddart, *On Geography and its History*, p. xi.

Within this poem, Creswell constructs an image of sloppy and ‘lazier’ pedants who ‘sit still a great way’, and travel simply by moving their fingers across a page. Through the invocation of ‘Homer in’t’h’dark’, Creswell imprints an enduring motif of the malady of non-movement. The reference to the blind Greek poet Homer suggests a disordered condition, in which the reader is blind to the writer’s failure to actually go anywhere, and yet is still led to believe that they have the wisdom derived from making such a voyage. Whilst it can be read as a criticism of ‘armchair travel’, this verse also serves to break down the physical act of ‘travel’ in the grand sense, into small-scale gestures as they are produced through bodily relations with material objects; such as chairs, globes, maps, compasses, and pens.

The central concern of this chapter is to trace the physical contours of the debates surrounding ‘geography’ – as both a scientific discipline and a body of knowledge – and the place of travel within them. Specifically, the purported spatial and physical distinctions between the active explorer and the sedentary scholar are the chapter’s main points of contention. Into the nineteenth century, the making of geographical knowledge had come to be increasingly defined in the popular imagination by large-scale movements of exploration; namely, the act of travelling to and across unknown spaces. Yet, like Purchas pilgrimaging in his library chair, the ‘armchair geographer’ remained an enduring and important aspect of Victorian geographical practice. Here it is argued that the geographical practitioner’s identity was not just dependent on its spatial manifestation, but it was also entangled with a sense of movement: the mobile geographical explorer did not simply contrast with the sedentary critical geographer, but it also came to signify a different engagement with the world.

Taking its lead from recent work on the histories and historical geographies of ‘mobility’, this chapter moves beyond clear-cut spatial distinctions to focus on the bodily comportment of the nineteenth-century geographer, narrating a far more

entangled and complex tale of movement and repose than has previously been told.⁷ ‘Mobility’ as an emergent analytical concept, encompasses not only the large-scale movements of people, objects, capital, and information, but also everyday micro-movements. Tim Cresswell defines ‘mobility’ as a ‘fragile entanglement of movement, representation, and practice’.⁸ This refers not only to the pure facts of physical movement, of how and where things move, but also to how such movements are represented and given shared meaning, and how they are experienced and embodied. Despite much of the work on mobility being focused on the turn of the twenty-first century, the act of ‘moving’ to travel and observe became integral to the emerging scientific discipline of geography in the nineteenth century. In looking beyond the brute facts of physical movement, this chapter uncovers not just how and where nineteenth-century geography was made, but, more critically, how such actions were represented, received, and experienced. Whilst these elements of mobility are not always easy to disentangle, in being aware of these different aspects of moving, this chapter illustrates how the body of the sedentary geographer became increasingly politicised and bound up with meanings of both action and stasis, and location and dislocation.

This chapter is structured around these entanglements of movement: its representation, experience, and reception. To this end, the ‘cabinet’ is first introduced to uncover how these typically private spaces have been materially and discursively constituted. Artistic representations of field scientists, naturalists, travellers, and geographers in their cabinets are drawn on as representations of scientific practice. Through this visual approach, the chapter highlights how these interior microcosms

⁷ Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London: Routledge, 2006); John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press: 2007); Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman (eds), *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); Peter Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012); David Lambert, ‘Master-Horse-Slave: Mobility, Race and Power in the British West Indies, c.1780–1838’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 36 (2015), pp. 618-641.

⁸ Tim Cresswell, ‘Towards a Politics of Mobility’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28 (2010), pp. 17-31, p. 17.

were situated in an enduring cultural discourse that was not separated from the field sciences, but actually structured its public presentation. The second part of this chapter analyses two seemingly discordant geographers – the oft-lauded most ‘notorious’ armchair geographer, William Desborough Cooley and famed missionary explorer Dr David Livingstone. In reconstructing how they both conducted and experienced their research – one travelled extensively, while the other did not leave London – and how this work was critically received, the cultural meanings that came to be attached to ‘cabinet culture’ and the ‘field’ are considered. Of particular interest for negotiating these micro-movements are three objects compiled and used by Cooley and Livingstone – a map, a letter and a chair – none of which have before received critical attention, yet are hugely significant. In engaging with these items’ materiality, the chapter navigates not just the movements of geographers, but what they each reveal about the different, and also similar, ways geography was realised in the cabinet *and* the field.

Placing the ‘Armchair’: Geographies of and in the cabinet

The making of geographical knowledge has come to be understood as being constituted through a range of bodily activities, such as travelling, seeing, and recording, each of which have a distinct geography. These have been depicted as being in perpetual ‘tension’, between the mobile knowledge of the field and the sedentary knowledge of the cabinet.⁹ Yet these sites of knowledge making are not unproblematic spatial categories, and are often interlinked through the mutual extension of knowledges: the works of the cabinet moved into and through the field and the knowledge of the field was present and embodied in the cabinet.¹⁰ The central focus of this section is the presence of a ‘cabinet culture’ in the field sciences, showing how the cabinet has been

⁹ Driver, ‘Distance and Disturbance’, p. 82.

¹⁰ Driver, *Geography Militant*, pp. 15-20.

represented as a site of knowledge making, and how knowledge was represented in the cabinet.

The cabinet as a physical entity has been typically seen as a male preserve: the home of the Men of Letters, who were ‘dedicated to study, to reading, and to their *cabinet*’.¹¹ The cabinet is, as Felix Driver posits, a ‘place where the raw material of nature is imaginatively synthesised, patiently transformed into true knowledge’.¹² Its potentiality and use as a site of travel has been critically recognised in studies examining the ‘typology of the traveller’, in which the ‘géographe de cabinet’ appeared as one who does leave their study, but instead journeys exclusively by collating recent and historical authorities to produce synthetic surveys.¹³ A travelogue from 1856 stated that in order to travel, all one needed to do was settle in the quiet of the cabinet and ‘call into requisition the services of one old and comfortable friend – the arm-chair’.¹⁴ Despite this being a romanticised view of travel through reading, it does present an interesting metaphor that serves to illuminate a complex range of spatial contexts and bodily movements. In the moment of sitting down to read, the ‘armchair’ becomes a mode of transport, invoking a sense of motion despite its juxtaposition against the stationary bodily position of being ‘seated’. The retreat into one’s study therefore should not be viewed as merely a literary theme or a philosophical ideal, but rather, as a practical reality that physically and materially structured many different forms of intellectual activity.

The Geographer painted by Johannes Vermeer (c.1668–1669) features as the cover illustration for David N. Livingstone’s seminal work, *The Geographical Tradition* (Figure 3.1). This seventeenth-century oil painting is prominently positioned as visually

¹¹ Roger Chartier, ‘The Man of Letters’, in Vovelle (ed.) and Cochrane (trans.), *Enlightenment Portraits*, pp. 142-189, p. 143.

¹² Driver, ‘Distance and Disturbance’, p. 82.

¹³ Ralph-Rainer Wuthenow, *Die erfahrene Welt. Europäische Reiseliteratur im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1980), p. 417; Broc, *La Géographie des Philosophes*, p. 187.

¹⁴ Committee of General Literature and Education, *The Old Arm-Chair, a Retrospective Panorama of Travels by Land and Sea* (London: Printed for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1854), pp. 1-2.

embodying the history, practices, and customs of geographical endeavour. In illustrating disciplinary consciousness, Livingstone's *Geographical Tradition* pinpoints a very specific visual embodiment of this 'tradition' to be handed down, and it is one that takes place in the cabinet.¹⁵ The artwork expresses the ideals of the 'age of reconnaissance' with its scholarly and philosophical interest in capturing and mapping nature. The cartographic craft to reconstruct the material world on paper became an ever-growing intellectual responsibility 'not merely for its inescapably functional character but for mathematical proficiencies and precision instruments that were to become the insignia of the accomplished cartographer: as science and art'.¹⁶ Vermeer was an eager admirer of this flourishing spirit of human investigation and has long been linked with the golden age of Dutch cartography. It has been commented that he liked 'especially to provide the wall surfaces of his pictures with a map'.¹⁷ As such, it is important to not only attend to representations of the cabinet as an interior space, but also to be sensitive to their material realities as an expressive fusion of parts: what the cabinet contained and how it was inhabited and animated by its user.

¹⁵ This was termed a 'most commendable choice' in Mildred Berman, 'Reviewed work: *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* by David N. Livingstone', *Geographical Review*, 83 (1993), pp. 501-504, p. 504.

¹⁶ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition*, p. 51. See also, J. H. Parry, *The Age of Reconnaissance, Discovery, Exploration and Settlement 1450 to 1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

¹⁷ E. A. Seeman, cited in James A. Welu, 'Vermeer: His Cartographic Sources', *The Art Bulletin*, 57 (1975), pp. 529-547, p. 529. Debate continues as to whether the scholar in the study is actually Vermeer himself.



Figure 3.1. 'The Geographer' by Johannes Vermeer, c.1668–1669. Courtesy of Google Cultural Institute.

Vermeer presents a young male scholar working alone in his darkened cabinet, illuminated by the light from the window, and considering the practices of observation rather than the objects of theoretical gaze. The 'geographer' is not sat, but stood, leaning over the ornately dressed table in front of him. The original painting reveals a vague pentimento of the geographer's forehead, which suggests that Vermeer had originally

positioned his head looking down at the chart lying on the table.¹⁸ Instead, the subject's focus is captured by the world through the window, and he remains physically connected to the work in the room by holding a pair of dividers as his hand rests on the sheet in front of him.¹⁹ The two rolled sheets on the floor and the vellum sheet on the desk, whose faint markings suggest a nautical map, indicate the drafting of a cartographic product. Such posturing is a powerful signification that this is also a space of mastery: a place where facts become truths.²⁰

The exterior world is alluded to through the worldly motifs and cartographic material present in the room. As Vermeer's contemporary Samuel van Hoogstraten declared, 'how valuable a good map is wherein one views the world as from another world, thanks to the art of drawing'.²¹ The tireless work of James A. Welu has deconstructed the cartographic objects present in Vermeer's imagery, and identified a sea chart of Europe appearing alongside a Hondius terrestrial globe.²² Its sister celestial globe features in Vermeer's *The Astronomer* (1668), and together these scientific scenes signal the cosmographical endeavours of exploring both heaven and earth at that time.²³ This early modern geographical practice worked through humanist efforts of synthesis to construct summaries of the world as a whole. As a subject of intellectual endeavour therefore, geography was in a textual sense 'fixed' and held within the cabinet.

¹⁸ All of the artistic alterations made by Vermeer are detailed by Jonathan Janson, 'The Geographer by Johannes Vermeer', *Essential Vermeer 2.0* [<http://www.essentialvermeer.com/catalogue/geographer.html#.VXdM70vDods>, accessed 2 June 2015].

¹⁹ The painting also features a square lying on the stool in the right foreground, which, like the pair of dividers, is used to mark distance, and there appears to be a cross-staff on the centre post of the window for measuring the angle of elevation of the sun and stars.

²⁰ Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, 'Introduction', in Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (eds), *Thinking Space* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-30.

²¹ Samuel van Hoogstraten (1678), cited in Welu, 'Vermeer: His Cartographic Sources', p. 547.

²² The sea chart is similar to Willem Jansz Blaeu's 1600 nautical chart of 'all the Sea coasts of Europe'. See, Welu, 'Vermeer: His Cartographic Sources'.

²³ James A. Welu, 'Vermeer's *Astronomer*: Observations on an Open Book', *The Art Bulletin*, 68 (1986), pp. 263-267.



Figure 3.2. 'Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697–1782)', Anonyme © RMN-Grand Palais (Château de Versailles)/Gérard Blot.

In moving to view a 'typical representation of the armchair geographer' from eighteenth-century France, the changing representation of the microcosm of the cabinet can be viewed (Figure 3.2).²⁴ Despite this being a 'mainly allegorical portrait', Lucile Haguet makes use of it to visualise the cartographic methods of Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville.²⁵ Having never left Paris, this portrait possibly captures one of the best working examples of Broc's 'géographe de cabinet'. Unlike in Vermeer's

²⁴ Lucile Haguet, 'J. B. d'Anville as Armchair Mapmaker: The Impact of Production Contexts on His Work', *Imago Mundi*, 63 (2011), pp. 88-105, p. 88.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

painting, this geographer is positioned in a far more static environment. He is presented as sitting upright in an upholstered chair at his desk, assuming a thoughtful repose as he reads. Whilst this is partly due to changing pictorial traditions, the scene of the cabinet is itself wholly different. The room is confined, with the vague outline of a globe and bookcase in the background, which do not make any clear allusion to the world outside its frame. This sense of motionless is encapsulated by Haguët who states how ‘his activity is intellectual; he does not hold a pencil or tool. The process of map making is made to look abstract, as if the drawing were being transferred magically from the mind to the page’.²⁶ Yet, a suggestion to the activities involved in making maps is present in the illegible marks covering the pages before him.²⁷ These strokes of the pen to make notes, alongside the process of inking and erasing, and the handling and reordering of papers can be likened to ‘artisanal gestures’. Nelson-Martin Dawson conceives that these workspaces were ‘ateliers’, in which raw materials were not merely compiled, but gathered, redesigned, and made into something new.²⁸ However, d’Anville’s contemporary, mathematician and natural philosopher Louis Bertrand Castel, challenged these cabinet creators, by declaring that travellers were ‘the real savants, the inventors, the creators of geographical science’.²⁹ He claimed that in order to conduct this ‘science’, the practitioner needed to display the practical skills of modern discovery and physically move beyond the cabinet. This sets up the spatial dialectic between the traveller who sees and physically experiences new places, and the scholar who collects and organises documents on those places. Yet the newly emerging ‘scientific explorer’ retained a close aesthetic and physical relationship with the cabinet.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 82.

²⁷ These marks are suggestive of D’Anville’s method of compilation, and his process of ‘levé’ (‘survey’), as detailed in Haguët, ‘J.B. d’Anville as Armchair Mapmaker’.

²⁸ Nelson-Martin Dawson, *L’Atelier Delisle: L’Amérique Nord sur à dessin* (Sillert: Les éditions du septentrion, 2006), pp. 146-178.

²⁹ ‘Letter from Louis Bertrand Castel to Guillaume Thomas Raynal’, 1751, cited in Numa Broc, *La Géographie des Philosophes*, p. 375.



Figure 3.3. 'James Cook (1728–1779)', by Nathaniel Dance-Holland, 1776 © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Greenwich Hospital Collection.

Upon the return of Cook from his second circumnavigation of the globe in 1775 and his subsequent election to Royal Society Fellowship, naturalist and botanist Joseph Banks, who had accompanied Cook on his first voyage of discovery (1769–1771), commissioned a portrait to celebrate his achievements as a skilled, though self-taught, scientific observer (Figure 3.3). In a well-established pictorial tradition, Cook is

posed in a similar stance to Vermeer's *Geographer*: an Enlightenment man engaged in the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. The inclusion of his own chart of the southern hemisphere is symbolic not just of the world in his hand, but his physical experience and sense of having touched those lands. Banks recognised the political, cultural, and commercial power of the visual image, policing the illustrations of the places he had explored and the specimens he had collected, along with meticulously monitoring the images of himself that became available for public consumption.³⁰ The earliest portraits arranged by Banks cast him as a 'romantic young explorer' (Figures 3.4 and 3.5).³¹ Whilst the Pacific cloak swathing Banks' body in Benjamin West's painting and the globe in Joshua Reynolds's portrait frame Banks as a man of action and imperial adventure, the pen and book upon the desk also represent Banks as a scholar. Despite the Latin text under Banks' clenched left hand declaring the Horatian ode: 'tomorrow we will again cross the immense ocean', Banks did not again embark on another exploratory expedition after returning from the first British scientific voyage to Iceland in 1772.

³⁰ Patricia Fara, 'The Royal Society's Portrait of Joseph Banks', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 51 (1997), pp. 199-210, pp. 200-201. See also, Patricia Fara, 'Joseph Banks: Portraits of a Placid Elephant', *The Public Domain Review*, 4 April 2013 (<http://publicdomainreview.org/2013/04/04/joseph-banks-portraits-of-a-placid-elephant/>), accessed on 6 May 2015).

³¹ Fara, 'Royal Society's Portrait of Joseph Banks', p. 199. These portraits were first displayed in the 1773 Royal Academy exhibition after he returned from his voyage on Cook's HMS *Endeavour* (1769–1771).



Figure 3.4. 'Sir Joseph Banks', by Benjamin West, 1773. Courtesy of the National Library of Australia.



Figure 3.5. 'Sir Joseph Banks, Bt.', by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1771-1773 © National Portrait Gallery, London.

Banks settled at 32 Soho Square in London, an area that became internationally famous for its science set in the eighteenth century. From here, Banks established himself as one of the greatest patrons of scientific objectives and advancement, and his cabinet became a significant embodiment of his central positioning in the nexus of science. Specifically, as Patricia Fara asserts, ‘by monitoring how the body was displayed, Banks influenced British perceptions of science and its practitioners, and helped to mould a prestigious status for men of science’.³² Banks’ body now fully occupied the cabinet as he took up his seat of power as a solid statesman of science (Figure 3.6). Despite the appearance of a manly countenance, these images clearly served an ideological function, masking the reality that Banks was severely overweight and crippled by gout. This had serious implications for his bodily mobility and contributed to his increasingly sedentary lifestyle. Banks expressed his despondence at being unable to travel beyond the walls of his study in a letter to Sir William Hamilton:

I envy you your situation within two miles of an Erupting Volcano ... I read your letters with that kind of Fidgetty anziety [sic] which continually upbraids me for not being in a similar situation. I envy you. I pity myself ... now I am tied by the leg to an arm chair.³³

The inability to travel far forced Banks to redefine his role, focusing not on his own physical constitution, but on the vitality of an institutionalised and professionalised science. This was a formative time in science’s disciplinary history, and Banks carefully constructed a visual identity which portrayed him as an influential scientific administrator whose organisation of further voyages of discovery augmented Britain’s

³² Fara, ‘Royal Society’s Portrait of Joseph Banks’, p. 199.

³³ ‘Letter from Sir Joseph Banks to Sir William Hamilton’, 22 October 1810, cited in Neil Chambers (ed.), *The Letters of Sir Joseph Banks: A Selection, 1768–1820* (London: Imperial College Press, 2000), pp. 370–371, p. 371.

commercial, scientific, and imperial welfare. His cabinet in Soho Square played a central part in this process. Far from a private, static space, this ‘home-cum-research institute’ was a place where men of science regularly gathered to discuss their works and gossip, including the work of the African Association, in which Banks had been instrumental in founding in 1788 and was prominent in directing its exploratory enterprise (Figure 3.7).³⁴ With the Suffolk Street home of the Association’s ‘Geographer’, James Rennell, being termed ‘an annex’ to the study of Banks, these domestic sites became a meeting place for travellers and geographical savants.³⁵ As Banks could no longer physically endure overseas travel, he instead assembled the persons and products of its labours. Visitors included eminent French botanist George Cuvier, explorer Mungo Park, and science writer Barthélemy Faujas de St. Fond. This intellectual centre was one node of Banks’ international network of scientific collection, information, and dissemination, and a space that united power and knowledge, which Banks diligently oversaw and carefully managed.³⁶

³⁴ Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment*, p. 70.

³⁵ Bravo, ‘Precision and Curiosity’, p. 173.

³⁶ Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment*.



Figure 3.6. 'Sir Joseph Banks, Bt', by Niccolo Schiavonetti, after Thomas Philips, 1812 © National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 3.7. Sir Joseph Banks' Study at Soho Square, 1820 © The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London.

This Banksian cabinet culture was integral to his role as scientific administrator and to the structure of metropolitan science as it entered the nineteenth century; yet the cabinet still retained its function as a private space of synthesis, observation, and reflection. This was demonstrated by the relationships both Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt and German geographer Carl Ritter had with their study spaces. Humboldt was a complex figure, seen to have given the notion of discovery an entirely new impulse as ‘an indefatigable searcher into nature’, seeking precision by establishing specific facts and separating them from hypotheses.³⁷ His contemporary Ritter sought to set up a scientific foundation for geography by moving beyond a strictly descriptive approach to embrace a genuine ‘science of relationships’; a form of epistemological renewal, which he termed ‘comparative geography’.³⁸ Whilst their pursuits were kindred, they both exhibited a different approach to geographical work, as one late nineteenth-century commentator observed:

One loved most the physical, the other the historical, study of the earth. One was emphatically a naturalist, the other a humanist ... Humboldt was emphatically a scientific explorer, observing and collecting in distant climes where the structure of the globe is most remarkable and interesting, and then returning to work out his conclusions. Ritter was chiefly the man of books, the student at home, weighing the testimony of early and recent explorers, harmonizing their statements, and deducing general laws from the special researches of many investigators.³⁹

³⁷ Ward and Lock, *The Life of Alexander von Humboldt* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1881), frontispiece.

³⁸ Arnold Guynot, ‘Geographical Studies by the Late Professor Carl Ritter of Berlin by William Leonhard Gage: Einleitung zur allgemeinen vergleichenden Geographie, etc: Vorlesungen an der Universitat Kramer: Carl Ritter, an Address to the American Geographical Society, February 16, 1860’, *The North American Review*, 98 (1864), pp. 498-519, p. 498.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 518.

These symmetrical characteristics of observation and reflection reformulate rather than compound the opposition between the traveller and the cabinet geographer. Both Humboldt and Ritter emphasised that the man of geography was to be a ‘complete walking academy’ trained in methods of exact science and literature, and the space of the study played a central role in their practice.⁴⁰ Yet, drawing on the often-cited comments made by Georges Cuvier in 1807, the ‘complete walking academy’ was a conflicted conception. In his direct attack on Humboldt, Cuvier positions the ‘field scientist’ in opposition to the ‘sedentary naturalist’, declaring:

If the sedentary naturalist does not see nature in action, he can yet survey all her products spread before him. He can compare them with each other as often as is necessary to reach reliable conclusions. He defines his own problems ... the travelling observer can only travel one road. One can only roam freely through the universe, by staying in one’s study.⁴¹

As Dorinda Outram has argued, this episode revealed scientific practices to not just be structured through contrasting methods, but also through personal experiences of space.⁴² The moments captured by Eduard Hildebrandt of an elderly Humboldt writing at his desk illustrates this point clearly as his study appears to be divided into two specific ‘working’ spaces: writing and thinking (Figure 3.8). The different furniture suggests this range of actions, with the wooden armchair supporting disciplined writing at the desk and the upholstered sofa enabling repose and imaginative thought. What is most interesting is Humboldt’s posture as he sits posed in, what Ottmar Ette has

⁴⁰ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 14.

⁴¹ Georges Cuvier, cited in Outram, ‘On being Perseus’, p. 286.

⁴² *Ibid.*

termed, a ‘doubled place of writing’.⁴³ He is not shown writing at his desk, rather he uses his knees upon which to rest his papers, ostensibly creating an improvised study space as if in the midst of the jungle, or on the banks of the Orinoco. His gaze could form the site of expeditionary practice where the raw material of nature is imaginatively transformed into ideas. Indeed, there was a marked visual dimension to all of Humboldt’s works.



Figure 3.8. ‘Alexander von Humboldt in his Study’, by Eduard Hildebrandt, 1845 © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

A preliminary survey of the representation of the spaces and culture of the cabinet in field science thus shows that the fixed physical state of ‘staying in one’s study’, as alluded to by Georges Cuvier, is insufficient in accounting for the significant

⁴³ Ette, *Literature on the Move*, pp. 85-87.

place of the cabinet in facilitating many material and geographical mobilities. From the illustrative examples, it is clear that to view cabinet culture as one of physical fixity and as distant from its objects of study obscures its potential as a nexus of both field knowledge and of knowledge formed from critical reading. This argument is developed in the next section, as the chapter turns to follow more closely individual practitioners' bodily experiences in making geography, and the objects that mediated and enabled their movements into the 'field'. It begins by tracking William Desborough Cooley's activities within his cabinet. Despite there being no image of Cooley and his cabinet in existence, it recovers his particular practices within that space, and demonstrates how the cabinet became a repository of movement for Cooley: a place where the potential for movement was stored.

Repository of Movement: How William Desborough Cooley fixed the 'relative position of places'

The life and writings of nineteenth-century geographer William Desborough Cooley have existed in a cloud of relative obscurity (Figure 3.9). The little recorded information about his antecedents and private life has been fleshed out by Roy C. Bridges, and reveals that he was born in Dublin in 1795 and educated at Trinity College Dublin, with a primary focus in mathematics.⁴⁴ This was followed by his first and only significant moment of travel: a move to London at the end of the 1820s. Once settled, Cooley established a literary reputation and began to involve himself in the emerging geographical science community. It was a time when excited speculations were being made for the establishment of a Geographical Society, separate from the African Association. This new institution was founded in 1830 and Cooley's name was among

⁴⁴ Bridges, 'William Desborough Cooley (1795–1883)'; 'W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part I'; 'W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part II'.

the early elected Fellows.⁴⁵ With the expertise that this implied, he quickly situated himself into the Society's inner social circle, being unanimously elected to the Council in 1832, becoming Vice-President in 1835, and its acting secretary for a short period. This institutional platform enabled Cooley to establish both a British and European reputation as an authority on geography, particularly discovery and exploration. He eagerly contributed articles to the *Foreign Quarterly Review* and was an editorial associate of John Sterling at the *Athenaeum*, where he remained a staff writer on travel and exploration throughout the early 1830s. From these positions of influence, Cooley began to promote African exploration and his critical eyes fixed onto East Africa, where his gaze remained until his death in 1883.⁴⁶ Over this period of fifty years, Cooley set himself the task of collecting and duly concentrating 'every scattered ray of light' onto the 'blank' of Africa's unknown interior, in order that 'the chief physical features of that hitherto dark interior, and those most likely to operate on the social condition of mankind, may be made to shine forth with incontrovertible evidence'.⁴⁷ Yet Cooley never visited the continent.

Described as a 'somewhat erratic genius', the formative period of Cooley's geographical career provides a constructive example of how geography was made in the cabinet.⁴⁸ His work illustrates how this interior space could represent Walter Benjamin's ideal of 'the universe', as within the walls of the cabinet Cooley brought 'together the far

⁴⁵ 'Copy of Certificate of Candidate for Election, from Registers and Council Minute Books: William D. Cooley', 1830, RGS-IBG, RGS Fellowship Certificates (1830–1988).

⁴⁶ His first paper on south-eastern Africa appeared in the Royal Geographical Society's *Journal* in June 1833, see William Desborough Cooley, 'A Memoir on the Civilisation of the Tribes Inhabiting the Highlands of Dalagôa Bay', *JRGS*, 3 (1833), pp. 310-324. The contents and implications of this paper are discussed in the subsequent chapter.

⁴⁷ William Desborough Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open in an Attempt to Trace the Chief Lines of Communication Across that Continent South of the Equator, with the Routes to the Muropue and the Cazembe, Moenemoezi and Lake Nyassa; the Journeys of the Rev. Dr Krapp and the Rev. J. Rebmann on the Eastern Coast; and the Discoveries of Messrs. Oswell and Livingstone in the Heart of the Continent* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), p. 1.

⁴⁸ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 41.

away and the long ago'.⁴⁹ Specifically, the particular micro-movements Cooley took within this space reveal how he sought to understand and reconstruct the experience of exploratory travel, whilst he was to physically remain in London.



Figure 3.9. William Desborough Cooley (1795–1883) © Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

Cooley began his journey by laying the foundations of his knowledge of non-European places and peoples. He compiled a catalogue of 7,000 geographical works and

⁴⁹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, prepared on the basis of the German volume edited by Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, and London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 9.

accumulated his own considerable library of books on the subject.⁵⁰ His expanding interest in geographical questions and histories of travel was manifest in his first major work of compilation, *A History of Maritime and Inland Discovery* published in three volumes from 1830–1831.⁵¹ Cooley saw this work as necessary preparation for contemporary geographical investigations, clearly cataloguing what information was available and highlighting specifically where it was deficient. As Bridges points out, ‘whatever the work’s intrinsic merits’, this book marked ‘the first ever history of the process by which all parts of the globe became known to one another’.⁵² Whilst there had been many travel collections published previously, the critical approach Cooley took to charting the progress of exploration from the Ancient world to the present was a novel one. He concentrated his attention on the earliest geographical accounts because he believed that it was amongst these, often extraordinary, stories that one could ‘find a few threads of consistent fact’.⁵³ In a sense, this was also a literary map that Cooley constructed for himself in order to begin plotting his route through the textual accounts and determine ‘a correct system of geography’, whereby he could fix what he termed ‘the relative position of places’.⁵⁴ It went beyond being a compendium of geography’s history, and marked an attempt to improve the scientific foundation of the discipline. Specifically, Cooley’s treatises were also regarded as important and useful for very practical reasons of trade and communications. As such, Cooley was not a ‘bibliographic dinosaur’, but came to inhabit the role of a ‘critical geographer’.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1850, cited in Bridges, ‘William Desborough Cooley’, p. 44.

⁵¹ William Desborough Cooley, *The History of Maritime and Inland Discovery*, 3 vols (London: Printed for Longman Rees, Orme Brown and Green, John Taylor, 1830–1831). This was part of a series styled the *Cabinet Cyclopaedia*, originated by Dr Dionysius Lardner, which included 113 volumes, published between 1829 and 1846.

⁵² Bridges, ‘William Desborough Cooley’, p. 49.

⁵³ Cooley, *Maritime and Inland Discovery*, vol. 1, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Cooley, *Maritime and Inland Discovery*, vol. 3, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Downes, ‘The Bibliographic Dinosaurs of Georgian Geography’.

Cooley aimed to establish the geography of regions on a more rigorous and reliable basis through, what he termed, the ‘rectification of sources’.⁵⁶ This ‘new and improved method’ was explicated through a language of experience and awareness. Cooley stressed the need for being aware of a text’s particular historical moment and political context, and that in correcting errors one must make allowances for historical change. He first examined the authors he deemed to be of ‘greatest value’, looking for internal consistencies in their work. This enabled him to positively identify ‘clear, natural, and consistent’ statements and mark them as correct within that text. When statements were ‘obscure, absurd, or contradictory’, Cooley would apply his method of rectification, which involved four principles of inquiry for determining credibility and value:

1st, What were the sources or channels of the author’s information?

2ndly, How far it must be taken in strictness, or may claim the latitude allowed to the language of ordinary discourse?

3rdly, The state of knowledge, and prevalent geographical systems in the writer’s time?

4thly, What portions may be looked upon as original or authentic, and what as founded on inference or surmise?⁵⁷

These prescriptions have been compared to those of Descartes’ *Meditations*, and they aided Cooley in determining whether authors could have known or observed the things that they claimed as ‘true’ in their accounts.⁵⁸ Moreover, he attempted to develop a

⁵⁶ This was an approach Cooley began in *Maritime and Inland Discovery*, and the ‘principle of rectification’ was referred to explicitly and developed in William Desborough Cooley, *The Negroland of the Arabs Examined and Explained: Or, an Inquiry into the Early History and Geography of Central Africa of Central Africa* (London: J. Arrowsmith, 1841), preface.

⁵⁷ Cooley, *Negroland of the Arabs*, pp. ix-x.

⁵⁸ Lawrence S. Dritsas, ‘Local Informants and British Explorers: The Search for the Source of the Nile, 1850–1875’ (MSci Dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2001), p. 19.

personal understanding of each author in order to identify specific factors that could have affected their account, or the means by which the testimony was communicated, such as whether it was a translation. The scholar who was alert to these difficulties was, according to Cooley, in a position to rectify the errors in a textual source. This ‘rectified’ information could then be reconciled with more recently retrieved data to produce a systematic geographical description. Whilst geography, like every other branch of knowledge, had been subject to a constant cycle of error and rectification, Cooley claimed that his correction of such ‘unscientific’ materials made it possible to move them ‘from mere conjecture towards a rule of reason’.⁵⁹ This was a sentiment that was also held by other critical geographers of the time, such as James MacQueen, Charles Tilstone Beke, and Alexander George Findlay, who also advocated for a comparative approach to textual and oral sources.⁶⁰

Whilst the RGS positively reviewed Cooley’s work as a product of ‘strict scientific examination’ that offered ‘acuteness and sound judgement’, he has not been appropriated as an example of a ‘perfect geographer’, but is viewed as an anachronism, remaining a product of Enlightenment learning, rather than one of the modernising forces affecting a specialist science.⁶¹ In attempting to understand the form of his scholarly work, it is instructive to look towards his education as a mathematician, revealing the epistemological foundation upon which Cooley worked, and to some extent, explaining the reason as to why he approached geographical problems in such a

⁵⁹ Cooley, *Negroland of the Arabs*, p. x.

⁶⁰ James MacQueen, ‘Construction of the Map’, in *The Journals of C. W. Isenberg and J. L. Krapf. Detailing Their Proceedings in the Kingdom of Shoa and Journeys in Other Parts of Abyssinia in the Years 1839, 1840, 1841, and 1842. To Which is Prefixed a Geographical Memoir of Abyssinia and South Eastern-Africa by James M’queen, Grounded on the Missionaries’ Journals and the Expedition of the Pacha of Egypt up the Nile. With Two Maps Constructed by James M’queen* (London: Seeley, Burnside and Seeley, 1843), pp. 1-95; Charles Tilstone Beke, ‘On the Nile and its Tributaries’, *JRGS*, 17 (1847), pp. 1-84; Alexander George Findlay, ‘On Dr Livingstone’s Last Journey, and the Probable Ultimate Sources of the Nile’, *JRGS*, 37 (1867), pp. 193-212.

⁶¹ ‘Review: *The Negroland of the Arabs Examined and Explained; Or, an Inquiry into the Early History and Geography of Central Africa*. By William Desborough Cooley’, *JRGS*, 12 (1842), pp. 120-125, p. 121, 125; Markham, *Rennell and the Rise of Modern English Geography*, p. 93; Bridges, ‘W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part I’, p. 55.

principled way. Indeed, the basis of his four principles of inquiry can be seen in one of his mathematical treatises, where he expressed that in order to solve problems, one needed to procure the largest sample possible and to treat each figure within it critically.⁶² He stated how accuracy was a rigorous and continual process, acknowledging that ‘the most acute will often have to beat about for hours, before they hit upon the exact line of argument which leads directly to the proof.’⁶³ With his critical focus on the African interior, Cooley attempted to gather as much information as he could from the five types of testimony available to him: ancient authorities; Arab travellers of the tenth and eleventh centuries; Portuguese travel accounts from after the voyage of Vasco de Gama in the late fifteenth century; indigenous information collected by travellers and merchants; and accounts by recent travellers.

The first application of his method of ‘rectification’ was made within *Negroland of the Arabs*, in which Cooley worked to make sense of what he deemed to be the overlooked and undervalued textual terrain of Arabian writers, in order to ‘establish the early geography of Central Africa on a solid basis’. He sought to inject ‘new value to such confused materials ... into which modern writers occasionally dip their hands, each selecting what appears to serve his purpose, and adapting it to his views by an interpretation as narrow and partial as his mode of inquiry’.⁶⁴ Cooley claimed that such a disordered approach had led geographers, such as the respected Rennell and d’Anville, into a ‘false method of proceeding’.⁶⁵ From Arabian writers he collected particulars respecting the trade of East Africa from as early as the tenth century, when Islam spread south into West Africa, and travel accounts with descriptions of the continent’s river

⁶² William Desborough Cooley, *Geometrical Propositions Demonstrated: or, A Supplement to Euclid, Being a Key to the Exercises Appended to Euclid’s Elements* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1840), pp. 6-7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁴ Cooley, *Negroland of the Arabs*, pp. vii-viii.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

systems began to appear.⁶⁶ Although it is unclear whether Cooley ever became proficient in Arabic, he identified the main source of confusion to be the difficulty in recognising the places described in these accounts due to the defects present in Arabian written characters.⁶⁷

As most European geographers referred to ancient authorities more readily than to Arab travellers, Cooley believed it ‘even more necessary’ to scrutinise, compare, and rectify the accounts of some of the great classical figures, thereby inquiring into their ‘real merits’ and ‘speculative errors’.⁶⁸ Cooley deconstructed Ptolemy’s textual tracing of the Nile from the Sennar up to its sources using philological analysis.⁶⁹ Through dissipating the air of scientific accuracy given to his work through the use of latitudes and longitudes, Cooley identified fundamental mistakes in these coordinates and highlighted the ambiguity of the sources that Ptolemy had relied upon. This led Cooley to produce a contrasting geography of the Nile region. Within this, he corrected the enduring error that Ptolemy had been discussing the Bahr el Abiad, or White Nile, and rightly claimed that Ptolemy’s study was always in reference to the Blue Nile, which flows from Ethiopia.⁷⁰ A focus on the issue of ‘evidence’ led Cooley to challenge the tacit reliance many geographers, cartographers, and travellers placed on Ptolemy. Despite the implicit irony, Cooley stressed that Ptolemy’s geography was wholly

⁶⁶ Specifically, Cooley located and used the works of travellers of Europe’s medieval period: Al Bekri (d. 1094); Al Idrisi (d. 1166); Ibn Batutah (d. 1377); and Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406).

⁶⁷ Cooley, *Negroland of the Arabs*, p. xi. For an example of similar research and contemporary discussion on the differing use and interpretation of Arab sources, and their comparison with other textual and oral testimonies, alongside observation in determining African geography, see Frederick Ayrton, ‘Observations upon M. d’Abbadie’s Account of His Discovery of the Sources of the White Nile, and Upon Certain Objections and Statements in Relation Thereto, by Dr Beke’, *JRGS*, 18 (1848), pp. 48-74.

⁶⁸ Bridges, ‘W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part I’, p. 50. Cooley dealt first with Herodotus in *Maritime and Inland Discovery*, vol. 1 and then Ptolemy in William Desborough Cooley, *Claudius Ptolemy and the Nile: Or, an Inquiry into That Geographer’s Real Merits and Speculative Errors, His Knowledge of Eastern Africa and the Authenticity of the Mountains of the Moon* (London: John W. Parker and Sons, 1854).

⁶⁹ In particular, Cooley compared Ptolemy’s statements with the anonymous geographical account, ‘The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea’. See G. W. B. Huntingford (ed. and trans.), *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, by an unknown author. With Some Extracts from Agatharkehidēs ‘On the Erythraean Sea’* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1980).

⁷⁰ Cooley, *Claudius Ptolemy and the Nile*.

speculative, as he did not draw from his own direct observation, but was reliant on the accounts of other travellers and merchants. He further demonstrated that the ancient authors were less authoritative, and less reliable the further south along the Nile that the reader ventured. Yet despite the perspicacity with which Cooley argued, he was criticised for his 'less than reverential attitude' towards ancient authority, and many did not see the value in his interpretation of Ptolemy and ignored his conclusions.⁷¹

Consideration was also given to Portuguese sources, which, whilst also offering a wealth of material, were usually narrative descriptions of journeys taken for trading purposes. Whilst the Portuguese held an extensive knowledge of the region, they had not performed systematic surveys of the areas in which they resided – along the eastern and western coasts of Africa and inland along the Sofala and Zambezi Rivers – and the journeys that had been undertaken through these regions were poorly documented. This often meant that the accounts of Portuguese settlers and merchants were 'too meagre and incomplete to be capable of satisfying curiosity or of holding a permanent place in systems of geography', or for use by the critical geographer.⁷² Despite this awareness that the data was 'deficient ... in the scientific elements of geography', Cooley and other critical geographers keenly utilised new information brought to light by recent Portuguese journeys, such as the journey east across the continent to the Portuguese possessions in Mozambique made by two 'pombeiros'.⁷³ Through comparative analysis, the critical geographer could draw out the estimated distance travelled per day from the Portuguese accounts and relate these calculations to the itinerary of more recent

⁷¹ Bridges, 'W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part I', p. 51.

⁷² William Desborough Cooley, 'The Geography of N'yassi, or the Great Lakes of Southern Africa, Investigated; with an Account of the Overland Route from the Quanza in Angola to the Zambezi in the Government of Mozambique', *JRGS*, 15 (1845), pp. 185-235, p. 185.

⁷³ Cooley, 'Geography of N'yassi', p. 214. 'Pombeiros' referred to traders of racially mixed ancestry, who worked with Portuguese settlers and travelled widely in southern Africa, see Dritsas, 'Local Informants and British Explorers', pp. 21-25. Cooley draws on these accounts in Cooley, 'Geography of N'yassi'.

scientific expeditions, which were fitted with instruments and furnished more accurate observations, and consistent measurements.⁷⁴

The summation of his rectified sources was published in the Royal Geographical Society's *Journal* in 1845. Through his approach of textual synthesis and constant comparison, Cooley identified inconsistencies within and between his sources, which he felt enabled him to expunge any speculation and exaggeration from his theoretical composition. Upon the basis of a 'harmony of authorities', Cooley asserted an 'objective' view of what could be found in the East African interior and this was most notably a large lake: the 'N'yassi' (Figure 3.10).⁷⁵ Despite the map being 'hopelessly wrong in most of its particulars', Cooley's control of his source material did provide evidence as to the existence of a 'Great Lake'.⁷⁶ Of course, this was not a 'new' discovery, as a hundred years before D'Anville and Guillaume Delisle had also found evidence for, what is today, Lake Malawi. Yet, his original contribution was in making the body of water extend in a northwesterly direction. Whilst he had 'discovered' the existence of Lake Tanganyika, Cooley did not accept, or even consider, the possibility that there could be two separate waters. This was to be Cooley's most enduring theory throughout the rest of his career.

⁷⁴ For examples of critical geographers employing this comparative approach with Portuguese sources and recent accounts exploration, see James MacQueen, 'Notes on the Geography of Central Africa from the Researches of Livingstone, Monteiro, Graça, and Others', *JRGS*, 26 (1856), pp. 109-130; William Desborough Cooley, 'Journey of Joachim Rodriguez Graça, to the Muata ya Nvo', *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 1 (1855-1856), p. 92. These are discussed in Chapter 7.

⁷⁵ Cooley, 'Geography of N'yassi', p. 235.

⁷⁶ Bridges, 'W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part I', p. 35.

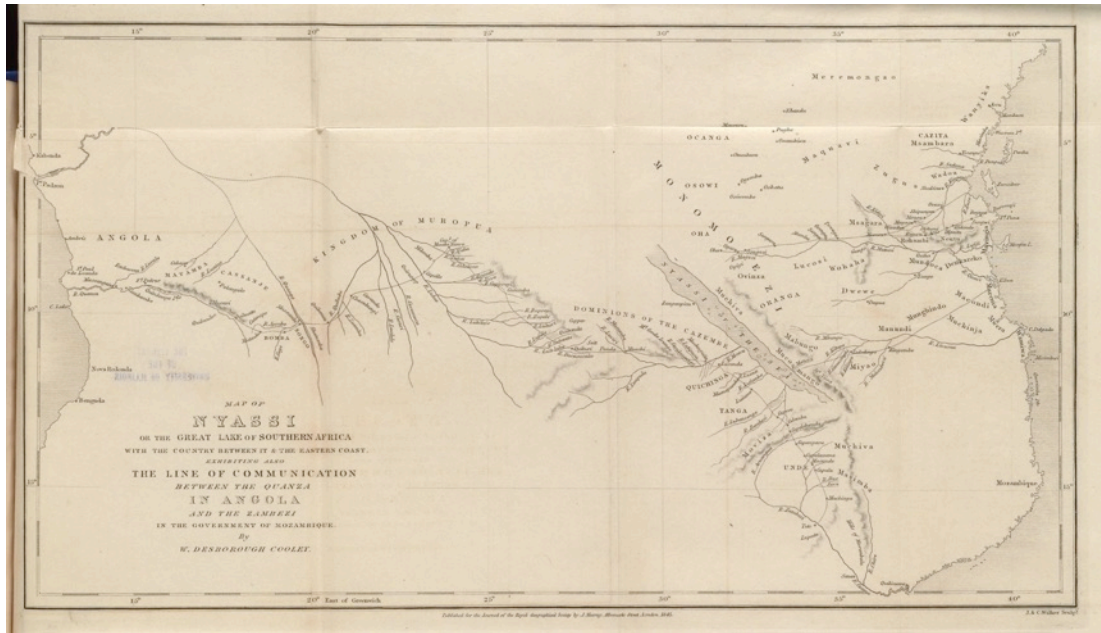


Figure 3.10. W. D. Cooley, 'Map of N'yassi', 1845. From Cooley, 'The Geography of N'yassi', after p. 385 Courtesy of The University Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Significantly, Cooley had positioned himself in opposition to the 'uncritical compiler' or 'copyist', instead viewing his role as a critical and corrective reader, who could explore without having to leave the study.⁷⁷ Indeed, his principles of rectification can be viewed as a process of decentring the previously stable subject of a travel account in order to track the recorded movements and reconstruct a new geography from the text's captured mobility. Through the formal conventions of travel writing and the presentation of a narrative, the sense of mobility becomes spatialised and synchronised into an ordered account.⁷⁸ Such narrative movement embodies a state of travel and translates an overwhelming sense of simultaneous motion, whereby the critical readers' reaction becomes an intersection of literal and metaphorical journeys.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Cooley, *Negroland of the Arabs*, p. x.

⁷⁸ Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst (eds), *Travel Writing, Form, and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility* (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁷⁹ Duncan and Gregory, *Writes of Passage*.

Texts recounting travels therefore sit, not simply as a repository of memory, but as one of movement; they do not just capture the act of travel, but also enable it be followed and remobilised.

Cooley's reading of the journal Dr Francisco de Lacerda e Almeida explicitly illustrates how textual objects hold expressive agency and could be put to use as not just literary, but also as material conjurers of place. Lacerda was a colonel of engineers and professor of mathematics, appointed to the Rios de Sena (a Portuguese colony on the Zambezi) in 1797 for the specific purpose of 'fixing the geography of that region by astronomical observations', and thereby establish a trade route through the interior.⁸⁰ He conducted an expedition in 1798, from Tete on the Zambeze, up to Lucenda the capital of the Cazembe; yet, Lacerda never completed this mission as he died before he reached his final destination due to fever and exhaustion. Whilst his journals survived, their delayed publication meant that Cooley could not draw on them when preparing his 'Geography of N'yassi'. Following the release of parts of the journal in *Annaes Maritimos e Coloniaes* in 1845, Cooley examined it to demonstrate how it related to the one Cooley 'had imagined', and to test his conclusions.⁸¹ He was one of the first scholars to make a serious attempt to critically use Lacerda's writings, as he deemed him to be 'a gentlemen of learning and ability' with some 'scientific attainments'.⁸²

As part of his comparative approach, Cooley produced an itinerary map to visually work out his ideas against those of Lacerda's, marking out two configurations of the route and direction between Tete and Cazembe (Figure 3.11).⁸³ Originally proposing

⁸⁰ [William Desborough Cooley], 'Art. III – *A Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia, Performed in His Majesty's Ships Leven and Barracouta, from 1822, to 1825, Under the Command of Capt. W. F. W. Owen, R. N.* By Capt. Thomas Boteler R. N.', *Edinburgh Review*, 61 (1835), pp. 342-364, p. 349. This route was to connect the Portuguese territories of Angola, in the west, and Mozambique, in the east.

⁸¹ William Desborough Cooley, 'Further Explanations in Reference to the Geography of N'yassi', *JRGS*, 16 (1846), pp. 138-143, p. 140.

⁸² Cooley, 'Geography of N'yassi', p. 195.

⁸³ Despite the RGS-IBG dating this map as c.1860 and it not appearing with the published paper, it appears that this map dates from 1845: following the route Cooley detailed through this source, there is a positive correspondence between the noted locational measurements in Cooley, 'Further Explanations',

that the route in question went parallel to the shores of ‘N’yassi’, at a distance of about 50 miles, he tested this conjecture by marking out two red lines, one following his route and another tracing Lacerda’s calculated journey.⁸⁴ The first red line, populated with Portuguese place names and landmarks, depicts Cooley’s fixing of locations, whilst the second red line, drawn from Lacerda’s observations, takes a sharper northwesterly path. He marked in pencil the lines of variance in their measurements to show the shift westwards of Lacerda’s route.⁸⁵ The materiality of the map itself attests that Cooley undertook a metaphorical journey across this space with Lacerda as his guide. This product of ‘textwork’ appears as layers of inks and pencil, with an undertext of rough workings out, smudges, and erasures to clearly communicate how Cooley was intimately connected with following each individual movement. These suggestions of movement and postural sensation give credence to Benjamin Morgan’s assertion that ‘Victorians read books with their bodies’.⁸⁶

From this comparative exploration of Lacerda’s text, Cooley admitted that in the route from Tete to the capital of the Cazembe, he had ‘fallen short of the truth by about 150 miles’. He claimed that he had been cautious in his placing of positions in order to avoid speculation in places where he did not have sufficient data, and this caused him to bring the route closer to a straight line than he should have done. Cooley cleverly tried to consider the displacement in latitude as being ‘completely within the limits of errors’.⁸⁷ Specifically, he attested:

and those marked on the map, William Desborough Cooley, ‘Map of Dr Lacerda’s route from Tete to Cazembe’, (1860 [c. 1845]), RGS-IBG, Map Room, Zambia S/S.8.

⁸⁴ Cooley, ‘Further Explanations’, p. 140.

⁸⁵ Cooley marked in pencil at bottom centre of Figure 3.11: ‘variation at Machinga according to Dr Lacerda’s report: 25° 50’ 40” W”.

⁸⁶ Benjamin Morgan, ‘Critical Empathy: Vernon Lee’s Aesthetics and the Origins of Close Reading’, *Victorian Studies*, 55 (2012), pp. 31-55, p. 31.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

But though I have missed the exact points, you will, I trust, see sufficient proof in the general soundness of my reasoning in the fact that I have hit on the exact line ... and if I had taken the coast-line in my map from Lacerda's data, and not from the English charts, that difference would have vanished, and my delineation of the route, so far as it goes, would have coincided completely with his.⁸⁸

Such a justification, Cooley felt would 'dissipate all doubts as to the existence of the great lake called 'N'yassi', and to prove the reasonableness of my inferences respecting its position'.⁸⁹ Indeed, Lacerda's account was used by Cooley to reaffirm his original conclusions in the face of questions raised from the account of Portuguese explorers Monteiro and Gamitto, who also travelled to the Cazembe's kingdom in 1830–1831.

The result of this work was the emergence, and apparent confirmation, in Cooley's mind, of a clear conception of the configuration of the East African interior, and in particular, the location and course of the great lakes therein. Whilst it was a flawed geography, Cooley's 'N'yassi' can be regarded as one of the most responsible contemporaneously available accounts of the region of Africa between the latitudes of about 5° and 15°. ⁹⁰ His geographical labours prompted the RGS President, Roderick Impey Murchison, to declare that Cooley had formed an 'extensive acquaintance with everything relating to Southern Africa' and that he was to be consulted by 'the mass of geographers' who were 'entirely ignorant'.⁹¹ Evidently, despite not having a first-hand acquaintance with the continent, Cooley was recognised as having attained significant knowledge and particular skill from the textwork performed in his cabinet.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

⁸⁹ Cooley, 'Further Explanations', p. 143.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁹¹ Roderick Impey Murchison, 'Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London', *JRGS*, 14 (1844), pp. xiv-cxxviii, p. cxix. The reception of the wider scientific community is dealt with in detail in Chapter 7.

Following how Cooley fixed the 'relative position of places' thus uncovers how the cabinet was not simply a place of potential movement and latent energy, but that it was actually a site of animation. This is clear in the particular practices he used in this space. Despite the fact that Cooley was to never see the places about which he wrote, he was able to form pictures from the descriptions of others, and revisit these places as often as he chose through the translative power of text. However, it is in engaging with how these ideas were received that we are able to open up and expose the contested nature of the 'field'. Using a letter written by David Livingstone in 1856, the next section examines the explorer's reaction to such methods and products of the cabinet, and reveals how these debates critically focused on bodily movement and claims to authority.

‘Easy Chair Geography versus Field Geography’

With the ‘soundness of his reasoning’ regarding the geography of the southern Africa interior, Cooley continued to advance his theoretical topography as geographical fact.⁹² In the course of his own self-promotion, Cooley became notorious for his derisory and antagonistic approach towards the work of others, becoming known as ‘the lynx eyed detector of geographical frauds and fallacies’.⁹³ The politics of this ‘lynx-eyed’ vision is significant, not just because Cooley would confidently assert that explorers had not seen what they attested to have seen, but because the body, its senses and movements came to be a central focus in mid-nineteenth-century geographical debates. These disputes coalesced around the relationship between the sites of field and cabinet; or, as missionary explorer Livingstone put it provocatively, it was ‘Easy chair geography versus Field geography’.⁹⁴

In a letter to the editor of the *Athenaeum* in 1856 Livingstone responded to Cooley’s criticisms that he had made grave ‘geographical errors’, complaining that his adversary only peddled ‘geographical twaddle’.⁹⁵ At the time of writing, Livingstone was in the Mediterranean on SS *Canada* making his return to Britain from Mauritius, following fifteen years spent in Africa as a medical missionary, in which time he crossed the continent from the west to the east coast.⁹⁶ Whilst Livingstone had been in Africa, Cooley had been in London rectifying sources and preparing his ‘Geography of N’yassi’,

⁹² Cooley, ‘Further Explanations’, p. 140.

⁹³ Richard Francis Burton, ‘The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa, with Notices of the Lunar Mountains and the Sources of the White Nile; Being the Results of an Expedition undertaken under the patronage of Her Majesty’s Government and the Royal Geographical Society of London, in the years 1857-1859’, *JRGS*, 29 (1859), pp. 1-454, p. 3.

⁹⁴ David Livingstone, ‘Letter to the Editor of the “Athenaeum” discussing ‘Easy chair versus Field Geography’, 25 November 1856, RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*; William Desborough Cooley, ‘Dr Livingston’s [sic] Remarkable Journey’, *Athenaeum*, no. 1507, 13 September 1856, pp. 1141-1143, p. 1143.

⁹⁶ Livingstone arrived at Cape Town in South Africa in March 1841. He then set off north to the Kalahari Desert and continued his explorations to reach the coastal region of Luanda in 1853. He sighted Lake Ngami in 1849 and the Zambezi River in 1851. He reached his end-point – Quelimane, Mozambique on the east coast – in 1856.

beginning in 1835 until his claim to have laid inner Africa open in 1852. Livingstone was no doubt aware of Cooley's researches as they appeared in prominent scientific and literary publications, but he was invoked to answer from the field particular disparaging assessments made about his conduct and the accounts of his African travels that had been presented to the wider scientific community back in Britain. His aggrieved reaction was spawned when he 'was favoured by Mr Latouche, the Admiralty agent on board with a sight of a late number of your [*Athenaeum*] widely circulated journal containing a paper by Mr Cooley'.⁹⁷ This paper was 'Dr Livingstone's Remarkable Journey [sic]', published in the *Athenaeum* on 13 September 1856, and intended as a response to an account of Livingstone's journey delivered to a meeting of the 'Geography and Ethnology' Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.⁹⁸ Cooley believed it was 'absolutely necessary' that further explanation and direction on the 'obscure' narrative that had been presented was needed.⁹⁹ Within this deprecatory paper, Cooley positioned himself as a lead authority on which to write such comments, particularly as Livingstone's route trod the paths whose geography Cooley had presented as 'conclusive'. He claimed that the vague narration of the journey left its details 'a confused tissue of contradictions' that did not improve Britain's knowledge of African geography, but rather left it in 'deep darkness'.¹⁰⁰ The criticism was such that it prompted a reply from RGS President Murchison, who had presented the redacted version of Livingstone's report at the meeting of the British Association. He stated that he never imagined 'that the brief notice of ... the termination of his [Livingstone's] second wonderful journey, would have elicited such comments as those which have

⁹⁷ He received the paper when coming up the Red Sea on board the P&O. Co. steamer *Nubia*. Livingstone, 'Letter to the Editor of the "Athenaeum"', RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

⁹⁸ David Livingstone, 'Geography and Ethnology Section: Rev. Dr D. Livingstone's Return Journey across Southern Africa [read by R. I. Murchison]', *Report of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Cheltenham in August 1856* (London: John Murray, 1856), pp. 113-114.

⁹⁹ Cooley, 'Dr Livingstone's [sic] Remarkable Journey', p. 1141.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1142.

necessarily arrested my attention'.¹⁰¹ Unsurprisingly, Livingstone's response was not quite so diplomatic.

Livingstone firstly addressed Cooley's contention that he had not relayed enough information about the 'wholly novel part of the route', that being the course of the Leeambye and Zambezi Rivers, and ascertaining if they were connected.¹⁰² He teased how in his very own book, Cooley claimed to have laid inner Africa open, yet he then 'rather lugubriously complains because I have not thrown a "flood of light" on what if his pamphlet is what its name implies, surely needed not any glimmerings I could give'.¹⁰³ Within his opening sentence, the implication was made that Cooley had failed in his task, and Livingstone concluded that he would be the one to 'give a good account of the profits of "Inner Africa laid open"'. Indeed, Livingstone's opening proposition had been 'to enter a gentle protest against putting Easychair [sic] geography on a level with that of actual observation'.¹⁰⁴ The direct juxtaposition of these two 'geographies' immediately set up a combative spatial dialectic, which exposed the fragility of the geographical labour network and its epistemological foundations. It was a distinction that went beyond simply sedentary versus active geography, and into debates concerning evidentiary value, knowledge, and power. The use of 'chair' was a way of displaying hierarchy and, in this context, signified a place of privilege, where the individual passed judgment, and asserted the validity of particular geographical knowledge claims over others. As Livingstone put it, 'the self-satisfied assurance of the Easychair [sic] and pair of compasses, is not one of our besetting sins'.¹⁰⁵ It was a disdain shared by many explorers, and in particular, Nile explorer John Hanning Speke referred scornfully to those 'geographers ... who sit in carpet slippers, and criticise

¹⁰¹ Roderick Impey Murchison, 'Dr Livingstone's [sic] Letters from South Africa', *Athenaeum*, no. 1509, 27 September 1856, p. 1189.

¹⁰² Cooley, 'Livingstone's Remarkable Journey', p. 1142.

¹⁰³ Livingstone, 'Letter to the Editor of the "Athenaeum"', RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

those who labour in the field'.¹⁰⁶ However, far from being a simple satirical swipe, Livingstone's letter highlights the real and serious epistemological issues lying at the core of making geography as the body of the geographer became politicised.

From the outset, there is a great sense of anger to Livingstone's letter, embodied in its material form (Figure 3.12). His handwriting provides an interesting insight into his emotional state of mind at the point of its production, which serves to add a further human dimension to this highly charged debate. The messy layout of the letter indicates a passionate outpouring of his irritation and dissatisfaction. As the letter progresses, the strokes of Livingstone's writing become increasingly exaggerated and extra notes appear above and below the line. These scribbled features all speak to a breathless and anxious writer. One particularly significant element is Livingstone's use of underlining to stress certain statements, particularly his underlining of 'laid open', almost every time he references Cooley's 1852 publication. This can be read as a sarcastic swipe at Cooley, as Livingstone reels at his audacity in making such a claim 'without even pretending to have visited the scenes which the title seems to promise'.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, this grew as a point of contention amongst the geographical community, with Cooley repeatedly being ridiculed by explorers for the confidence he held in his assertions despite their physical exertions in the field contradicting his conjectures.¹⁰⁸

This was not simply a reaction to counter and correct the points poised by Cooley, but a total dismissal of his credibility and ability as a geographer. Even beyond this, Livingstone presented his subject line as: 'Easy chair ~~geography~~ versus Field geography'.¹⁰⁹ With one swift strike of his pen (deliberate or not), Livingstone's letter can be approached from a different perspective, positing a whole different meaning.

¹⁰⁶ 'Letter from Speke to Blackwood', n.d. [c. 1863], NLS, MS 4185, ff. 282-283.

¹⁰⁷ Livingstone, 'Letter to the Editor of the "Athenaeum"', RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Francis Burton, 'The African Discovery', *Athenaeum*, no. 1899, 19 March 1864, pp. 407-408, p. 408.

¹⁰⁹ Livingstone, 'Letter to the Editor of the "Athenaeum"', RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

Indeed, this crossing out of 'geography' after 'Easy chair' could be read as a symbol for the complete erasure of a whole body of scholarship, undermining its epistemological purpose and suggesting that the competition between the two forms of geographical practice had been won by 'Field geography'.

DL 2/12
Steam Ship bandia 25th Nov^r
in Mediterranean sea 1856

To the Editor of the Athenaeum

Easy chair, geography versus Field geography
In coming up the Red sea about
a week ago in the P. & O. Co's steamer Arabia
I was favoured by Mr. Latouche the Admiralty
agent on board with a sight of a late number
of your widely circulated journal containing
a paper by Mr. Cooley the author of a pamphlet
called "Inner Africa land open", in which he
rather lugubriously complains because I
have not thrown a "flood of light" on what
if his pamphlet is what its name implies,
surely needed not any glimmerings I could
give. He asserts ~~that~~ that when I went to

Figure 3.12. "Letter from David Livingstone to the Editor of the "Athenaeum", 25 November 1856, p. 1. RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

A similar exchange had occurred thirty-five years earlier in a review penned by Sir John Barrow following the 1821 publication of MacQueen's *A Geographical and*

Commercial View of Africa.¹¹⁰ Barrow, a central figure in the coordination and promotion of British exploration in the Arctic and Africa, dismissed MacQueen's comparative approach as 'no less curious than convenient system of its rivers, which Mr M'Queen has ingeniously laid down ... from materials collected in his closet'.¹¹¹ The semantic shift here from 'cabinet' to 'closet' is especially significant, as it signals the politicisation of the body and the space it inhabited. Notably, the closet was 'the feminine counterpart within the household of the masculine library or study ... a place of contemplative isolation, a place for activities of the mind'.¹¹² The employment of the term 'closet' by Barrow was particularly disparaging as it evoked 'meanings of effeminacy, introspection, safety, and textuality'.¹¹³ These characteristics stood in direct opposition to what Barrow held to be the essence of geographical discovery, and it was a specific form of 'field geography':

There is nothing so easy as to fill up the vacant spaces of maps with points and lines according to some favourite hypothesis, but to fix with precision the exact spot that the point ought to occupy ... require[s] not only personal presence and actual and minute observation, but for the most part great patience and perseverance, much bodily fatigue and danger, and but too frequently loss of health and life itself. This has been peculiarly the case with regard to African geography.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ This episode is examined in Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, pp. 123-129. The text in question is MacQueen, *A Geographical and Commercial View of Northern Central Africa*.

¹¹¹ [John Barrow], 'Review of *A Geographical and Commercial View of Northern Central Africa*', *Quarterly Review*, 26 (1821), pp. 55-56.

¹¹² E. J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 134-135.

¹¹³ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 126.

¹¹⁴ [John Barrow], 'Recent Discoveries in Africa, Made in the Years 1823 and 1824, by Major Denham, Captain Clapperton, R. N. and the Late Dr Oudney, Extending across the Great Desert to the Tenth Degree of Northern Latitude, and from Kouka in Bornous to Sackatoo, the Capital of the Soudan Empire', *Quarterly Review*, 33 (1826), pp. 543-544.

MacQueen's response to these denigrating charges was to challenge 'the distinction between knowledges of the field and cabinet'.¹¹⁵ He accepted that he had worked through sedentary methods of textual collation and synthesis, but he strongly asserted its legitimacy and importance as a form of geography.¹¹⁶

With the discourse of scientific exploration being recast, it had taken a more visceral turn by the mid-nineteenth century. In his early years, Livingstone was famously overheard declaring: 'I am willing to go anywhere – provided it be forward'.¹¹⁷ This confident and assured sense of 'moving' came to define a significant aspect of exploration: the travelling body. Through physical stoicism and the primacy of senses, the explorer was cast as a master of the physical environment, and of 'the field'.¹¹⁸ The body of the sedentary geographer was also drawn into these debates, as there was a discursive shift from geography formed in the 'closet', to the geographer confined to an 'easy chair'. These examples present a 'body' of knowledge that was defined by its mobility, or indeed, immobility. This went beyond the 'closet culture' habits of privacy and solitude for a feminised reader, as the 'easy chair' implied something far more sinister; it was a malady. From Livingstone's representation, 'easy chair geography' was both a disease and a serious problem that was purportedly weakening the emergence of geography as a strong, masculine, and imperial science.

The meaning of 'ease' from 'easy chair' originally implied the absence of physical stress, rather than the direct connotation of 'comfort':

¹¹⁵ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, pp. 126-127.

¹¹⁶ James MacQueen, 'M'queen on the Course and Termination of the Niger', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 13 (1823), p. 432.

¹¹⁷ 'David Livingstone: The Centenary Commemoration in London, December 11th, 1940', *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 40 (1941), pp. 108-120, p. 111.

¹¹⁸ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa, including a Sketch of Sixteen Years' Residence in the Interior of Africa, and a Journey from the Cape of Good Hope to Loanda on the West Coast, thence across the Continent, down the River Zambesi, to the Eastern Ocean* (London: John Murray, 1857); Basil Matthews, *Livingstone the Pathfinder* (2nd edn, London, 1913); Driver, *Geography Militant*.

Easy chairs ... were not for everyone's comfortable seating; rather, they were designed for people who could not move easily on their own – chronic invalids, women in the late stages of pregnancy or recovering from childbirth, and men with gout.¹¹⁹

From this definition, the material reality of the 'easy chair' held the implication that geographers working in the cabinet with texts were inactive and impotent. There are elements within Livingstone's letter that those 'easy chair' geographers should be characterised as physically and, at times, psychologically abnormal. Whilst Livingstone makes reference to the speculative minds of these sedentary scholars, he also suggests that they were disorderly fantasists, remarking that he was 'compelled to believe that a geographer on an easy chair with a bowl of punch before him may see greater marvels than any traveller in the field'.¹²⁰

The pathologised figure of the 'sickly scholar' also emerged in the wider literary and scientific culture at this time. In particular, the Victorian novel came to poetically cast the 'scholar of antiquity' as having 'semicolons and parentheses in his blood'.¹²¹ With the novel being promoted as the dominant literary form, it came to be positioned opposite to and in competition with classical genres, such as the epic. Such literary motives led certain novelists to castrate, cripple, or dehumanise their 'scholar' characters, as a means of symbolically renouncing ancient genres and embracing modern consciousness.¹²² The presentation of the sedentary and sickly figure was drawn from an established practice of painting satirical portraits of scholars:

¹¹⁹ John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 145-146.

¹²⁰ Livingstone, 'Letter to the Editor of the "Athenaeum"', RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

¹²¹ Elizabeth Hale, 'Sickly Scholars and Healthy Novels: The Classical Scholar in Victorian Fiction', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 17 (2010), pp. 219-243, p. 219.

¹²² Ibid.

Hard students are commonly troubled with ... all such diseases as come by over-much sitting; they are most part lean, dry, ill-coloured ... and all through immoderate pains and extraordinary studies ... [they are often deemed] ridiculous and silly fools, Idiots, Asses, and (as oft as they are) rejected, condemned, derided, doting, and mad [sic].¹²³

The sense that the non-moving body reflected deformities of mind and emotion was a marker that they were unfit to belong to the ‘normal’ world. These criticisms were not simply voiced through fictitious characters, but they were also levelled at particular individuals. For example, the caricature of author Wilkie Collins in *Vanity Fair* depicts him as having an underdeveloped and weak body, in comparison to the exaggerated size of his head (Figure 3.13).¹²⁴ Livingstone drew a similar, if not more manic, image of Cooley as exhibiting symptoms of *‘cacoethes scribendi’*.¹²⁵ This Latin phrase, which means an uncontrollable urge to write, was clearly an accusation that Cooley was compulsive in his tasks.¹²⁶ Contemporaries observed that he suffered ‘peculiarities of temperament’, and Cooley himself admitted that the ‘allurement of discovery’ easily became a chronic condition of obsession.¹²⁷ In focusing on the oddities of behaviour, Livingstone created a sense that ‘easy chair’ geographers were a threat to the health of other geographers, and the larger geographical community.

Livingstone’s sardonic reference to the ‘easy chair’ geographers as ‘our comfortable friends’ was a charge that they lacked the manly qualities of field explorers

¹²³ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy, What it is, with all the Kinds, Causes, Symptoms, Prognostics, and Several Cures of it in Three Partitions. With Their Several Sections, Members, and Subsections, Philosophically, Medicinally, Historically Opened and Cut Up, Vol. I* (London, 1806 [first published 1671]), p. 201.

¹²⁴ For comments on Wilkie Collins and the ‘physiological conception of the novel’, see Lara Karpenko, ‘“A Nasty Thumping at the Top of Your Head”: Muscularity, Masculinity, and Physical Reading in *The Moonstone*’, *Victorian Review*, 38 (2012), pp. 132-154.

¹²⁵ Livingstone, ‘Letter to the Editor of the “Athenaeum”’, RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ ‘Obituary: William Desborough Cooley’, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, 5 (1883), pp. 232-233, p. 233; Cooley, *Geometrical Propositions Demonstrated*, p. 6.

and inhabited the safe space of comfortable domesticity.¹²⁸ Whilst the easy chair was designed specifically for the immobile body, the chair itself was part of the emergent modern sensibility of comfort.¹²⁹ The implied snugness of this physical support within a domestic setting contrasted with the danger, disease, and violence encountered in the field. In turn, these contrasting environments were inhabited by contrasting masculine identities. This was a period when the notion of ‘manliness’ was coming to replace the figure of the ‘polite gentleman’.¹³⁰ By noting how Cooley lacked the embodied experience of Africa and the ravages of travel, Livingstone asserted that Cooley did not display any of the active virtues of ‘manliness’, such as courage, endurance, and personal integrity. When commenting about his approach to work, Cooley suggested that he was anti-risk both physically and mentally, with the tenets of ‘reserve and circumspection’ guiding his approach to settling geographical questions.¹³¹



Figure 3.13. ‘(William) Wilkie Collins’, by Adriano Cecioni, 1872 © National Portrait Gallery, London.

¹²⁸ Livingstone, ‘Letter to the Editor of the “Athenaeum”’, RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

¹²⁹ Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*.

¹³⁰ John Tosh, ‘Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002) pp. 455-472; *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005).

¹³¹ Cooley, *Negroland of the Arabs*, p. xii.

Whilst it is unknown whether Cooley ever saw Livingstone's 1856 letter as it went unpublished, the debate it raised places into relief the entangled relations between the sites of the field and the cabinet. Livingstone's use of the competitive preposition 'versus' incited the sense that there were two separate and opposed groups of geographers in the nineteenth century. Yet, as the next section shows, Livingstone's bodily actions in the field demonstrate the complexity of this argument and the inherent contradictions in his own epistemological position, as gestures of comfort, repose, and privacy extended into his way of being in the field.

From Motion to Repose: Unfolding David Livingstone's chair

Livingstone's own account of the act of travel was one of resolute physicality. As he noted a moment of exhilaration and energy in his journal entry of 26 March 1866:

The mere animal pleasure of travelling in a wild unexplored country is very great ... when on lands of a couple of thousand feet elevation, brisk exercise gives health, circulates blood, and the mind works well; the eye is clear, the step is firm.¹³²

Livingstone's descriptive and personal reflection stripped his movements down to the pure physical act of walking. In observing the plain bodily facts of how he moved in the field, Livingstone displayed his actions as enabling him to get to where he wanted and needed. As a technology of travel, these movements became integral to his credibility as an explorer, and his physical frame 'was represented in the field as being in perpetual

¹³² Horace Waller (ed.), *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa from 1865 to his Death. Continued by a Narrative of his Last Moments and Sufferings, Obtained from his Faithful Servants, Chuman and Susi*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1874), p. 13.

motion ... resilient to the last'.¹³³ Unlike other scientific discoveries, travel reports were not immediately demonstrative, and an explorer's remote observations had to be proved credible in order to be trusted. Whilst this trust was often bound to an individual's 'epistemic virtue', namely that they were of proven good character and moral standing, exploration was also 'a kind of ritual in manly virtue'.¹³⁴ The qualities of physique and character – what Thomas Carlyle called 'toughness of muscle' and 'toughness of heart' – were clearly bound to the masculine, travelling body.¹³⁵ Livingstone has often been referred to as the physical embodiment and rhetorical image of imperial masculinity and the Victorian ideal of the 'muscular Christian'; an identity forged from selfless dedication, heroic valour, physical strength, and scientific mastery.¹³⁶ He was a walking 'body of evidence', physically showcasing what he had acquired and the act of acquiring.¹³⁷

With a body in 'perpetual motion', the figure of Livingstone was often represented in moments of active encounter, typically emerging as a 'heroic figure', or as an 'exemplar of civilization, order, and culture'.¹³⁸ The most famous of these came from his *Missionary Travels*, in which Livingstone recounted the lion attack, which shattered his elbow (Figure 3.14). As a dramatic visualisation of a scene of danger, Livingstone is depicted being restrained under the large physical bulk of a fearsome lion, his beastliness being emphasised with an implied growl through sharp and gritted teeth. Whilst Livingstone deplored this scene as 'abominable' and suggested it would be a source of

¹³³ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 70.

¹³⁴ Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*, pp. 201-202; Heffernan, "A Dream as Frail as those of Ancient Time", p. 219.

¹³⁵ Thomas Carlyle, 'Book III. – The Modern Worker', *Past and Present* (3rd edn, New York: William H. Colyer, 1844), pp. 96-165, p. 112.

¹³⁶ Livingstone, *Livingstone's Lives*, pp. 137-138. For more on the term 'muscular Christian', see Norman Vance, *The Sineus of Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹³⁷ Justin D. Livingstone, 'A "Body" of Evidence: The Posthumous Presentation of David Livingstone', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 40 (2012), pp. 1-24, p. 1.

¹³⁸ Horace Waller, 'The Universities Mission to Central Africa', *Quarterly Review*, 168 (1889), pp. 229-248, pp. 229-230; Livingstone, *Livingstone's Lives*, p. 77.

ridicule, the decision for the publisher John Murray to authorise the illustration suggests a desire to meet the reading public's taste for adventure in unexplored lands.¹³⁹ The significant fracture he sustained in this episode would serve as an eternal physical testament to his image as an explorer-hero in the eyes of the public, and one that spoke of his life in motion as a true traveller to the metropolitan scientific community.¹⁴⁰ As Outram has remarked, 'without that vulnerability the explorer could not manifest in his own person the moral economy which made his reporting acceptable as authentic knowledge'.¹⁴¹



Figure 3.14. 'The Missionary's Escape from the Lion', from Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857), opposite p. 13 © Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

¹³⁹Louise Henderson, "Everyone will die laughing": John Murray and the Publication of David Livingstone's *Missionary Travels*, *Livingstone Online*, 7 June 2010 [<http://www.livingstoneonline.ucl.ac.uk/companion.php?id=HIST2>, accessed 6 June 2015]; Leila Koivunen, 'Africa on the Spot and from the Distance: David Livingstone's *Missionary Travels* and Nineteenth-Century Practices of Illustration', *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 129 (2013), pp. 194-209. For further analysis, see Louise Henderson, 'Geography, Travel and Publishing in Mid-Victorian Britain' (PhD Thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2012).

¹⁴⁰ Livingstone, 'A "Body" of Evidence', p. 20.

¹⁴¹ Outram, 'On Being Perseus', p. 292.

However, the material remnants of Livingstone's expeditions attest to a more complex story that disrupts his own clear distinction between the activities of the 'field' and the inertia of the 'easy chair'. As Driver has noted, a tension existed between his representations as a (mis)adventurer, imperial hero, and exacting scientist, and this is apparent not just in how his body was discursively positioned in the field, but through its full range of physical movement and postures.¹⁴² Whilst Livingstone's travels in Africa were driven by fortuitous energy, they were also punctuated by times of repose and stillness. Livingstone was well known for his aversions to deskbound work, and often declared that he found travelling easier than reading and writing. Yet Henry Morton Stanley described and sketched one such sedentary moment, observing that Livingstone exhibited 'great care' of movement.¹⁴³ With this account, Stanley has captured a very different image of Livingstone in the field (Figure 3.15). Aside from periods of forced immobility due to illness, Livingstone appears in an unfamiliar gesture of reflection, pondering over his account of daily experiences and observations. He used small 'pocket-books' or 'metallic note-books' to keep his field diary, which he later expanded and revised for his larger diaries.¹⁴⁴ The apparent novelty of this scene for the viewer is acknowledged by Stanley who goes on to 'correct the gentleman who informed me that Livingstone takes no notes or observations' by stating that he was an industrious and diligent writer, and composed 'sheet after sheet, column after column, carefully written, of figures alone'.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Driver, *Geography Militant*. See also, Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller*.

¹⁴³ Henry Morton Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures, and Discoveries in Central Africa, Including an Account of Four Months' Residence with Dr Livingstone* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1872), p. 563.

¹⁴⁴ Waller, *The Last Journals*, vol. 1, p. iv.

¹⁴⁵ Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone*, p. 430.

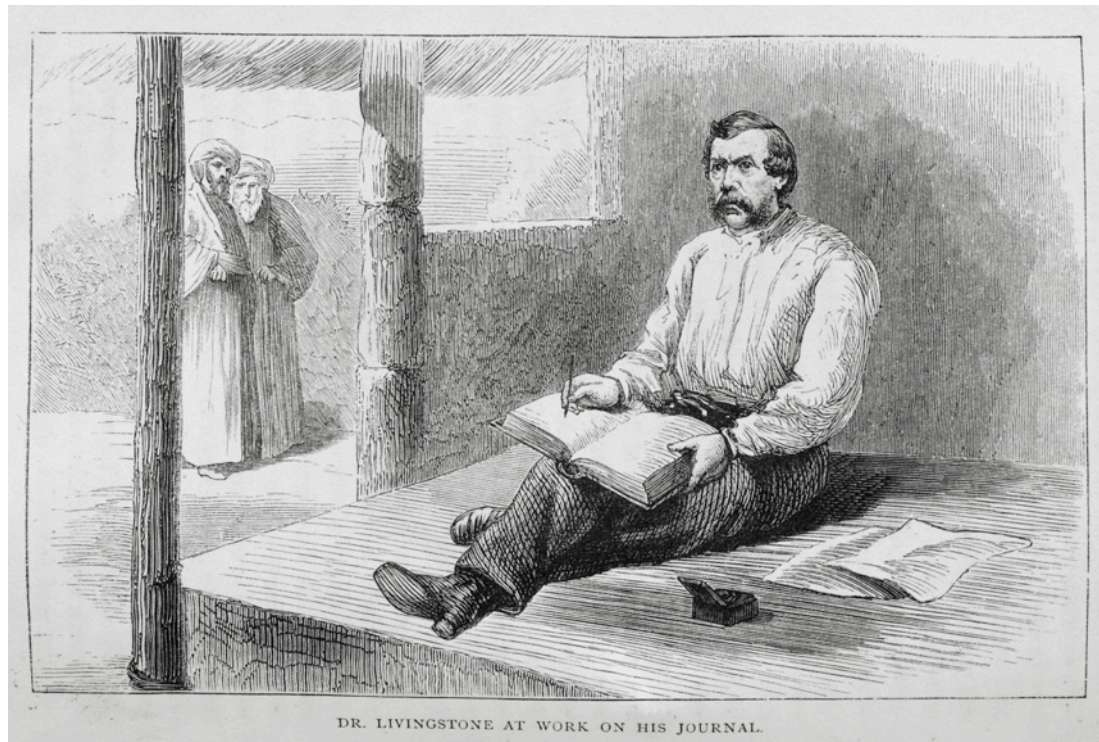


Figure 3.15. 'Dr Livingstone at work on his journal'. From Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone* (1872), opposite p. 563 © Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

Keeping a journal was a practice that had long been habitual among navigators and explorers became an explicit requirement for major expeditions. These journals and logbooks reflected the first process of selection from among the mass of daily facts, events, and experiences. Geographical 'data' and measurements dominated, as it was the central focus of the explorer tasked with correcting or composing maps and charts of unknown regions.¹⁴⁶ The discipline of regular writing in the field was closely connected with expectations of observational rigour and bodily discipline; it was, what has been termed, an 'authorial regimen'.¹⁴⁷ The material constitution of these journals adds to this tale of mobility. Livingstone's written notes 'were often flecked with blood or stained by drops of sweat', reflecting the bodily trials faced by Livingstone himself to become a

¹⁴⁶ Bourguet, 'The Explorer'.

¹⁴⁷ Withers and Keighren, 'Travels into print', p. 565. For more on explorers' notebooks, see Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, 'A Portable World: The Notebooks of European Travellers (Eighteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)', *Intellectual History Review*, 20 (2010), pp. 377-400.

‘paradigm of fortitude’.¹⁴⁸ One particularly unique item is his ‘Manyema Field Diary’ (1870–1871) from his final African expedition (1866–1873), which Livingstone creatively put together when he ran out of pocket-books.¹⁴⁹ Its seventy-eight discrete pages were formed from whatever paper he had at hand in the later years of his expedition.¹⁵⁰ The formation of this ‘scrapbook’ contrasts with the more convenient state of being at home, where paper and ink were not in short supply. As such, this fragile manuscript is perhaps the closest embodiment of the extreme and arduous circumstances under which Livingstone lived and travelled. The fragments of paper are covered with his overlapped handwriting, that he squeezed in at different angles so as to make full use of the space available (Figure 3.16). The diary is a material testament to geographical knowledge being captured in a state of continual transition, transformation, and transference.

¹⁴⁸ Martin Dugard, *Into Africa: The Retelling of the Stanley-Livingstone Story* (London: Bantam, 2003), p. 17; Livingstone, *Livingstone’s Lives*, p. 126.

¹⁴⁹ The Manyema Diary (1870–1871) contains: The Bamberre Field Diary (1870–1871) and the Nyangwe Field Diary (1871). The folia that make up these diaries are variously held by the David Livingstone Centre in Blantyre, Scotland; National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; Rhodes House Library, Oxford. These previously unprocessed and illegible documents form part of the ‘The David Livingstone Spectral Imaging Project’, a collaboration between Livingstone Online and UCLA Digital Library Program: <http://livingstone.library.ucla.edu>. The results of the Project are published online as digital resources: *Livingstone’s 1871 Field Diary: A Multispectral Critical Edition*: <http://livingstone.library.ucla.edu/1871diary/>; *Livingstone’s 1870 Field Diary and Select 1871 Letters: A Multispectral Critical Edition* (in progress).

¹⁵⁰ The Diary includes pages from an unidentified book of sermons, a map of Lake Albert from the *Proceedings of the RGS*, sheets from the *Pall Mall Budget* (21 August 1869) and *The Standard* (24 November 1869), and various used envelopes and enclosures. See ‘The David Livingstone Spectral Imaging Project’ [online].



Figure 3.16. A page from Livingstone's 1871 Field Diary, showing Livingstone's overtext written on *The Standard*, 24 November 1869, p. 1. Courtesy of Livingstone Spectral Imaging Team.

Another surviving object that does not present a text to be read, but tells a tale of such bodily transitions purely through its materiality, is Livingstone's travel chair (Figure 3.17). This mahogany Victorian folding chair with brass fittings and a pull out reading rest was used by Livingstone on his Zambesi Expedition (1858–1864), in which he discovered Lake Nyasa (now Malawi). In one of the only pieces of correspondence

related to this chair, it is detailed how Livingstone's 'camp chair-bed' and another that belonged to his wife, Mary, were given as a 'departing gift' to Colonel Galdino Jose Nunes in Quelimane.¹⁵¹

Despite a lack of material related to its specific design, manufacture and use, it reveals itself to be a rather inventive piece of travel equipment for the time, which was loosely based on the portable Douro chair.¹⁵² Livingstone's chair would have enabled a full range of motion to suit the sitter's needs, with the ability to recline due to the deck chair like prop behind its back that was hinged to securely fix it in place. The innovative qualities of such a folding mechanism were recognised by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce who awarded their silver Vulcan medal to Mr J. P. Hubbard in 1824 for his folding wooden chair with a spring catch.¹⁵³ It was commended for its ingenuity, and, in particular, its 'great simplicity ... the ease with which it is folded, and the small space which it then occupies', which together made it easily portable.¹⁵⁴ The more complex features of Livingstone's chair went beyond Hubbard's basic design and attest that thought had been invested in its production in order to meet the specifications of the field traveller. This is clearly the case when compared with similar, yet less sophisticated, modes of transport, such as the 'armchair boat' concocted by American geologist and explorer John Wesley Powell

¹⁵¹ 'Formal letter of donation to RGS from Henrique Cesar da Costa', 11 January 1903, RGS-IBG, Correspondence Block 7/77. It is probable that this 'gift' was to acknowledge and commend Nunes for his assistance in handling the finances of the Zambesi Expedition and for holding its objects and specimens. Livingstone had held Nunes in high esteem since his first travels in Africa and he proved himself to be a useful 'intermediary' for Livingstone, due to his linguistic skills and local knowledge, particularly in relations with the Portuguese in Quelimane and Mozambique. See Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 672.

¹⁵² The portable Douro chair was a piece of campaign furniture that was manufactured and advertised by the majority of London travel equipment firms in the mid to late nineteenth century, such as Hill & Millard, Allen, W. Day & Son and the Army & Navy Society. Each chair came with an associated packing case. Once at camp, the chair was unpacked and legs were screwed to the base of the packing case to turn it into a separate table. See Simon Clarke, 'The Douro Chair', *Christopher Clarke Antiques Blog*, August 2008 [<http://antiquecampaignfurniture.blogspot.co.uk/2013/08/the-douro-chair.html>, accessed 30 June 2015].

¹⁵³ Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce became the Royal Society of Arts in 1847.

¹⁵⁴ 'No. V FOLDING CHAIR', *Transactions of the Society, Instituted at London, for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce*, 43 (1824), pp. 99-100, p. 100.

(Figure 3.18). This curious contraption was put together for his expeditions in 1871 and 1872 when navigating the Colorado River to the Grand Canyon. The makeshift perch was formed from a sturdy armchair being lashed to the middle bulkhead of the lead boat, the *Emma Dean*. It was an ad-hoc, creative response to Powell's desire to have a clear, high line of vision to survey the river ahead, and thus it acted as an observation deck.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Joseph A. DiPetro, *Landscape Evolution in the United States: An Introduction to the Geography, Geology, and Natural History* (Newnes, 2012), p. 313.



Figure 3.17. Chair used by Dr Livingstone during his expedition to Lake Nyasa, 1858–1864 © Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).



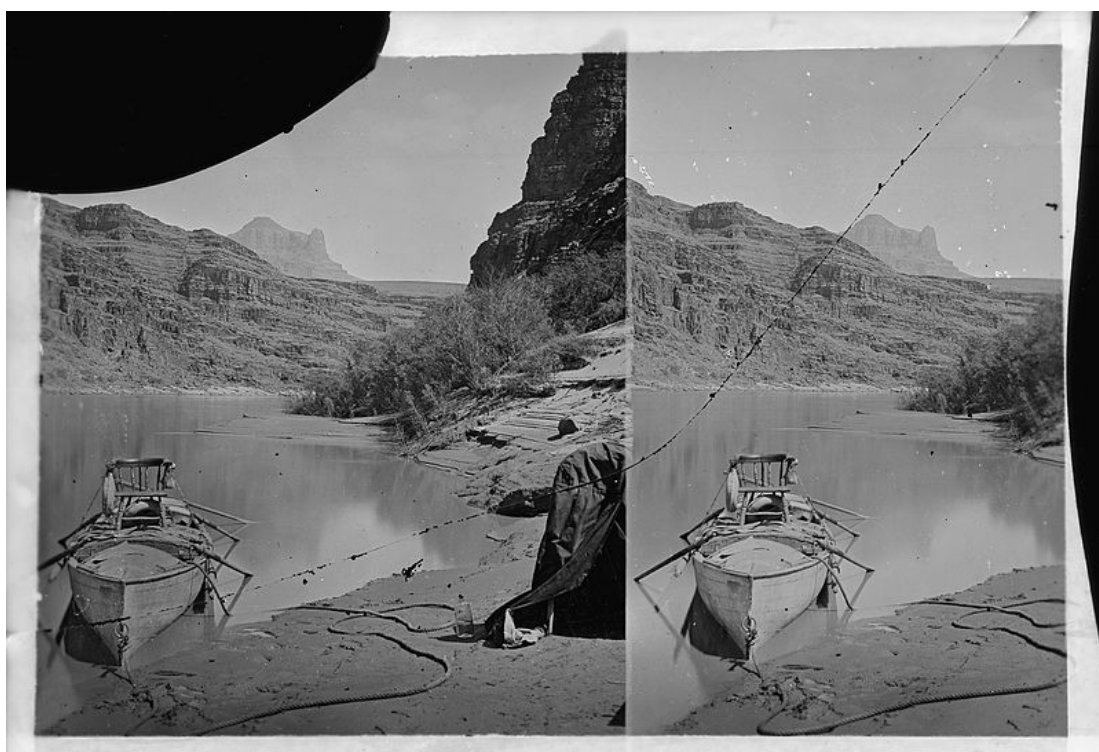


Figure 3.18. Major Powell's boat with chair facing the camera, Grand Canyon, Colorado River, 1871–1878. Courtesy of U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

The chair itself served to mediate its occupant's experience of the space in which it is placed, as the action of unfolding the chair signalled a transition from active explorer to sedentary observer. As soon as Livingstone was positioned in the chair and the desk pulled across his front, he was fixed in a physical mode of study. In particular, it was a place for writing, and the movable desk was large enough to hold his journals and field notes. These elements of a 'mobile laboratory' were also materialised in the collecting wagon of William Burchell. This wagon acted as his travelling cabinet, and was fitted to carry his necessary instruments and provide a place in which he could read,

write, and measure during his journey across southern Africa between 1810 and 1815.¹⁵⁶ Whilst not a mobile study in the same way as Burchell's wagon, Livingstone's chair provided, what could be termed, 'an improvised study'; a transitory, portable, and compact study space that could be unfolded and positioned in whatever location Livingstone desired to work, without being bounded to any interior space.

As a facilitating instrument, the chair enabled moments of detached and objective sight in the space which was being observed, and reflected upon. It also offered respite in order to, hopefully, avoid a similar situation as that described by Sir Charles Fellows, who lamented that regular writing was a marginal daily activity due to time and, perhaps more interestingly, a lack of private space with opportunities for bodily ease. Fellows recorded that he occasionally had to represent himself 'as an invalid, in order to get time for writing and the other occupations of a traveller', and that how 'after active travel', he enjoyed moments of mental and physical 'repose'.¹⁵⁷ Significantly, Livingstone's chair offered this sense of repose. It was upholstered and cushioned on the back, seat, and arms to offer comfortable support. The reclining motion also encouraged relaxation and reflection, holding the body in a position that aligned with the eye's line of sight to look up and out, and not hunched up over a desk. This posturing allowed Livingstone to be in a moment of stasis, without losing any of the multi-sensory intimacy of being in the physical reality he was trying to capture. The use of the chair as positioning the sitter both in, and as a part of, nature can be seen as being instrumental in the explorer's retirement from the active life into a non-verbal navigation of sight, bodily senses, and feelings.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 17. For a detailed description and illustration of the wagon, see William John Burchell, *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1822–1824), pp. 108–111, 118–120.

¹⁵⁷ Charles Fellows, *A Journal written during an Excursion in Asia Minor* (London: John Murray, 1839), p. 63; 158; 'Letter from Charles Fellows to John Murray', 5 June 1840, NLS, MS 40395.

¹⁵⁸ Megan Doolittle, 'Time, Space, and Memories: The Father's Chair and Grandfather Clocks in Victorian Working-Class Domestic Lives', *Home Cultures*, 8 (2011), pp. 245–264.

The chair also speaks to a wider geography of ease by demonstrating how this ‘culture of comfort’ extended into the field. The growing demand for a new material culture fitted for travel has been poetically referred to as ‘elegance under canvas’.¹⁵⁹ High ranking British officers during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century sought to recreate the same standard of living as they did at home whilst out on military campaigns in Africa or India. ‘Campaign’ furniture was designed to be portable in order to support this itinerant lifestyle, whilst retaining the style of the period and a body posture that was culturally dictated by metropolitan norms.¹⁶⁰ As such, the arrival of Western-style furniture into the field became a prominent marker of cultural difference. As Henry Barkley Henderson declared in 1829: ‘a Chair is a visible sign of our civilisation’.¹⁶¹ Thus, in many ways, sitting in the chair demarcated Livingstone as an outside observer and as separate from the geographical and social scenes he surveyed.

However, the chair itself embodies a major contradiction. The purpose of such campaign furniture, and particularly for use in active exploration, was portability. A travelling chair was to be ‘light’ and ‘of a very firm and simple construction’, yet Livingstone’s chair is neither of these things.¹⁶² Despite having a reputation as an explorer who travelled lightly, the chair, even folded down, would have been extremely heavy and bulky. Whilst it is unclear who was tasked with carrying this chair, it punctures the image of Livingstone as a ‘solitary’ explorer and attests to the vital role played by the local intermediaries, showing Livingstone’s movements to have been acted out as a collective and collaborative experience. It opens up further questions regarding the wider network of imperial mobility; namely, the logistics of movement out in the field and the involvement, structure, and work of a larger expeditionary party physically

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas A. Brewer, *British Campaign Furniture, Elegance under Canvas, 1790–1914* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ H. B. Henderson, *The Bengalee: Or, Sketches of Society and Manners in the East* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1829), p. 329.

¹⁶² ‘No. V FOLDING CHAIR’, p. 99.

exerting themselves, alongside Livingstone, to transport such a cumbersome piece of equipment.

Furthermore, the aesthetic design disrupts the romanticised image of him as the heroic and suffering traveller, as the reclining chair was often recommended for invalids to offer ‘ease and relief’.¹⁶³ This was explicitly voiced when the chair was returned to Britain in 1903. The Commissioner in British Central Africa, Alfred Sharpe, wrote to RGS Secretary John Scott Keltie that whilst it was an authentic item,

[I]t has not by any means the appearance of such a chair one would expect Dr Livingstone to have with him on his travels ... I would suggest that if you desire to keep it, you should cut off all these upholsterings and trimmings.¹⁶⁴

These comfortable flourishes were obviously felt to signify that in his moments of repose, Livingstone inhabited a bodily condition close to his ‘comfortable friends’ in their ‘easy chairs’. Whilst this cannot be classified as an ‘easy chair’, it does work to facilitate a form of, what could be termed, ‘at ease observation’. As, for Livingstone, the chair did not function as a seat of speculative conjecture and judgment, but it supported a position of sedentary sensory experience and calm calculation.

However, Keltie and the RGS did not take the advice given by Sharpe and the chair exists today with these trimmings intact. Yet, despite the ‘Livingstone’ legacy being

¹⁶³ Thomas Webster, *An Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy: Comprising Such Subjects as are Most Immediately Connected with Housekeeping* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), p. 281.

¹⁶⁴ The chair had remained in the possession of Colonel Jose Militao Nunes in Quelimane since it was gifted to him by Livingstone c.1860. Upon Jose Nunes’ death [n.d.], the Livingstones’ chairs remained with Nunes’ wife until she remarried, and the chairs were given to the ex-Governor of Zambezia. They were then transferred to the Portuguese Consul to British Central Africa, Senor Henrique da Costa, with the instruction to deliver David Livingstone’s chair to the British Commissioner and Mary Livingstone’s chair to Lisbon [this has not yet been successfully traced]. HM Commissioner Sharpe then sent Livingstone’s chair to the RGS on 14th January 1903. They were marked as ‘acknowledged’ by the RGS in March 1903. See ‘Letter from Alfred Sharpe to John S. Keltie re. chair belonging to Livingstone’, 14 January 1903, RGS-IBG, Correspondence Block 7/77.

born and kept alive through iconic images, this chair has not been one of them.¹⁶⁵ In unfolding it here, the chair troubles the notion of the exploring body as being in ‘perpetual motion’, demonstrating that it did, in fact, pause for periods of time. This chair sits as a material metaphor for Livingstone’s life. As he packed and unpacked for his travels, this chair moved with him, it did not simply remain as a static object of stationary reflection. It has now been laid to rest, having clearly sustained the ravages of travel. With its recline mechanism broken, the fabric ripped, faded, and discoloured, and the desk no longer being secure, the chair, like its owner, has the marked body of a life in motion.

Conclusions

This chapter has examined the extent to which certain discourses and practices of mobility were apparent in the making of geographical knowledge in the nineteenth century. The sustained historiographical focus on ‘exploration’ has seen the work of geography increasingly defined by travel and its efforts to facilitate such large-scale movements. It is therefore important to draw a more detailed understanding of the everyday micro-practices through which knowledge was also being generated and made credible. Inspired by work on mobility and histories of science, this chapter has opened up the spatial contexts of ‘cabinet’ and ‘field’ to reveal and extract the varying physical movements that made nineteenth-century geography. As such, a far more entangled account of movement and repose than has previously been told has emerged.

In considering how the cabinet as a space of knowledge was portrayed in portraits of geographers, naturalists, and field scientists, it is clear that it was a prominent cultural discourse for structuring representations of where field science was

¹⁶⁵ Felix Driver, ‘Old Hat, I Presume? The History of a Fetish’, *History Workshop Journal*, 41 (1996), pp. 230-234.

conducted. Thus, whilst the 'field' and science were intertwined, it is also demonstrably apparent that the cabinet was a space where places and peoples were explored. The signification of outside/inside was persistent and continually suggestive of movement between the two states, whether physically or epistemically. This chapter has shown, therefore, that historical accounts depicting the demise of the sedentary scholar in their cabinet, in favour of new empirical knowledge produced by explorers in the field, do not capture the complexity of the spatial contexts in which knowledge was being generated.

The cabinet was not a site of non-movement, but a crucial site in which geographical knowledge was being formulated. The chair existed as a mediating object within it, and formed the focus for identifying the sedentary practitioner, scripting a particular bodily posture, but this was not necessarily restrictive. The bound location of the armchair practitioners who 'travel not, but still a great way' has been unravelled. In the case of Cooley, his efforts to transform static objects of contemplation – books and maps – into modes of expanding knowledge by compiling new maps and hypotheses shows how the cabinet was also a repository of movement. This argument has been further developed by turning the cabinet/field dialectic on its head and considering how the cabinet was present in the field, in similar ways to the field existing in the cabinet.

The popular representation of mobile geographers as heroic explorers who moved to physically and textually fill in the blanks of the interior of Africa has also been deconstructed. Through engaging with the materiality of Livingstone's expeditions to Africa, this chapter has come to account for some of the embodied and experienced aspects of his movements that have previously gone unnoticed. With its marked body, Livingstone's chair attests to a life in motion, but also punctuates such an active life with moments of repose and stillness. The links identified here between these spaces and the activities therein, contribute to wider historiographical debates about geography's early

practices, where these were located, and the different spatial conceptualisations of the ‘field’ in the nineteenth century.

Despite the similarities in particular stances and individual ways of inhabiting their chosen ‘field’ identified here, tensions existed between them and the issue of *where* geography was being produced became increasingly politicised. The material binaries constructed by Livingstone in his 1856 letter of the scarred and suffering ‘field geographer’ and the comfort of the ‘easy chair’ worked to suggest a kinematic hierarchy, based entirely on his own sense of the dynamics of movement and non-movement. It is shown later how these tensions, particularly the personal grievances between Cooley and Livingstone, played out in later years when primary exploration in Africa took centre stage.

The following chapter continues to examine the struggle between different modes of geography, but it does so in a specific institutional context to view how they were given a ‘more formal character’.¹⁶⁶ As this thesis moves to look at the first twenty years of the Royal Geographical Society of London (1830–1850), it is apparent that Livingstone’s mid-century ‘easy chair versus field’ critique cannot be identified as such a clear cut dialectic in this earlier period, as sedentary methods, speculations, and critical practices were visible and recognised from its foundation.

¹⁶⁶ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 210.

Chapter 4

Seats of Speculation:

The labours of the Royal Geographical Society, 1830–1850

The RGS holds a unique and respected position in the history of geographical science and exploration. However, as George Bellas Greenough expressed in his 1840 Presidential Address to the Society, this was not always the case:

Societies, like individuals, entertain different feelings, opinions, and desires, and different periods of their existence. Geographical science, as it becomes more generally known, will be more generally and deeply respected; but it is not known sufficiently at present to render it prudent to make it the sole object of pursuit ... It would be highly dangerous to confine our studies to geography, so strictly called.¹

Such a dismissive expression towards the scientific labours of the RGS appears somewhat unexpected from the Presidential chair of what was to become the largest scientific society in London by 1870.² Yet, it was representative of sentiments within the Society during its first decades and captured the central conflict amongst its members: what were the labours of the RGS? These formative debates have been obscured in histories of the Society by a discourse of hesitancy and inactivity. As its long-time associate and chronicler Hugh Robert Mill claims: it was only in 1851 that the story of the RGS becomes filled with ‘incident and action’.³ This sense of the Society operating

¹ George Bellas Greenough, ‘Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London’, *JRGS*, 10 (1840), pp. xliii-lxxxiii, p. lxxxii.

² Johnston, ‘The Institutionalisation of Geography as an Academic Discipline’; Driver, *Geography Militant*.

³ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 63.

without a clear direction has cast a long shadow in historical assessments of its early period. From such statements, it would not be an exaggeration to assume that the period between its foundation in 1830 and 1850 was rather dull. Indeed, Felix Driver asserts that before 1850, the Society ‘occupied a relatively insignificant position both in the world of science and within society at large’. He describes it as a time of ‘faltering development’ as the collection of information proceeded slowly and its diffusion was spasmodic.⁴

This chapter departs from such a view and, instead, harnesses the sense of anxiety alluded to by Greenough. Through the different opinions and desires of the early members of the RGS, it is argued that this initial period is hugely significant for understanding the development of geographical science and its attendant culture of exploration. In accessing such critical commentaries, the chapter will provide an insight into how the RGS and its labours were managed, viewed, and challenged in this formative period. In making these first two decades a primary concern, this chapter recovers a complex history that has been at best underplayed and at worst neglected, even as it has been partially remembered. Many of the debates will echo the wider epistemological tensions between knowledges of the cabinet and the field introduced in the previous chapter, and they will be considered here in the context of the form and organisation of a society devoted to developing and promoting the ‘science’ of geography.

Against a backdrop of scientific and public interest in geographical exploration and the significant transformations in the organisation of the sciences incited by the scientific reform movement of the 1820s, this chapter situates the first twenty years of the RGS within two interrelated contexts: the history of science and the history of

⁴ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 37.

geography.⁵ As such, it is positioned historiographically in the intellectual space between geography operating within an ‘economy of gentility’ at the turn of the nineteenth century, to geography as a ‘science of empire’ by its middle period.⁶ It will navigate this not as a moment of transition, but as a liminal period in which the RGS Council took a central role in speculating on its future. The following sections of this chapter seek to harness these forces of change and the new cultural politics of science, particularly with the rise of ‘professional’ science, in order to consider what these meant in the context of geography’s history and its impact on constructing the figure of the ‘geographer’.

With its origins being sourced to travel associations, the physical labour of exploration has long been held as central to the Society. The formal announcement for the new Society was made at a meeting of the Raleigh Travellers’ Club, a dining society formed in 1827 for showcasing the literal fruits of the labours of travel. However, this club did not directly work to advance the development of geographical science. The African Association has been called the real precursor to the RGS as, with its founding, exploration came to be institutionalised.⁷ Whilst the Association was motivated by curiosity, it was said to be ‘a curiosity controlled by rational minds and directed to practical ends’, with their attention more readily drawn to potential markets than romantic images of adventure.⁸ Its members worked to turn ‘exploration into geography’ by controlling each point in the expedition process; they selected the explorers, directed the expeditions, and edited and published information.⁹ Its leaders were ‘men of affairs’ who lent the exploration of Africa their authority as gentlemen, and thus constructed a credible scientific structure.¹⁰ Such a complex network was

⁵ Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire; Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment*; Miller and Hanns Reill, *Visions of Empire*; Lightman (ed.), *Victorian Science in Context*; Mackay, *In the Wake of Cook*; Livingstone and Withers (eds), *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science*.

⁶ Stern, “Rescuing the Age from a Charge of Ignorance”, p. 118; Driver, *Geography Militant*, pp. 24–48.

⁷ Daunton, *Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*.

⁸ Hallett (ed.), *Records of the African Association*, p. 15.

⁹ Stern, “Rescuing the Age from a Charge of Ignorance”, p. 120.

¹⁰ Hallett (ed.), *Records of the African Association*, p. 3.

largely predicated on a division of labour that has been likened to ‘a restrained form of armchair swashbuckling’ in which those in the seat of power could provide credibility to the explorer, whilst reaping any commercial benefits and controlling the flow of information.¹¹

Informed by these historical assessments, this chapter analyses the concept of ‘labour’, its social relations and spatial divisions in order to show the different speculative, scholarly, and scientific discourses and practices that made up the work of the RGS. As such, it takes a broadly social constructivist approach, paying attention to the categories employed by contemporaries to ‘the role of human beings, as social actors, in the making of scientific knowledge’ and to the importance of the sites and social spaces in which such knowledge was made and received by different people.¹² By not enforcing a static definition of ‘labour’, it is shown that this fluid construct was actively employed as a discursive marker for the debates surrounding the work and activities of the new Society. As highlighted in the last chapter, physical actions were important, but here the critical focus shifts to the political act of ‘speculation’ as the science of geography was contemplated and considered. This chapter observes that there was a notable shift from the ‘armchair swashbuckler’ of the African Association to the seated speculator of the RGS.

The first section of this chapter seeks to resituate the foundation of the RGS and demonstrate that it was not a straightforward linear narrative from the travellers’ clubs to the new ‘Geographical Society’ as has been conventionally presented. Drawing on private correspondence, and the existence of three prospectuses for a ‘British Geographical Society’ drawn up before the inauguration of 24 May 1830, a clearer

¹¹ Stern, “Rescuing the Age from a Charge of Ignorance”, p. 123.

¹² Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, p. 6. See also, David Demeritt, ‘What is the “Social Construction of Nature”? A Typology and Sympathetic Critique’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 26 (2002), pp. 767-790; Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*; Secord, ‘Knowledge in Transit’; Smith and Agar, *Making Space for Science*.

insight will be given into the cultural politics of the RGS and how its network of interest stretched far beyond those of the travel societies. The chapter then follows the call of Bernard Lightman to go ‘behind the formidable and seemingly solid walls of the buildings that house scientific sites’ to ‘discover malleable spaces’.¹³ Using the example of one of the Society’s first expeditions to Africa in 1834, the role of ‘speculative geography’ and its relationship with exploration is illustrated. Despite the expedition being abandoned, it demonstrates that the Society initially welcomed the sedentary geographer as their critical methodologies were afforded a central place within it. The chapter identifies two critical points in the debates over the relationship between scholarly, scientific, and practical ‘labours’ in 1838 and in 1846. Both of these occurred as reactions to the actions of the RGS Council that elicited complaints about the motivation, management, and movements of the Society. The epistemological struggle over geographical science from 1830 to 1850 is ultimately revealed as a critical period in making geographical science more ‘generally known’ and understood.¹⁴

Visions of a ‘Geographical Society of London’

The first call for a ‘Geographical Society’ was not sounded from the world of gentlemanly science, nor did it initially come from inside the Raleigh Club or its critics. In fact, the suggestion was first conveyed in a letter to the editor of the *Literary Gazette* dated 19 May 1828 and signed ‘A.C.C.’.¹⁵ Significantly this letter is the first piece in a jigsaw of conflicting contemporary accounts of the formation of the Geographical

¹³ Lightman, ‘Refashioning the Spaces of London Science’, p. vii.

¹⁴ Greenough, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1840), p. lxxxii.

¹⁵ The letter was never printed in its entirety in the *Literary Gazette*. An acknowledgment of the letter was given among the publication’s usual small type notices to correspondents, exactly two years prior to the Society’s official founding at the Raleigh Travellers’ Club meeting. See, ‘To Correspondents’, *Literary Gazette*, no. 592, 24 May 1828, p. 334. For a copy of the full letter, see William Jerdan, ‘Appendix: Geographical Society’, in William Jerdan, *The Autobiography of William Jerdan*, 4 vols, vol. 4 (London: Arthur Hall, Vertue & Co., 1853), pp. 405-411, pp. 405-407.

Society. The immediate origin is habitually attributed to a core group of seven Raleigh Club members, and nurtured by its energetic ‘foster father’ Sir John Barrow.¹⁶ Whilst not denying that these ‘scientific servicemen’ supported the Society, this section will show that it was born of a different parentage.¹⁷ Building on Mill’s ‘first connected narrative’ of the events surrounding the foundation of the RGS, the driving forces, intellectual directions, and ultimate desired destinations of three different visions of a British Geographical Society demonstrate that it was not a pure line of descent from travellers’ club to modern scientific institution.¹⁸ In this way, this section reveals the heterogeneous character of ‘geography’ and the presence of the developing culture of exploration within both literary and learned circles.

The editor of the *Literary Gazette*, William Jerdan, recognised this short piece of correspondence as the initial start of the germination of a geographical society.¹⁹ This pseudonymous piece breathed for ‘the want of a Geographical Society – a want which is the more singular, as our nation has always been, and still is, the very foremost in promoting geographical discoveries’. The proposed society was imagined as being ‘driven by the spirit of enterprise’, functioning as a ‘point of union to travellers and scientific men and as a depository for geographical information’.²⁰ This vision voiced a need to correspond with and compete against the *Société de Géographie de Paris*, whilst also wistfully describing the pleasures of clubbing culture and evening soirees ‘after the return of some distinguished traveller’ with ‘his drawings, maps, curiosities, etc., lying on

¹⁶ William Henry Smyth, ‘The Autobiography of Sir John Barrow’, *Colburn’s United Service Magazine and Naval and Military Journal*, 55 (1847), pp. 241-255, p. 254. These seven ‘founders’ are given as John Barrow; Robert Brown; Roderick Impey Murchison; John Hobhouse; Montstuart Elphinstone; Bartholomew Bartle Frere; and William Henry Smyth, in Markham, *Fifty Years’ Work of the RGS*, p. 23.

¹⁷ David Philip Miller, ‘The Revival of the Physical Sciences in Britain, 1815–1840’, *Osiris*, new series 2 (1986), pp. 107-134; Randolph Cock, ‘Scientific Servicemen in the Royal Navy and the Professionalisation of Science, 1816–55’, in David M. Knight and Matthew D. Eddy (eds), *Science and Beliefs: From Natural Philosophy to Natural Science, 1700–1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 95-112.

¹⁸ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 12. For a more recent critical account, see Baigent, ‘Founders of the Royal Geographical Society of London’.

¹⁹ William Jerdan, ‘RGS: Its Origins and Early History’, *Leisure Hour*, 2 August 1869, pp. 558-560, p. 558.

²⁰ Jerdan, ‘Appendix: Geographical Society’, p. 406.

the tables'.²¹ This stirring letter was penned by a young Thomas Watts, who had developed an interest in geography from his expertise in foreign languages.²² Significantly, this first clear demand for a geographical society in London came from the world of letters, not from a traveller or a gentlemanly scientist. Yet, Watts would never join the Society he foreshadowed and went on to become the first Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum.

Watts was endorsed by Jerdan, who appended to his letter how 'a Geographical Society would be an excellent institution in England'.²³ He later recalled how his handling of the letter 'accidentally' put him and his publication in a position of 'power' for affecting the origin and early history of the RGS.²⁴ This was not a unique position for the *Literary Gazette* to find itself in, as it had become known for taking an active involvement in public affairs. Founded in 1817, it quickly became a leading weekly for the intellectual classes because it was the only paper at the time edited by a gentleman, and with none but gentlemen as contributors. It had already begun to press its desire to have 'Geography' honoured as an independent science.²⁵ This was a sentiment that was seemingly widely felt in the publishing world with the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* placing 'Geography' on its title page since its first volume in 1819, together with 'Natural Philosophy', 'Chemistry' and 'Natural History', and an *Edinburgh Journal of Natural and Geographical Science* was started in 1830. In particular, Jerdan had a certain affinity with taking a prominent interest in such campaigns and devoted himself to using

²¹ Ibid.

²² Author's name was revealed in Jerdan, 'RGS: Its Origins and Early History', p. 560. On Watts see, Richard Garnett, 'Watts, Thomas (1811–1869)', rev. P. R. Harris, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28893>, accessed 12 February 2015].

²³ 'To Correspondents', *Literary Gazette*, p. 334.

²⁴ Jerdan, 'RGS: Its Origins and Early History', p. 560.

²⁵ See, for instance, 'Progress of the Sciences: Physical Geography', *Literary Gazette*, no. 9, 22 March 1817, p. 131.

his influence on their behalf.²⁶ He saw his role as one of facilitator, publicist, and sponsor of such schemes, which he trusted to then be ‘taken up by efficient hands’.²⁷

However, the reaction to Watts’ letter was rather muted. There was neither the immediate flurry of enthusiastic responses, nor the hoped for determined action of ‘three or four influential persons to originate such a plan’.²⁸ This was no doubt a consequence of the letter appearing rather casually in the paper. However, four months after the initial proposal, William Huttman, a member of the Asiatic Society and clerk in the India Office, wrote in cordial support of the scheme and expressed his disappointment at the lack immediate discussion for forming such a society.²⁹ He did not put himself forward for the task, but used his letter to reaffirm the vision created by Watts for ‘fear that the letter may have escaped the notice of those who feel desirous of promoting geographical knowledge’. Huttman was certain that this idea had not gained traction due to it being overlooked and not for the ‘want of persons to institute it’, nor for ‘the want of means for effectually executing the purposes, for we have active and intelligent countrymen either constantly visiting or residing in almost every part of the habitable globe’.³⁰ Within his letter, Huttman went further in delineating a geographical society that was more than a social club formed of convivial meetings. Rather, it would work to promote geographical discoveries by ‘furnishing travellers with topics of inquiry connected with the countries they visit’ and ‘publishing their observations’. It was his belief that support for a few distinguished individuals would enable a more general and

²⁶ Such as in the establishment of the Zoological Society, see ‘Arts and Sciences: New Zoological Project’, *Literary Gazette*, no. 433, 7 May 1825, pp. 295-296.

²⁷ Jerdan, ‘To Correspondents’, p. 334. On Jerdan and the *Literary Gazette*, see Beverly E. Schneller, ‘Jerdan, William (1782–1869)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition, October 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14770>, accessed 10 November 2014]; Susan Matoff, *Conflicted Life: William Jerdan, 1782–1869, London editor, author and critic* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2011).

²⁸ Jerdan, ‘To Correspondents’, p. 334.

²⁹ William Huttman, ‘Original Correspondence: Geographical Society Proposed’, *Literary Gazette*, no. 609, 20 September 1828, p. 600.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

deep study of geography's workings, practitioner's approaches, and thereby develop a distinct subject matter to ultimately 'attain the rank of a science'.³¹

This proposal was noticed by the antiquary John Britton, who consulted with Jerdan as an early advocate for the project, and together they set in motion a campaign of canvassing the involvement of their literary and scientific friends. However, progress was slow. Despite enlisting a few supporters, it became apparent that they did not have the individual or even collective capacity to carry the scheme into effect. Yet, their efforts did serve to keep the subject from falling into obscurity and, two years later, the proposal reached 'more appropriate and powerful quarters' when Captain William Henry Smyth came together with Britton.³² Smyth brought with him not only his own influence, but also powerful friends; indeed, 'the strong man seemed to be found'.³³ By this point, the project had procured a small coterie of interested individuals who represented the wide range of scientific, political, commercial, and scientific interests to whom a potential geographical society spoke. These individuals came together and began to lay concrete plans for such a society.³⁴

The turning point came on 12 April 1830. Britton, Smyth, and their scheme's interested supporters met at astronomer Francis Baily's house in London. It was here that the first prospectus of a 'Geographical Society' was drafted; a Provisional Committee put together; and the objectives of the new association printed and circulated.³⁵ The 'Prospectus for the Establishment of the London Geographical Institution' appealed to 'those who are at once qualified and disposed to co-operate' in

³¹ Ibid.

³² Jerdan, 'RGS: Its Origins and Early History', p. 561.

³³ Hugh Robert Mill, 'The Centenary Meeting: Addresses on the History of the Society', *The Geographical Journal*, 76 (1930), pp. 458-462, p. 459.

³⁴ As identified in Baigent, 'Founders of the Royal Geographical Society of London', these men were Jerdan; Huttman; Smyth; Britton; Francis Baily; William Samuel Stratford; and Thomas Frederick Colby.

³⁵ For this Provisional Committee, Britton was appointed as the first Secretary and Reverend George Cecil Renouard, was nominated to be Foreign and Honorary Secretary.

such an enterprise.³⁶ This was a significant moment with a unity of purpose seemingly concretised and, as Mill has noted, ‘everyone was now talking of the proposal, and success was in sight’.³⁷ Britton forwarded the first proof of this notable document to Jerdan and it was edited in line with his suggested alterations. A final version was printed, dated 18 May 1830, yet it appeared with only Britton’s name attached.³⁸ As such, it is possible that this version was issued without Smyth’s knowledge, and that the two gentlemen circulated separate prospectuses with each gathering signatures to their own draft. Smyth later recalled how he personally secured fifty-two supporting signatures to his prospectus that featured several members of the Raleigh Club.³⁹

Despite Mill lamenting that at this point the narrative of events becomes ‘obscure’, two prospectuses have been recovered which, although discrete documents, were exceedingly similar in style, structure, and content.⁴⁰ The compelling cases made for Britton’s ‘London Geographical Institution’ and Smyth’s ‘Geographical Society’, were largely framed in the context of the ‘nation’, with geography being presented as the ‘science of paramount consequence to the interests of a nation’. They also constructed a definite sense of the subject matter of ‘Geography’ as a science whose inquiries were divided into what were seen as geography’s four different labours: ‘absolute’ which covered the intrinsic properties of the Globe; ‘physical’ which was concerned with the natural and geological features of the world; ‘special’ had a historical, human and

³⁶ John Britton, ‘Prospectus for the Establishment of the London Geographical Institution’, 18 May 1830, RGS-IBG, AP/1.

³⁷ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 15.

³⁸ This prospectus appeared as Britton, ‘Prospectus’, RGS-IBG, AP/1.

³⁹ ‘Appendix. No. 1’, in William Henry Smyth [printed anonymously], ‘The Royal Geographical Society and its Labours’, 1846, RGS-IBG, WHS/1, pp. 29-32. Britton’s draft ‘Prospectus’ appeared with thirteen names appended to the bottom, of which, one was Smyth.

⁴⁰ Mill, *Record of the Royal Geographical Society*, p. 459. The two documents being compared: Britton, ‘Prospectus’, RGS-IBG, AP/1 and ‘Prospectus’ appended to Smyth, *The RGS and its Labours*, RGS-IBG, WHS/1.

cultural focus on peoples, alongside astronomical and geodesic phenomena; ‘political’ was to examine populations, commerce, customs, law and religion.⁴¹

In both prospectuses, the overall objective of the proposed society was to ‘collect, register and digest all of the useful acts’, which could be performed under these subdivisions. In this sense, they presented a society that would function as a depository of knowledge and a site of developing expertise. These first prospectuses therefore built on the initial vision of Watts, to create a meeting point to celebrate the efforts of extending knowledge, but they also stated that this knowledge would be disseminated by publishing periodically all of the original communications in a ‘small and cheap form’.⁴² Whilst they did not explicitly declare that the new society would begin launching a series of expeditions, the prospectuses did state that prizes could occasionally be offered, as they were in the Parisian Society. Significantly, there was no clear sense that the new association would be fashioned on the Banksian model of centralised control and organisation. There was no mention of any intention to procure instruments and make them available to travellers, or that instructions would be drafted to guide exploratory enterprises. These prospectuses did not immediately define the new society as a site of disciplinary declaration or as a place of prescription and professional practice, but rather it would encourage and stimulate ‘diligent observations and enquiries’.⁴³

Despite the vigour and enthusiasm espoused by Smyth and Britton, neither of them managed to muster the momentum to lay down immediate and clear founding resolutions. In fact, it was the voice of Barrow that would announce the inauguration of the ‘Geographical Society of London’, albeit in a different tone. Clements Markham’s

⁴¹ Britton, ‘Prospectus’, RGS-IBG, AP/1; ‘Prospectus’ appended to Smyth, ‘The RGS and its Labours’, RGS-IBG, WHS/1.

⁴² ‘Article VII’, in Britton, ‘Prospectus’, RGS-IBG, AP/1; ‘Article 6’, in Smyth, ‘The RGS and its Labours’, RGS-IBG, WHS/1. Smyth also wrote to Francis Beaufort that he wished to emulate the, so-called, world’s first geographical society, ‘Gli Argonanti’ and use the society as a commercial venture with a direct means of income from subscriptions and a market to distribute its publications, see ‘Letter from Smyth to Captain Francis Beaufort, re. Founding of the RGS’, 18 May 1830, RGS-IBG, WHS/2.

⁴³ ‘Article V’, in Britton, ‘Prospectus’, RGS-IBG, AP/1; ‘Article 4’, in Smyth, ‘The RGS and its Labours’, RGS-IBG, WHS/1.

account of this history ascribes the Jerdan–Britton scheme to Smyth and suggests that it fed seamlessly into Barrow’s work to formally establish the Society.⁴⁴ However, the sequence of events was not smooth enough to conclude that one scheme was effortlessly subsumed into another. Britton was aware of several ‘wholly unconnected’ gentleman who mediated on the formation of a geographical society; some were motivated by their ‘favourite schemes’ or had ‘vague and crude theories’, whilst others had already made ‘collections on the subject’ and were ‘ready to co-operate in any judicious plan that may be calculated to promote the science’.⁴⁵ Indeed, Barrow described a different sequence of events. He recounted that he was invited to be part of the formation of a new society at a dinner given by ‘his late esteemed friend’ Mr William Sotheby, a prominent figure in London’s literary circles and learned societies.⁴⁶ Barrow believed that it was Sotheby who first attempted to persuade him to propose and carry through the formation of such a society: ‘the unanimous opinion was, that if I would undertake it, there was no doubt of its success’.⁴⁷ Whilst the date of the dinner was not given, this testimony again reveals that the desire for a geographical society emanated from the literary arena: Sotheby was, by all accounts, a patron of the world of letters.

Despite Barrow intimating that he was reluctant to accept this invitation, he was one of the fifty-two names signed on Smyth’s prospectus. Furthermore, his actions at the time reveal that he was almost certainly desirous of taking charge and overriding the other plan, as was his wilful nature. Smyth recalled how he ‘received a severe whigging [sic] from Mr Barrow’ after he had seen his printed proposal alongside its signatures of support.⁴⁸ Whilst Barrow’s name appeared in support, his negative reaction apparently

⁴⁴ Markham, *Fifty Years’ Work of the RGS*.

⁴⁵ ‘Letter from John Britton to Davies Gilbert’ (no date), transcribed in Jerdan, ‘Appendix: Geographical Society’, pp. 407-408.

⁴⁶ John Barrow, *An Autobiographical Memoir of Sir John Barrow, Bart, Late of the Admiralty; Including Reflections, Observations, and Reminiscences at Home and Abroad, from Early Life to Advanced Age* (London: John Murray, 1847), p. 484.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ ‘Letter from Smyth to Beaufort’, RGS-IBG, WHS/2.

stemmed from his belief that Smyth's prospectus was a 'precipitate' action and not in the 'proper hands'. The confrontation led Smyth to withdraw from the scheme and claim that he had 'about as little concern in forming a geographical society as the man in the moon' and that he had only 'suggested some of the terms', but never thought of printing them and courting interest. Indeed, Barrow's reaction was so strong that Smyth vowed not to say more on the issue for fear of 'the odium of 'self-constituted' meddling'.⁴⁹

However, when Smyth read Barrow's *Autobiography* he decided that quiet would no longer be his object and he challenged Barrow's statement of events by poetically jibing: 'Barrow, forgive, if by your converse stir'd, Our pen shall scribble what our ears have heard'.⁵⁰ Smyth asserted that Sotheby's dinner had nothing to do with the Society's formation and that Barrow's recollection of events was confused. Instead, Smyth claimed that it was actually Beaufort who enlisted Barrow's interest. Yet, as the ideas had been developing for some time before 1830, the suggestion may have come from elsewhere and he recalled speaking on such matters with Major Rennell 'some *years* before, when discussing the bearings of the Geographical Societies of Paris and Florence'.⁵¹ It thus becomes clear that even after its official inauguration, the origins of the RGS were much more complex than is traditionally told. In any case, the suggestion had been made and was pressed. Barrow proved himself to be the determined, strong hand to bring this project to fruition and, having been trained through long official experience, he had acquired the art of forming deliberate and final judgments.

The next part of this history is one that has been widely recounted.⁵² The first step taken was placing the proposal before the Raleigh 'Travellers' Club, of which

⁴⁹ Ibid. Underlining made by the author.

⁵⁰ Smyth, 'The Autobiography of Sir John Barrow', p. 253.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 254.

⁵² See, Cameron, *To the Farthest Ends of the Earth*; Driver, *Geography Militant*; Markham, *Fifty Years' Work of the RGS*; Mill, *Record of the RGS*; Marshall-Cornwall, *History of the Geographical Club*.

Barrow was a member. He believed that momentum could only be gathered if a favourable response was received from those who had a keen involvement and interest in travel. A special meeting chaired by Barrow was held on 24 May 1830, at the Thatched House in London. The objects of the proposed society were stated and two carefully drafted memoranda were submitted: ‘That a new and useful society might therefore be formed, under the name of THE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON’. This proposal was adopted by acclamation.⁵³ Barrow expressed that the ‘interest excited by this department of science is universally felt’, and this was reflected at the meeting with at least two-thirds of those in attendance declaring their support.⁵⁴

The aim of the emergent Society was ‘the promotion and diffusion of that most important and entertaining branch of knowledge – GEOGRAPHY’.⁵⁵ These terms anticipated some of the diverse ways in which geographical knowing was to be promoted by the Society, as both useful and enjoyable. There are notable similarities in the three prospectuses in both the proposed purposes of the Society and the language used to convey them, which suggests that they were put into conversation with one another as part of the drafting process (Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3). Yet, the definition of geographical labours, upon which the activities of the society were to be based, was not as comprehensive in the new prospectus as in the earlier documents. Instead of the four divisions previously enumerated, this one put geographers as labouring under the two divisions of physical and political geography. If one reads deeper into the practices endorsed by each proposal then it is evidently clear that there existed fundamental differences in the epistemological positioning and political agenda of the envisioned societies. Whilst each emphasised the significance of geography as providing ‘useful knowledge’, interpretations of what this meant and how it could be attained were

⁵³ ‘Prospectus of the Royal Geographical Society’, *JRGS*, 1 (1831), pp. vii–xii, p. vii.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* The meeting was described in the Raleigh Club Minutes as being ‘large’ and attended by twenty-four members and six guests, as cited in Marshall-Cornwall, *History of the Geographical Club*, p. 11.

⁵⁵ ‘Prospectus of the Royal Geographical Society’, p. vii.

different. Smyth and Britton presented plans to develop the science of geography and geographical scholarship, with the hope that such a centralised information exchange would encourage exploratory enquiries. In contrast, Barrow's proposal stated that the new Society would take a central role in organising expeditionary endeavours and propagating imperial concerns. Specifically, the third and fourth objectives in Barrow's prospectus expressed the intention to actively promote practical endeavours and initiate disciplinary regulations, which suggested that the Society would soon sponsor and organise its own expeditions, function as a steering committee and come to define which researches were the 'most essential to make'.⁵⁶ In this new state of science, Barrow regarded the formation of the Geographical Society to be a 'continuation of the Banksian project by other means', as it set to coordinate the production of geographical knowledge in all its diverse forms.⁵⁷ Yet, Britton and others advocated for the development of a more specialised approach to geographical science.

These contrasting elucidations did not merely reflect the personal interests of Barrow, but also those of the individuals appointed at the 24 May meeting to form the Provisional Committee. This particular group was tasked with determining and proposing the resolutions that would frame the constitution of the incipient Society.⁵⁸ Whilst no comprehensive list of the Committee was ever given, the most extensive record detailed the names of twenty well-known geographers and travellers.⁵⁹ Collectively, they brought together their particular practical strengths in topographical

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

⁵⁷ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 33.

⁵⁸ 'Minutes of first meeting of the Geographical Society', 24 and 26 May 1830, RGS-IBG, AP/3.

⁵⁹ Mill stated that the Provisional Committee contained 'many names', but he 'singled out ten as in a special sense the founders of the Royal Geographical Society', in Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 19. He included six of the seven men given by Markham in *Fifty Years' Work of the RGS*, p. 15. Mill excludes Bartle Frere, but gives the additions of Francis Baily, John Britton, Thomas Frederick Colby, and George Cecil Renouard. The most comprehensive list was given in 'Arts and Sciences: Geographical Society of London', *Literary Gazette*, no. 699, 12 June 1830, p. 384: 'Montstuart Elphinstone, Sir Thomas Brisbane, Sir A. de Capell Broke, Cam Hobhouse, Mr Hay of the Colonial Office, Colonel Leake, Captain Beaufort, Basil Hall, Sir J. Franklin and Smyth R. N., Mangles of the same service (James Mangles), Mr Barrow, Lieutenant Colonel Colby of the Engineers, Robert Brown of the Linnean Society, Henry Ward, Major the Hon. G Keppel, Mr Murdoch, Mr Murchison and Mr Greenough, with Commander, M. Konochie as the secretary'.

survey and scientific administration and individually, each member held an avid interest in a various branch of natural knowledge. Jerdan observed that this social composition 'said enough to show what sort of institution it is likely to be' and the type of member it would attract.⁶⁰ This group can be viewed as extending and enacting the principles of 'field geography' heralded by Barrow that, as outlined in the previous chapter, demanded 'personal presence and actual and minute observation', not hypotheses formed from a distance.⁶¹ Barrow's sense of ardent imperialism, married with a geographical science forged in the field, has led to the claim that the founders set about promoting 'geography militant'.⁶² Such a campaign aligned geography with the priorities of government and sought to meet the commercial and strategic needs of empire. Whilst the term 'explorer' was not employed in any of the founding documents, it was the figure of the 'traveller' who journeyed to extend the frontiers of European geographical knowledge, and was discursively structured as the central agent of this geographical practice.⁶³

When the details were settled, a public meeting was called on 16 July 1830 to announce the adopted resolutions. It was declared that the Society had been honoured with the patronage of King William IV, and was inaugurated as 'The Royal Geographical Society of London'.⁶⁴ The initial observations made clear the desire to develop a 'geography militant' through the encouragement of links and communications with the armed services, particularly the Royal Navy, corporate ventures like the East India Company, and other prestigious learned societies, especially the Royal Society. The meeting stated that its 'List of Members' had enrolled more than four hundred names and comprised those individuals eminent in the 'Arts, Sciences, and Literature, and from

⁶⁰ Jerdan, 'RGS: Its Origin and Early History', p. 559.

⁶¹ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 126.

⁶² Driver, *Geography Militant*.

⁶³ The 'traveller' is the central subject in the 'Prospectus of the Royal Geographical Society'. On the 'explorer' as an imperial agent, see Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 3.

⁶⁴ 'Prospectus of the Royal Geographical Society', p. viii. The Society received its Royal Charter in 1859.

the distinguished Officers of the Army and Navy'.⁶⁵ The new Society in this sense embraced the heterogeneous character of its subject and represented a 'coalition of interests' from antiquarian scholars to imperial diplomats.⁶⁶

Mill claimed that the inauguration marked the moment all of the proposals for a geographical society were 'happily united to form the structure of the Royal Geographical Society'.⁶⁷ From the outset it was believed by Britton's party that this junction would not introduce 'antagonistic division' to the Society, but rather impulse and strength. Indeed, Jerdan declared himself 'proud of the honour of being a Member of the Society'.⁶⁸ However, the differences between the projects soon became apparent in the close quarters of the inaugural Council. Social frictions and tensions of authority were strongly felt, and Britton confessed that the 'jealousy and ill temper of Barrow' ran through the new association.⁶⁹ The prior labours and endeavours of Britton's party became insignificant once the Society was officially founded and they were not referred to, or acknowledged. Smyth made the caustic comment that the Society 'did not owe its birth to the patronising condescension of a Dining Club' as 'it was really of independent origin', and such a fallacious account 'assuredly occasioned a schism which lapsed into indifference' amongst the project's earliest members.⁷⁰ This 'schism' opened such discontent that it led to the formal resignation of Britton from the Society's Council in 1832.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. ix. Of the seventy members then on the books of the Raleigh Travellers' Club, only thirty-eight elected to join the new Geographical Society.

⁶⁶ 'Front Matter', *JRGS*, 1 (1831), pp. iii-xx, p. xiii. The inaugural Council was led by Viscount Goderich as its first President, alongside the Vice-Presidents Barrow, diplomat W. R. Hamilton, and surveyor turned scholar Lieutenant-Colonel Leake, and geologist Greenough, orientalist Renouard was appointed as Foreign and Honorary Secretary, and the banker and magistrate John Biddulph served as Treasurer.

⁶⁷ Mill, 'The Centenary Meeting', p. 460.

⁶⁸ 'Letter from William Jerdan to John Barrow', 10 June 1830, RGS-IBG, Correspondence Block 1/28.

⁶⁹ Britton, cited in Jerdan, 'RGS: Its Origin and Early History', p. 559.

⁷⁰ Smyth, 'The Autobiography of Sir John Barrow', p. 254.

⁷¹ Britton wrote to Jerdan to state he had a 'packet of letters by Admiral Smyth, Colonel Colby, Lieutenant Stratford, F. Baily, etc., respecting the *formation* of the Geographical Society, and the jealousy and ill temper of Barrow', in Jerdan, 'RGS: Its Origin and Early History', p. 559. See also, William Jerdan, *Men I have Known* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1866), p. 44 and Stoddart, *On Geography*, pp. 20-21.

The young Society quickly set about promoting its objectives. The watchword of the Society's first decade was deemed to be 'exploration', as it worked to encourage the actions of explorers and support expeditions in various parts of the world.⁷² The next section considers the social and spatial coordination of the Society's first expedition to southern Africa in order to examine the labour relations between critical speculation and practical exploration.

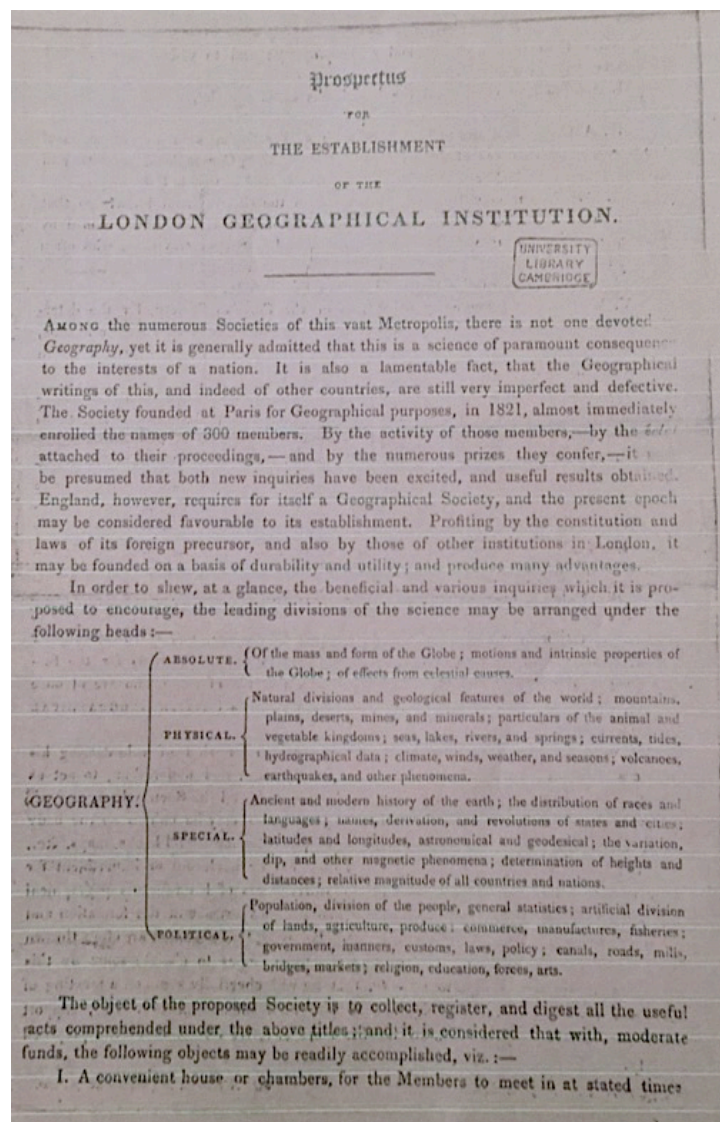


Figure 4.1. John Britton, 'Prospectus for the Establishment of the London Geographical Institution', 18 May 1830. RGS-IBG, AP/1.

⁷² Mill, 'The Centenary Meeting', p. 460.

"An attentive consideration of the very elevated character which the British nation has acquired, by its rapid advancement and wide diffusion of various branches of useful knowledge, cannot but awaken surprise and regret that geography—a science emphatically termed one of the 'eyes of history'—should have remained in comparative neglect; and among the numerous literary and scientific societies established in our vast metropolis, the importance of this most pleasing study has been so strangely overlooked, that laudable inquiry has been obliged to content itself with the meagre and inaccurate details of our gazetteers and cyclopedias. Discreditable as it may appear, it is a lamentable fact, that there is scarcely an original English work on geography which possesses any just claim to critical accuracy; yet this is the copious language in which a noble series of the most enterprising, instructive, and veracious voyages and travels extant is written.

"The universal interest excited by geography is undeniable; its advantages are obviously of paramount consequence to the welfare of a maritime nation; and its decided utility in fixing distinct and just ideas of the physical relations of our globe is rendered more material from being accompanied by valuable information and rational amusement.

"Our neighbours of France, aware of the defective state of geographical writings in general, founded a society in 1821 for the express purpose of rescuing them from their unmerited obscurity; and the popularity of the measure was attested by the immediate enrolment of three hundred members. By their activity and by the several prizes they confer, it may be presumed that new inquiries have been excited, and useful information obtained. In 1825 an

30 THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

establishment was also formed at Florence, for the investigation of the geography, statistics, and natural history of Tuscany, and the names of its members afford an earnest of gratifying results. But England, from its extensive colonies and multiplied foreign relations, is the most deeply concerned, and urgently requires a Geographical Society for itself.

"From the impulse lately given to public feeling by the Polar voyages, the expeditions to Africa, the ships fitted for hydrographical researches, and the unwearied zeal of our travellers, the present may be considered a favourable epoch for the institution of such a society; and profiting by the constitution and laws of its precursors, it may be founded with manifold advantages on a durable and serviceable basis. In order to show, at a glance, the beneficial and various inquiries which it is proposed to encourage, the leading divisions of the science may be thus arranged:—

Geography	Absolute	Of the mass and form of the globe.
		Motions and intrinsic properties of the globe.
	Physical	Of effects from celestial causes.
		Natural divisions and geological features of the world.
Special	Mountains, places, deserts, mines, and minerals.	
	Particulars of the animal and vegetable kingdoms.	
Political	Sea, lakes, rivers, and springs.	
	Currents, tides, hydrographical data.	
Special	Climate, winds, weather, and seasons.	
	Volcanoes, earthquakes, and other phenomena.	
Political	Ancient and modern history of the earth.	
	The distribution of races and languages.	
Special	Names, derivations, and revolutions of states and cities.	
	Latitudes and longitudes, astronomical and geodesical.	
Political	The variation, dip, and other magnetic phenomena.	
	Determination of heights and distances.	
Special	Relative magnitudes of all countries and nations.	
	Population, division of the people, general statistics.	
Political	Artificial divisions of lands, agriculture, produce.	
	Commerce, manufactures, fisheries.	
Special	Government, manners, customs, laws, policy.	
	Canals, roads, mills, bridges, markets.	
Political	Religion, education, forces, arts.	

"The objects of the proposed Society are to collect, register, and digest all the useful facts comprehended under the above titles; and it is considered that, with moderate funds, the following objects may be readily accomplished, viz:—

- "1. A convenient house or chamber, for the members to meet in at stated times; to preserve their books, papers, and other property; and to which strangers and foreigners may be admitted.
- "2. A library, to contain all the best books on geography, with a complete collection of voyages, travels, and topographical works; and a choice bureau of maps, charts, and plans,—ancient and

Figure 4.2. W. H. Smyth, 'Prospectus', printed and circulated by Smyth as 'Appendix, No. 1', in 'The RGS and its Labours', pp. 29-32.

ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

AT a numerous Meeting of the Members of the RALEIGH TRAVELLER'S CLUB, and several other Gentlemen, held at the *Thatched House*, on Monday, the 24th of May,

JOHN BARROW, Esq., in the Chair,

It was submitted that, among the numerous literary and scientific societies established in the British metropolis, one was still wanting to complete the circle of scientific institutions, whose sole object should be the promotion and diffusion of that most important and entertaining branch of knowledge, GEOGRAPHY.

That a new and useful Society might therefore be formed, under the name of THE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

That the interest excited by this department of science is universally felt; that its advantages are of the first importance to mankind in general, and paramount to the welfare of a maritime nation like Great Britain, with its numerous and extensive foreign possessions.

That its decided utility in conferring just and distinct notions of the physical and political relations of our globe must be obvious to every one; and is the more enhanced by this species of knowledge being attainable without much difficulty, while at the same time it affords a copious source of rational amusement.

That although there is a vast store of geographical information existing in Great Britain, yet it is so scattered and dispersed, either in large books that are not generally accessible, or in the bureaux of the public departments, or in the possession of private individuals, as to be nearly unavailable to the public.

The objects, then, of such a Society as is now suggested would be,

1. To collect, register, and digest, and to print for the use of the Members, and the public at large, in a cheap form and at certain intervals, such new, interesting, and useful facts and discoveries as the Society may have in its possession, and may, from time to time, acquire.

2. To accumulate gradually a library of the best books on Geography—a selection of the best Voyages and Travels—a complete collection of Maps and Charts, from the earliest period of rude geographical delineations to the most improved of the present time; as well as all such documents and materials as may convey the best information to persons intending to visit foreign countries; it being of the greatest utility to a traveller to be aware, previously to his setting out, of what has been already done, and what is still wanting, in the countries he may intend to visit.

Figure 4.3. 'Prospectus of the Royal Geographical Society', *JRGS*, 1 (1831), pp. vii-xii, p. vii.

Defining Geographical Labours: From speculation to defection on the 1834

Delagoa Bay Expedition

The official 'Prospectus' of the Society clearly states that geographical labour should take the form of 'actual observation and experiment'.⁷³ The measures initially taken to promote geographical discoveries were the presentation of awards to eminent explorers and geographers, providing financial and logistical aid to travellers, and lobbying the Government to undertake expeditions.⁷⁴ By the end of 1833, the Society Council resolved to expend a portion of its savings on financing and directing three original expeditions itself. Guided by a reasonable sense of economy, it determined on adopting schemes that could demonstrate such potential as to yield valuable results for a moderate outlay. The first two expeditions recommended for dispatch under the aid and auspices of the RGS in 1834 were the explorations of South Africa by Captain James Edward Alexander and of British Guiana by Robert Hermann Schomburgk.⁷⁵

The RGS's opening address also stated that its proceedings and activities would not be limited to direct travel experiences alone. Specifically, Chairman John Barrow asserted that the Society would not be 'hostile to theory' and was aware of the 'great benefits' that could be derived from the sedentary practices of what was termed, 'speculative geography'. This was a form of geographical labour that developed and projected theories that

do not involve obvious absurdities or impossibilities, but are supported by reasonable probabilities, may serve as guides to conduct to important discoveries;

⁷³ 'Prospectus of the Royal Geographical Society', p. xi.

⁷⁴ See Markham, *Fifty Years' Work of the RGS*, p. 57.

⁷⁵ RGS Council Minutes, 25 January 1834, RGS-IBG. See printed accounts from these expeditions: James Edward Alexander, *An Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa, Through the Hitherto Undescribed Countries of the Great Namaquas, Boschamns, and Hill Damaras*, 2 vols (London: H. Colburn, 1838); Peter Rivière (ed.), *The Guiana Travels of Robert Schomburgk 1835–1844. Vol I: Explorations on Behalf of the Royal Geographical Society 1835–1839* (London: Published by Ashgate for The Hakluyt Society, 2006).

by exciting curiosity they stimulate inquiry, and inquiry generally leads to truth. And reasonings and suggestions, therefore, in regard to parts of the world deserving of minuter investigation, which are little known, or of which no good account has yet been given, the routes to be observed in examining them, the chief subjects of inquiry, and best modes of overcoming the probable difficulties that may occur in the research.⁷⁶

Speculative geography was, in this context, to be conducted not just to collate and compare evidence, but also to cultivate critical suppositions that would incite exploratory activity. It was only through the sage and rational proposition of inquiries that geographical speculations were able to ‘form proper subjects’ that could be submitted into the proceedings of the Society.⁷⁷ As such, speculative geography was to be a further way of contributing to the Society’s network of measures to encourage geographical research out in the field. The 1834 expedition to explore the highland region near Delagoa Bay is the earliest example of speculative geography in action at the RGS. This expedition, undertaken by Alexander, presents an interesting example of the interaction of different forms of geographical labour and the complex geography of the expedition, as it moved from the speculations of sedentary practitioners to the realisation of geographical discovery in the field.

It was the critical geographer Cooley who first brought the proposal for an expedition to the southern coast of Africa before the RGS Council in June 1833.⁷⁸ As outlined in the previous chapter, he had been received into a position of influence in the new geographical institution and he had quickly begun to stimulate curiosities for exploring the interior of south-east Africa. He saw this region as being ‘so physically

⁷⁶ ‘Prospectus of the Royal Geographical Society’, pp. xi-xxi.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ RGS Council Minutes, 29 June 1833, RGS-IBG.

interesting and mysterious', that it had 'naturally attracted the embellishments of historical speculation, and was made the scene of wonderful events fantastically moulded from materials supplied by falsehood and exaggeration'.⁷⁹ Cooley was aware that his approach was limited and that stripping away the verbal detailing and imaginative geographies through critical reading and textual exegesis could only get him so far in delineating an accurate topography. It was his belief, therefore, that a traveller had to be dispatched to gather precise information about the interior. This campaign began with Cooley presenting a paper to promote the subject to the Society, which was published in its *Journal* alongside a sketch map (Figure 4.4).⁸⁰

Cooley proposed that populations of the interior highlands of southern Africa had 'some degree of industry and civilisation'.⁸¹ Based on the available evidence, the paper proceeded to show that from the character of its population, productions, and geographical situation, the Delagoa Bay region held 'particular inducements to the enterprise of British merchants' and 'that it unites probably more of the elements of a great and civilised community than any other portion of Southern Africa'.⁸² His deductions were founded upon his initial investigations into published material from travellers, naval survey reports, and verbal exchanges with Lieutenant Rozier, who had served as a midshipman on a naval survey ship. Cooley's researches were chronologically wide-ranging; the journey of sixteenth-century traveller Duarte Barbosa conversed with more recent observations, such as those made by Captain W. F. W. Owen, whose

⁷⁹ Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, p. 189.

⁸⁰ Cooley, 'Memoir on the Civilisation of the Tribes'. Cooley first read a paper giving a 'critical analysis of our knowledge of the Districts of Africa' and strongly recommended an 'expedition to be sent up one of the rivers which fall into Delagoa Bay' at a RGS Council meeting on 29 June 1833, which was directed to be read at the Special General Meeting on 28 September 1833. See, RGS Council Minutes, 29 June 1833, 28 September 1833, RGS-IBG.

⁸¹ Cooley, 'Memoir on the Civilisation of the Tribes', p. 310.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 311. His linguistic investigations indicated that these nations spoke 'kindred tongues' which led Cooley to propose the ethnographic designation 'Austral-Ethiopian' for what is now recognised as 'Bantu'.

account was published in the same year that the article was written.⁸³ Almost three-quarters of the sources cited within the paper are accounts of journeys made by Europeans that occurred within thirty-five years of Cooley's publication and demonstrate that he was not only interested in historical narratives, but also engaged with current events and contemporary exploration. This desire to delineate the topography of the African interior was not just a subject for learned societies, as it was also a political objective based on an imperial agenda. The possession of accurate geographical knowledge to display on large maps was a clear assertion of political power and it had been the focus of a series of cartographic campaigns led by various departments of the British and Colonial governments.⁸⁴ Despite these surveys providing

⁸³ Printed sources Cooley used for his 1833 Paper. Published accounts: Duarte Barbosa, 'Livro de Duarte Barbosa', in Giovanni Battista Ramusio (ed.), *Primo Volume Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi ... La Descriptione Dell'Africa*, 3 vols, vol. 1 (Venice, 1550); William Dampier, *Voyages and Descriptions: Vol. II* (London: Printed for James Knapton, 1705); Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of East Indies*, 2 vols (London: Printed for C. Hitch and A. Millar, 1744); Mauritz Thomann, *Reise und Lebensbeschreibung* (Augsburg, 1788); Heinrich Lichenstein, *Reisen im südlichen Afrika in den Jahren 1803, 1804 und 1806*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1811); Henry Salt, *A Voyage to Abyssinia and Travels into the Interior of that Country* (London: Printed for F. C. and J. Rivington, 1814); John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, 1813* (London, 1815); *Travels in South Africa ... Being a Narrative of a Second Journey, 1820*, 2 vols (London: Printed for London Missionary Society, 1822); John Philips, *Researches in South Africa*, 2 vols (London: John Duncan, 1819); Burchell, *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa*, 2 vols; Thomas Edward Bowdich, *An Account of the Discoveries of the Portuguese in the Interior of Angola and the Mozambique* (published posthumously from original manuscripts prepared in 1822, London: John Booth, 1824); *The Missionary Register*, vol. 18 (London: Seeley, Jackson, & Halliday, 1830); William Fitzwilliam Saxe Bannister, *Humane Policy: or, Justice to the Aborigines of New Settlements Essential to a due Expenditure of British Money, and to the Best Interests of the Settlers* (London: T. & G. Underwood, 1830); J. C. Chase, 'Substance of the Journal of Two Trading Travellers, and of the Communications of a Missionary, Regarding their Visits to the Countries in the Rear of the Portuguese Settlement at De la Goa Bay', *South African Quarterly Journal*, 1 (1830), pp. 402-407; William Fitzwilliam Owen, *Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia, and Madagascar: Performed in HM Ships Leven and Barracouta, under the Direction of Captain W. F. W. Owen, R.N.*, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1833). Oral testimony: information given by acting-Lieutenant Rozier who accompanied Owen's naval survey and kept a written journal.

⁸⁴ The first British occupation of the Cape of Good Hope (1795–1803) led the newly appointed Governor, Lord Macartney, to launch an exploratory mission to acquire topographical information of the largely unmapped interior in 1796. These journeys were undertaken by Barrow between 1797 and 1798, see John Barrow, *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa, in the years 1797 and 1798: Including Cursory Observations on the Geology and Geography of the Southern Part of that Continent: The Natural History of Such Objects as Occurred in the Animal, Vegetable and Mineral Kingdoms; And Sketches of the Physical and Moral Characters of the Various Tribes of Inhabitants Surrounding the Settlement of the Cape of Good Hope. To which is Annexed, a Description of the Present State, Population, and Produce of that Extensive Colony; With a Map Constructed Entirely from Actual Observations Made in the Course of the Travels*, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1801–1804). Naval survey of the east and west coasts of Africa was later led by Captain William Fitzwilliam Owen (1821–1826), see Owen, *Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia, and Madagascar*. The need for disentangling the commercial networks of trade and exchange was also discussed in both the House of Commons and the Board of Control of Control of the East India Company, cited in Mabel V. Jackson Haight, *European Powers and South-East Africa: A Study of International Relations on the South-East*

critical information, the vast interior of southern Africa was still largely unmapped by Europeans in 1833.⁸⁵ As such, Cooley's speculative geography was intimately bound up with this wider network of imperial knowledge and politics overseas.



Figure 4.4. W. D. Cooley, 'Sketch of South Africa', 1833. From Cooley, 'A Memoir on the Civilisation of the Tribes', after p. 310.

Coast of Africa, 1796–1856 (New York and Washington: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967), p. 173. For examples of cartography of South Africa and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and the Colonial Office, see Elri Liebenberg, 'The Arrowsmith and S.D.U.K. Maps of South Africa of 1834 – Source Material and Cartographic Significance', *Proceedings of the International Conference of the International Cartographic Association* (La Coruña, Spain, July 2005); 'Mapping South Africa in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Cartography of James Centlivres Chase', *Historia*, 52 (2007), pp. 1-18.

The accompanying 'Sketch of South Africa' was a clear visualisation of his speculative, rather than definitive, theorisations, presenting a coastal outline with little interior detail. Cooley used the map to signal the particular places that were the focal points of his enquiry by putting a question mark next to specific location names (Figure 4.5). These can be observed northwest of the Delagoa Bay inlet and appear as 'Bamangwato?'; 'Mahalaselai?'; 'Mateebeylai?'⁸⁶ Evidence was presented that these nations and other large 'inland tribes' were located a journey of eight days eastward from Kurrichane and displayed the 'rudiments of a great nation ... decidedly emerged from savage life'.⁸⁷ They were said to have cultivated fields of corn, sugar and tobacco, manufactured razors and knives of iron, and built houses with masonry featuring ornamental pillars and mouldings. The paper also traced how these nations fitted into a wider trading network that stretched from 'Dalagôa Bay [sic] on the eastern to Whale Bay on the western coast; and from Litakoo northwards to the Zambese'. This 'active commerce' was facilitated through the circulating medium of 'black, white, and blue' beads, which were each ascribed with a recognised value.⁸⁸ Whilst Cooley exhibited the growing fervour for exploring the African interior, he also demonstrated that his speculations were 'supported by reasonable probabilities'.⁸⁹ This correspondence between the accounts he presented, led him to conclude that the region deserved 'to be immediately explored' and an expedition was requisite to connect the coast at Delagoa Bay with the commercial routes of the interior.⁹⁰

Cooley used this communication with the RGS not only as a means to outline the potential benefits of such investigations to its members, but also to demonstrate how they could be achieved. His paper was, in part, structured as a guide to 'our supposed

⁸⁶ 'Mateebeylai', and 'Mahalaselai' are nations Cooley located as living 'near the great water (I presume toward Dalagôa Bay)', in Cooley, 'Memoir on the Civilisation of the Tribes', p. 313.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

⁸⁹ 'Prospectus of the Royal Geographical Society', p. xi.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

traveller’, furnished with instructions detailing the chief subjects of inquiry for the journey, which ‘might be easily performed with oxen in a fortnight’.⁹¹ Cooley appealed that whilst his proposed design may have appeared too moderate for a scheme of geographical discovery and presented little risk of ‘mortification and disappointment’ through the loss of funds or life, the potential existence of ‘civilised peoples’, with linguistic and racialised affinities, was deemed to be a favourable circumstance. An investment in such an expedition was claimed to further extend into an ‘annual income of information, far surpassing in value all that could be expected from the most adventurous expedition’.⁹² This new fund of information, it was hoped, would ultimately work to break the continued silence of the archive.

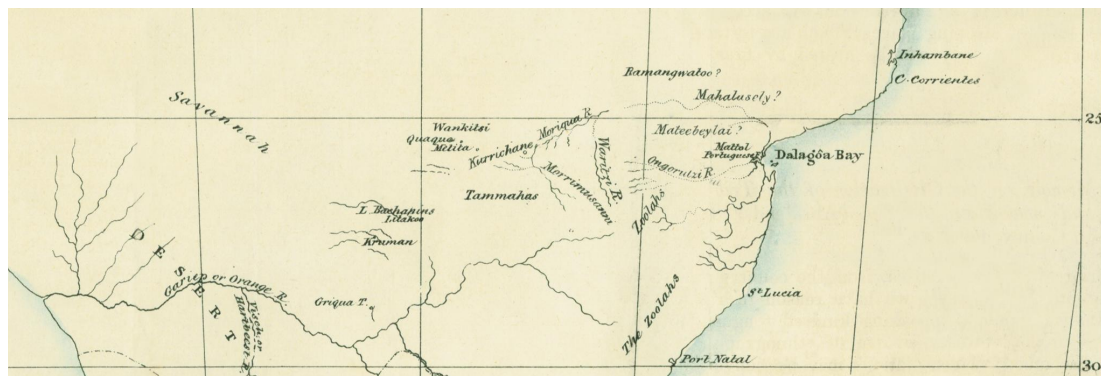


Figure 4.5. W. D. Cooley, ‘Sketch of South Africa’ (detail), 1833.

Following its first recommendation, a Special Committee was appointed to consider the practicalities and probable expense of an expedition.⁹³ This Committee was composed of individuals with practical experience of science and surveying, being chaired by W. R. Hamilton, with Cooley acting as Secretary, and Admiral Sir Edward

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 321.

⁹³ RGS Council Minutes, 18 July 1833, RGS-IBG.

Owen and Captain Alexander Maconochie appointed as other members. On their recommendation, the Council donated £500 for the expedition and the Committee also negotiated financial support from the Government.⁹⁴ In addition to these pecuniary commitments, Cooley looked to enlist further support from ‘the discerning public’ and ‘friends of enterprise’ by publishing a prospectus based on his original paper and map.⁹⁵ However, no offers of investment were made against such speculative returns.

The decision was made that Captain (later Sir) James Edward Alexander, an Army Officer, would undertake the expedition, making his way inland from Delagoa Bay (Figure 4.6).⁹⁶ Despite not possessing any formal or specialised scientific training, Alexander was dubbed ‘the most indefatigable and extensive traveller of modern times’. He was said to embody the qualities of the ideal ‘traveller’, such as ‘restless activity and eager curiosity, which hinder a man from “dully sluggardising at home”’.⁹⁷ As one of the first individuals to venture out under the auspices of the RGS, Alexander’s role was defined as ‘a traveller, appearing in the character of an ambassador’ who would act as the official agent of the RGS and enact its institutional interests from the Council Room out into the field.⁹⁸ His general object was to explore the River Manice from Delagoa Bay to

⁹⁴ RGS Council Minutes on the Delagoa Bay Expedition, RGS-IBG: Committee appointed, 18 July 1833; Report of Committee put forward for consideration by the RGS Council and, if thought fit, it would be recommended to the Government, 25 September 1833; Second Committee of Hamilton, Sir Edward Owen, Colonel Leake, Robert Brown, Lieutenant Edward Kendall and Cooley appointed to examine the plans and report on the expediency of the Society encouraging them, 18 January 1834; ‘Expedition into the Interior of South Africa from Delagoa Bay’ recommended, 25 January 1834; RGS Delagoa Bay Committee Report resolved to commit £500 to the African expedition, of which £200 be used to cover the equipment expenses and £300 be used to open a credit account at the Cape of Good Hope, and the Government recommended a grant of £500 for the expedition, 14 August 1834. For all of the documents related to the Delagoa Bay Expedition and the Committees, see ‘Notes on the Intended Expedition to Delagoa Bay’, 1834, RGS-IBG, JMS/2/5 (a–g).

⁹⁵ William Desborough Cooley, *Prospectus of an Expedition to the Interior of South Africa, from Dalagoa Bay: patronized by the Royal Geographical Society* (London: Printed by William Clowes, 1833).

⁹⁶ RGS Council Minutes, 7 June 1834, RGS-IBG.

⁹⁷ ‘Captain Alexander’s “Western Africa”’: The Caffre War’, *Asiatic Journal*, 23 (1847), pp. 178-185, p. 178. Alexander was known for his travels in Persia, the Balkans, Guiana, the West Indies and North America.

⁹⁸ Cooley, *Prospectus of an Expedition*, p. 5.

the Baquaina country, and to determine whether it was identical to the interior River Mariqua.⁹⁹



Figure 4.6. 'James Edward Alexander', by Richard James Lane, 1827 © National Portrait Gallery, London.

The chance of an expedition's success depended not only on the strength of the individual traveller, but also on preparation, training, technical skills, and support. Cooley translated his original proposal into instructions which he confined to a 'statement of the most important and essential conditions' necessary to inform Alexander as to the purpose and procedures of his expedition.¹⁰⁰ He was clear to point the observational

⁹⁹ 'Notes on the Intended Expedition to Delagoa Bay: Minutes of the Expedition Management Committee, 29 August 1834', RGS-IBG, JMS/2/5 (d). The Manice was called the 'King George's River' by the English and 'Rio del Espiritu Santo' by the Portuguese. The Mariqua was the name used by the colonial traders for the great Makata River. Cooley had reason to suspect that these rivers were identical, see Cooley, 'Memoir on the Civilisation of the Tribes', p. 318.

¹⁰⁰ William Desborough Cooley, 'Expeditions into the Interior of South Africa', *JRGS*, 4 (1834), pp. 362-374, p. 372. Full written instructions given in 'Notes on the Intended Expedition to Delagoa Bay: William Desborough Cooley, Instructions to Capn. Alexander, 1 September 1834', RGS-IBG, JMS/2/5 (f).

focus towards breaking the silences of the archive, and instructed Alexander to trace the 300 mile gap in the accounts and venture beyond the furthest point of the Manice explored by Captain Owen, to the most northern point of the Mariqua, as seen by Scottish travellers Robert Scoon and William McLuckie.¹⁰¹ Whilst he was not provided with any special training, Alexander was advised to spend the time before and during his journey to the Cape to acquire ‘expertness’ in the use of the astronomical instruments he had been provided and the Sichuana language he would encounter.¹⁰² Alexander set sail aboard HMS *Thalia* just over a year after the publication of Cooley’s paper and arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in the beginning of 1835.

However, Alexander did not follow his instructions and the planned expedition was never followed through to completion. The expedition was marred by continual setbacks in the field. Upon his eventual arrival at the Cape, Alexander found it to be in the midst of conflict and it became clear that this was ‘evidently not the time for geographical research’, leading the expedition to be postponed for a year.¹⁰³ The RGS Council did not view this interval as having a negative impact on its objectives. It was reported that Alexander’s fixed position provided the opportunity to gain experience in South African manners and languages, and ensure that he was ‘better prepared’.¹⁰⁴ With tranquillity beginning to be restored on the frontier of the Cape Colony, the RGS expected that Alexander would soon confirm their assumptions. However, he ‘remained unaccountably silent’.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ An account of the journey of Scoon and McLuckie is given in Chase, ‘Substance of the Journal of Two Trading Travellers’.

¹⁰² Cooley, ‘Expeditions into the Interior of South Africa’, pp. 372-373. For details on the instruments and equipment provided by the RGS, see ‘Notes on the Intended Expedition to Delagoa Bay: Committee’s Financial account of supplies provided for Alexander’, 1834, RGS-IBG, JMS/2/5 (e).

¹⁰³ Alexander, *Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa*, vol. 1, p. viii. The Sixth Cape Frontier War (1834–1835) was underway and Alexander was called to serve as aide-de-camp to British Governor Sir Benjamin D’Urban.

¹⁰⁴ ‘At the General Meeting, May 16, 1836: Report from the Council’, *JRGS*, 6 (1836), pp. 3-16, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Reviews: *An Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa &c.*, By J. E. Alexander, K. L. S. 2 vols. Colburn’, *Athenaeum*, no. 568, 15 September 1838, pp. 665-667, p. 665. This review was no doubt penned by Cooley. Alexander had written a number of reports and letters to the RGS, but none of them were

Alexander eventually made contact in August 1836 to inform the RGS that a 'change of circumstances' had forced him to alter his plans and abandon the prescribed route.¹⁰⁶ The 'circumstances' to which he was referring was the successful completion of another expedition, which had journeyed north-east from the Cape to reach behind Delagoa Bay to its southern limit of latitude 23° 28'.¹⁰⁷ Led by zoologist and Army Surgeon Dr Andrew Smith, this expedition passed over ground that Alexander had intended to cross and he therefore believed it was necessary to change the original route. Alexander stated that the 'most feasible plan for acquiring interesting information' would be to turn his attentions to the western coast and explore the country to the north of the Orange River, with the aim of becoming acquainted with the Damara country.¹⁰⁸ He had previously discussed such a plan with Maconochie, who had sat on the advisory committee for the expedition, but he cautioned that Alexander should not act 'hastily'.¹⁰⁹ The RGS were aware of the other expedition and their report on the two projects showed that they viewed them as fundamentally different in their scale and objectives. Within this, the Expedition Committee indicated that Alexander's expedition was an experiment to test the conjectures of Cooley, before possibly launching a larger exploratory project to confirm or redraw his theoretical geography.¹¹⁰ Indeed, Cooley

published in the *Journal*, see James Edward Alexander, 'Reports to the RGS on expedition in S. Africa' 1835, RGS-IBG, JMS/2/8 [8 fol.].

¹⁰⁶ James Edward Alexander, 'Captain Alexander's Intended Visit to the Dámaras, South Africa', *JRGS*, 6 (1836), pp. 443-445, p. 443.

¹⁰⁷ Smith's expedition was deployed from the Cape in August 1834. For the reports see, Andrew Smith, *Report of the Expedition for Exploring Central Africa from the Cape of Good Hope, June 23, 1834* (Cape Town: Printed at the Government Gazette Office, 1836); 'Report of the Expedition for Exploring Central Africa', *JRGS*, 6 (1836), pp. 394-413. For the expedition's instructions and finances written by the Cape of Good Hope Association for Exploring Central Africa, see Thomas Wade, William Herschell, A. Oliphant, James Adamson, D. D. R. McLeah, A. J. Cloete, C. F. von Ludwig, F. S. Watermeyer, John Centilivres Chase, 'Instructions for the Expedition into Central Africa from the Cape of Good Hope, 23 June 1834', *The Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal*, 18 (1835), pp. 348-352; 'Report of the Committee of Management of the Cape of Good Hope Association for Exploring Central Africa', *The Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal*, 18 (1835), pp. 352-355; 'Cape of Good Hope Association for Exploring Central Africa', *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, vol. 7 (London: Charles Knight & Co., 1838), pp. 100-101.

¹⁰⁸ Alexander, 'Intended Visit to the Dámaras, South Africa', p. 443.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Smith's expedition was a 'well equipped and numerous party', whilst the RGS dispatched one 'adventurous traveller', see Cooley, 'Expeditions into the Interior of South Africa', p. 362.

had already begun plans for further expeditions, but these would never come to fruition.¹¹¹

However, Alexander defected from this plan and decided to undertake a twelve-month, round-trip expedition north from Cape Town through the western interior, to a latitude of 23°. Not waiting for instructions, he set off just three weeks after he had communicated his intentions with the Society.¹¹² The RGS did not immediately approve this, and wrote that he should suspend his future operations.¹¹³ In travelling without their approval, Alexander was charged with directly violating the express injunction of the Society. Cooley, as the originator of the expedition, felt that Alexander's abandonment of the duties laid out for him were tantamount to disobedience. He deplored how Alexander had consistently refused to comply with his instructions and eventually defied them in order to conduct 'another scheme more to his own taste' and at considerable extra expense.¹¹⁴

When the account of his journey was published, Cooley questioned the scientific yield of the RGS's investment, stating that even though Alexander was furnished with instruments, 'it is evident he made no use of them'.¹¹⁵ Alexander responded that this was 'injurious' towards his character and did not reflect his efforts to obtain accurate measurements, further claiming that since his return he had been 'afraid' of Cooley who

¹¹¹ Cooley had already begun discussing and consulting on plans for launching another exploratory expedition into the interior with Lieutenant James Barker Emery in 1833 and William Bolleart in 1837–1838, see 'Letters from Emery to Cooley', 1833–1835, RGS-IBG, LMS/E/8; 'Letter from Emery to Cooley', 20 October; 25 November 1836, RGS-IBG, Correspondence Block 2/168; William Desborough Cooley, 'From Zanzibar to Lake Nyassa, Letter to unknown correspondent [William Bolleart] giving advice in answer to a request for information on a proposed plan of exploring the Eastern Coast of Africa', 1837, RGS-IBG, JMS/2/14.

¹¹² On 6 September 1836. See, Alexander, 'Captain Alexander's intended visit to the Dámaras, South Africa'; 'Latest intelligence from Captain Alexander', *JRGS*, 7 (1837), pp. 439-446; 'Report of an Expedition of Discovery, Through the Countries of the Great Namáguas, Boschmans, and the Hill Dámaras, in South Africa', *JRGS*, 8 (1838), pp. 1-28, p. 26.

¹¹³ 'Reviews: *Expedition of Discovery*', p. 665

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* On the expenses of this expedition, see James Edward Alexander, 'Papers Concerning the expedition to S. W. Africa: Financial Accounts for Alexander's expedition 1836–1837', RGS-IBG, JMS/2/11 (i).

¹¹⁵ 'Reviews: *Expedition of Discovery*', p. 667.

had acted like a 'hateful dog' towards him.¹¹⁶ He explained that he had been unable to maintain a regulated approach to his observations due to the many practical difficulties he encountered; such as arranging daily travel itineraries, providing food, and quarrelling amongst his party.¹¹⁷ Yet he affirmed that the topographical information logged in his diaries offered 'a very near approximation' of his 1,500 mile route that was worked into a map by John Arrowsmith.¹¹⁸ The results of the expedition did not come to elicit the same derogatory reviews from others, as those made by Cooley. Rather, naturalist William Ogilby, ornithologist John Gould, and botanist Professor John Lindley asserted that a large proportion of the natural history objects brought back from the expedition were 'new and rare' species and offered 'curious' new lines of inquiry.¹¹⁹

Despite the results of the expedition being well received in other circles, Cooley felt that the geographical information procured by the RGS had been 'dearly purchased'.¹²⁰ This cost was more than just a monetary one for Cooley, with the price of the expedition also balanced against his reputation as a speculative geographer and the scientific authority and organisational power of the newly formed Society. Indeed, the return of the defected Delagoa Bay expedition coincided with a moment of critical discussions over the work of the RGS and the critical potential of 'speculative geography' over exploration.

¹¹⁶ James Edward Alexander, 'Letter', *Athenaeum*, no. 570, 29 September 1838, p. 713; 'Letter from Sir James Edward Alexander to Captain John Washington', 18 November 1849, RGS-IBG, Correspondence Block 3/10.

¹¹⁷ Alexander, 'Report of an Expedition of Discovery', p. 26.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. The map itself was a work of comparative cartography with Arrowsmith revising Alexander's daily records in accordance with already known points upon his return, see J. E. Arrowsmith, 'Map to illustrate Capt. Alexander's Route in South Africa. 1838', RGS-IBG, Map Room, Namibia S/S.1.

¹¹⁹ William Ogilby and John Lindley, cited in Alexander, 'Report on an Expedition of Discovery', pp. 26-28.

¹²⁰ 'Reviews: *Expedition of Discovery*', p. 667.

Between the Facts and Acts of Travel: The 1838 labours debate

Concerns over the focus and direction of the Society had been simmering amongst its members from its foundation and these reached a critical point when a note was distributed in 1837 under the title, 'Regarding the Labours of the RGS'.¹²¹ Penned by Fellow Colonel Julian R. Jackson, this pamphlet claimed that 'little' progress had been made towards meeting the original objectives of the Society. His particular grievances were with the lack of obvious efforts to catalogue and evaluate existing knowledge, identify gaps in this knowledge, and begin to regulate methodological procedures. Jackson cited the 'apathy' of members towards its founding aims, alongside the 'erroneous idea that nothing less than distant exploration ... is worthy of consideration or calculated to interest'.¹²² He asserted that focusing only on the writings and experiences of those who travelled would hamper progress in geographical methods and training, and therefore, the advancement of an independent science of geography. Indeed, Alexander was said to have proceeded on his expedition without regulation and worked with an 'uninstructed conscience' out in the field.¹²³ These actions served to undermine the projected knowledge network, in which Cooley's cabinet labour could be resolved through observations in the field, and the ability of the Society to discipline and advise on procedures of a 'geographical science'. From the evidence offered here, it is clear that confusion was apparent from the outset in the execution of this expedition and in defining the distinct relationship between the traveller and the sponsoring institution. Whilst Alexander was termed a 'traveller', a 'pioneer' and an 'ambassador' by the Expedition Committee, he was not once referred to as a 'geographer' who was to

¹²¹ 'Regarding the Labours of the Roy. Geographl. Society by a Member [Col. Julian R. Jackson]', 1837, RGS-IBG, AP/8.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ 'Reply to 'Letter from J. E. Alexander', *Athenaeum*, no. 570, 29 September 1838, pp. 713-714, p. 714.

collect knowledge and feed it back to the centre.¹²⁴ In contrast, the British Guiana Expedition, proposed at the same time, was viewed as ‘much more successful’ in accomplishing the objectives set by the Society. Its leader, Schomburgk, was said to have acted as a ‘real explorer, delighting in overcoming difficulties with torrential rivers and uncertain natives’ and was held as an example for the Society’s ability to support further exploration.¹²⁵

However, this reference to being a ‘real explorer’ was problematic. As Jackson wrote to the Society Secretary Captain Washington in 1838 that, whilst exploration was a necessary and important objective, he questioned its status as a credible form of knowledge production: ‘what know we positively, upon unquestionable authority, methodically of all that has been explored to the present time?’ Jackson was critical of the Council and lamented the romanticised view of ‘real’ exploration as providing accounts of the ‘hair breadth escapes of adventurous travellers’ that provided only ‘vague descriptions’.¹²⁶ Jackson was one of the earliest proponents of legitimising geography as a credible scientific discipline and called for an increase in the attention given to method, training, and instruction by the Society.¹²⁷

Such anxieties over the stability of geographical labour were formally confronted in the first Presidential Address given to the RGS on 21 May 1838. President William R. Hamilton declared that the purpose of this inaugural speech was to complement the Council reports and comment on ‘the importance, use, and advance of Geography’, with particular emphasis given to detailing the benefits that the Society was seen to have

¹²⁴ ‘Notes on the Intended Expedition to Delagoa Bay’, 1834, RGS-IBG, JMS/2/5.

¹²⁵ Mill, *Record of the Royal Geographical Society*, p. 46. Schomburgk was awarded the RGS Patron’s Medal in 1840 for his travels and researches during the years 1835–1839 in British Guyana, and in the adjacent parts of South America.

¹²⁶ ‘Letter from Jackson to Captain John Washington’, 9 March 1838, RGS-IBG, Correspondence Block 2/273.

¹²⁷ On Jackson, see Elizabeth Baigent, ‘Jackson, Julian (1790–1853)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14540>, accessed 10 November 2014]; A. S. Goudie, ‘Colonel Julian Jackson and His Contribution to Geography’, *The Geographical Journal*, 144 (1978), pp. 264–270.

cultivated.¹²⁸ Hamilton openly recognised that questions continued to be raised over how to contain and master such a diverse intellectual field. The grievances voiced by Jackson were publically acknowledged, with the pledge to put into effect some of the suggestions made by ‘one of our most intelligent and active contributors’ in order to redeem the commitments made in the Society’s founding document.¹²⁹ He also suppressed the criticism that the RGS would be misguided in directing its full attention towards travel alone and asserted the institution’s position as one that would continue to support and propagate practical discoveries that emanated from active encounter and direct observation. The statement that ‘the real geographer becomes at once an ardent traveller’ was a clear declaration that what distinguished a ‘geographer’ from the stay-at-home man of science was actual travel and physical experience. Hamilton’s ‘geographer’ was not only defined by the physical experience of travelling and being in different places, but was also instilled with a sense of moral duty ‘labouring for the good of his fellow-creatures’ whose actions should be accepted and revered.¹³⁰ Whilst Hamilton insisted that the Society had to begin dealing purely in ‘facts’ and ‘rigid experiment’, he did not directly answer Jackson’s call to regulate the conduct of the traveller and travel procedure under the auspices of the RGS.

The speculative geography that had driven forward the Delagoa Bay Expedition also came under scrutiny. Despite the RGS ‘Prospectus’ stating that it would not be ‘hostile to theory’, Hamilton advocated a geographical science ‘founded upon facts, and upon facts alone’:

[I]t admits of no theory, no hypothesis, no analogy, no metaphysical deductions on why or wherefore ... these are the principles which mainly distinguish the

¹²⁸ William R. Hamilton, ‘Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London’, *JRGS*, 8 (1838), pp. xxxvii-lxi.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. lx.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xxxix.

geographical pursuits of the present age from those of the critical and learned geographers of the last.¹³¹

This doctrine of an ‘exact’ science led Hamilton to openly question whether a comparison of ‘vague and apparently contradictory accounts of different authors’ could ever lay claim to being ‘precise geographical data’.¹³² As such, the stance of the RGS President following the return of Alexander was that a critical and comparative methodology was not to be employed to postulate speculative theories drawn from texts. Instead, this practice should only be concerned with the texts themselves, reading them within their historical context, and explaining why there were gaps in the accounts. Whilst Hamilton saw ‘comparative geography’ as requiring further elucidation, he considered it to be a ‘collateral object’ of the Society’s attention.¹³³

Yet in dealing with the ‘facts’ of travel, it was also acutely observed that this needed to mean more than the Society simply supporting the act of travel itself. In contrast to the RGS President, Jackson held comparative geography as a ‘necessary labour’. He stressed the need for, what he called, ‘the labours of the cabinet’ which would undertake the recovery of the many dispersed geographical writings and proceed to balance incoming observations against existing accounts. He stated that whilst travellers were actively engaged in the collection of new facts, sedentary geographers assiduously performed the ‘Herculean task of duly examining and arranging the facts innumerable already possessed by the Science’.¹³⁴ Jackson ensured he pointedly emphasised the strength of effort he believed such cabinet labour required. His use of the term ‘Herculean’ invokes the classical motif of the transfer of celestial knowledge from Atlas to Hercules; a metaphor for the process of cabinet labour in which

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. lvii-lviii.

¹³² Ibid., pp. l-lx.

¹³³ Ibid., p. lviii.

¹³⁴ [Jackson], ‘Regarding the Labours of the Roy. Geographl. Society’, RGS-IBG, AP/8.

knowledge is transmitted from books of travel to the reader, imparting great learning. In likening the ‘travails’ of the cabinet to upholding the weight of divine wisdom, Jackson moves its labours away from the imperative of place, thereby severing the link between sedentary ease and the cabinet. As such, these bodily and mental toils complicate Hamilton’s definition of the ‘real geographer’, as both the ‘ardent traveller’ and the ‘cabinet labourer’ had to experience different places, albeit through different means and modes of encounter. Jackson recognised this relationship and attested that the mental exercises implicit within cabinet labour should not be a mere auxiliary activity because it was of ‘infinite interest to the perfection of [geographical] science’.¹³⁵

Clearly, the tensions exposed with the founding of the Society remained unresolved, and instead, the defected Delagoa Bay Expedition brought them into sharp relief. Despite the assertive rhetoric emanating from the Presidential Address in 1838, and the positive regaling of active progress in the Council reports, the Society did not have the practical or financial means to support such a grand strategy of active exploration and this presented new problems for the RGS as it moved into its second decade.

Sat ‘in the Shallows’: The RGS and the 1846 requisition

Despite the Society securing its own accommodation at No. 3 Waterloo Place in 1839, the internal cracks behind this prosperous public façade deepened and threatened to reduce the Society to insignificance. As the RGS entered the 1840s it became clear that it was not in the ‘satisfactory’ position being purported by the Council.¹³⁶ It was suffering from a weak financial condition, compounded by the concurrent national

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ ‘At the Annual General Meeting, May 21, 1841: Report from the Council’, *JRGS*, 11 (1841), pp. iii-vii, p. iii.

economic depression. These symptoms of deterioration can be observed in the low balances that occurred in 1836, 1837, 1839, 1840, 1842–1845, and 1849 (Figure 4.7); in the stagnation of its membership; and in failing to garner a sufficient income from the existing members' fees.¹³⁷ Whereas Fellows had raised questions previously concerning the epistemological challenges of geographical science, discussions in this period were concerned with the viability of the Society as an institution. The faltering internal infrastructure meant that its key functions were affected as its focus turned towards meeting current expenditure, thus suppressing its active functions. Between 1834 and 1841, the Society expended £3,410 in grants for three expeditions, of which, the Kurdistan Expedition (1838–1841) represented over half of this total and was deemed a 'fruitless expenditure'.¹³⁸ In order to settle such debts, the Council took austere measures and ceased to directly fund expeditions or to purchase books, whilst the *Journal* was downsized. Each successive annual 'Report of the Council' recorded the difficulty of keeping expenditure within the bounds of income and it was observed that the Society endured a long bondage 'in shallows and in misery'.¹³⁹ However, little insight has been gained into not just how the Council as a collective navigated this rocky period, but also how individual members experienced and responded to each wave of distress.

¹³⁷ 'At the Annual General Meeting, May 25, 1840: Report of the Council', *JRGS*, 10 (1840), pp. iii-x, p. v. The average ordinary membership (1840–1850) was 679. It ranged from a low of 627 in 1848 and a high of 727 in 1850. A large proportion of the membership had compounded for life and contributed a low composition fee. Habitual arrears were a perennial issue and caused large losses against the projected income of the Society.

¹³⁸ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 55. Expenditure calculated from Rawson W. Rawson, 'Tabular View of the History and Finances of the Royal Geographical Society from the commencement in 1830 to the close in the year 1892', RGS-IBG, AP/26a.

¹³⁹ William Henry Smyth, cited in Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 60.

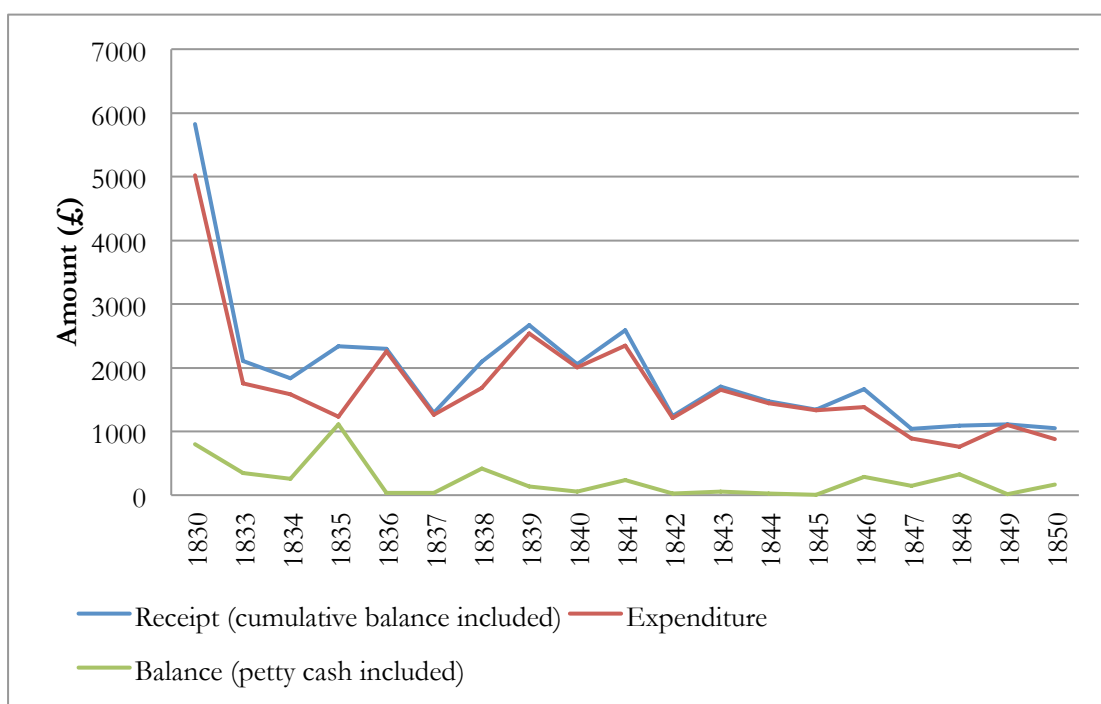


Figure 4.7. Chart showing the total receipts, expenditure and balance of the RGS accounts, 1830–1850. Compiled with data from ‘Reports of the Council’, *JRGS* (1830–1850).

The Council table became a site of ‘considerable acerbity’ as committees and special meetings were called to discuss the situation and recommend resolutions.¹⁴⁰ The most bitterly serious were the events of 1846, when the RGS entered its most depressed period. At a meeting on 27 April, a letter was read declaring the ‘requisition of six members’ of the Society. These dissentient Fellows were Cooley, Dr Matthew T. Saurman, Edward John Gray and Edward Doubleday of the British Museum, C. W. Dilkie, and William Horton Lloyd, who demanded the immediate appointment of a special committee to ‘take into consideration the state of the Society, and to report on its financial condition, its government and efficiency’.¹⁴¹ The appearance of an article, likely to have been penned by Cooley, in the *Athenaeum* voiced the reasons behind this

¹⁴⁰ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 55.

¹⁴¹ RGS Council Minutes, 27 April 1846, RGS-IBG. The letter was dated 9 April 1846.

‘requisition’ in more forthright and blunt terms.¹⁴² In condemning the poor condition of the country’s learned societies ‘where they do little or nothing towards the purposes of their institution’, Cooley then took aim at the RGS itself as being ‘particularly deplorable’. The article expressed disillusion over the failure of the Society to promote and diffuse geographical knowledge, declaring in an accusatory tone that ‘we are not aware that any one of the objects ... has been accomplished’.¹⁴³ Whilst Cooley was clear that he was not condemning any individual member of the Council for misconduct, he asserted that action must be taken to end the ‘embarrassment’ of the Society:

It was not that the Society had been liberal in publishing maps on philosophical, or any other principles, — not that they had involved the Society by profuse purchases of new instruments, or been ruined by the postage of an extensive foreign correspondence; but simply, as with all other of these Societies, the rent and salaries and other expenses of the establishment and been allowed to go on increasing until they had swallowed up all and more than all, the annual income.¹⁴⁴

Their intervention was not made to be wholly inflammatory, but it was rather to impress on the Council that such a ‘laissez-faire system will not do any longer’.¹⁴⁵ It led to a general meeting being called to consider the ‘state of the Society’, in which consent was given to release all of the financial information from the foundation of the Society to the close of the year 1845 (Figures 4.8 and 4.9).¹⁴⁶ Whilst the Treasurer’s ‘Balance Sheet’

¹⁴² [William Desborough Cooley], ‘The Literary and Learned Societies’, *Athenaeum*, no. 963, 11 April 1846, pp. 372-373, p. 372.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ RGS Council Minutes, 30 April 1846, RGS-IBG. The RGS Council called for a general meeting on 13 May 1846 in which the ‘affairs of the Society were discussed at great length’. A Special Committee had

and future 'Estimates' had been printed in the *Journal* from 1836, the presentation of an itemised list of receipts and expenditures was a move towards transparency and increasing accountability for the Council. In response to this financial report, the Council determined to increase its income through composition payments and reduce one of its larger expenditures, the *Journal*.¹⁴⁷

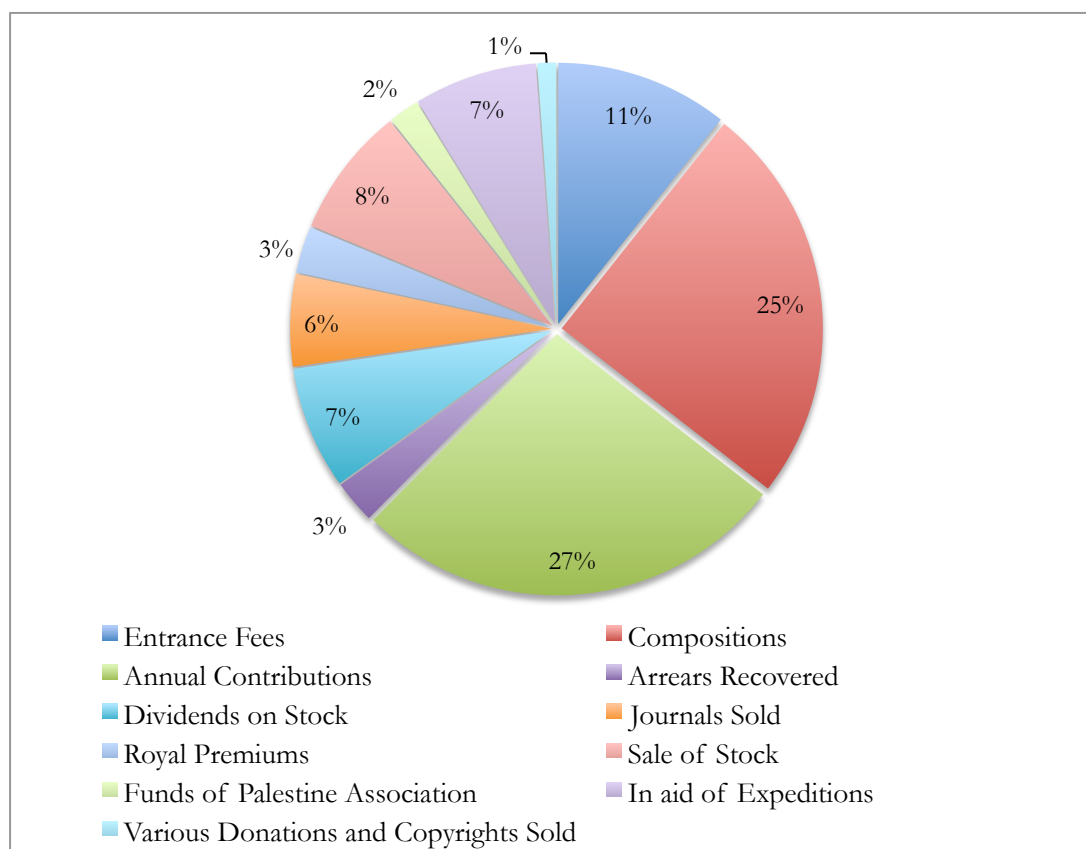


Figure 4.8. Proportion of receipts from RGS foundation in July 1830 to 31 December 1845 (%). Compiled with data from 'A Summary of the Receipts and Expenditure of the RGS from its Foundation in July, 1830, to the 31 December, 1845, inclusive', in 'Report of the Council', *JRGS*, 16 (1846), pp. v-ix.

met previously on 20 April to discuss reductions in expenses, 'particularly with reference to the rent of apartments, cost of the *Journal*, and the salaries of its Officers'.

¹⁴⁷ RGS Council Minutes, 13 May 1846, RGS-IBG. These motions were formally accepted at the next meeting on 3 June and a new edition of the 'Regulations' was recommended for print. This was submitted on 8 June and in force by 22 June 1846.

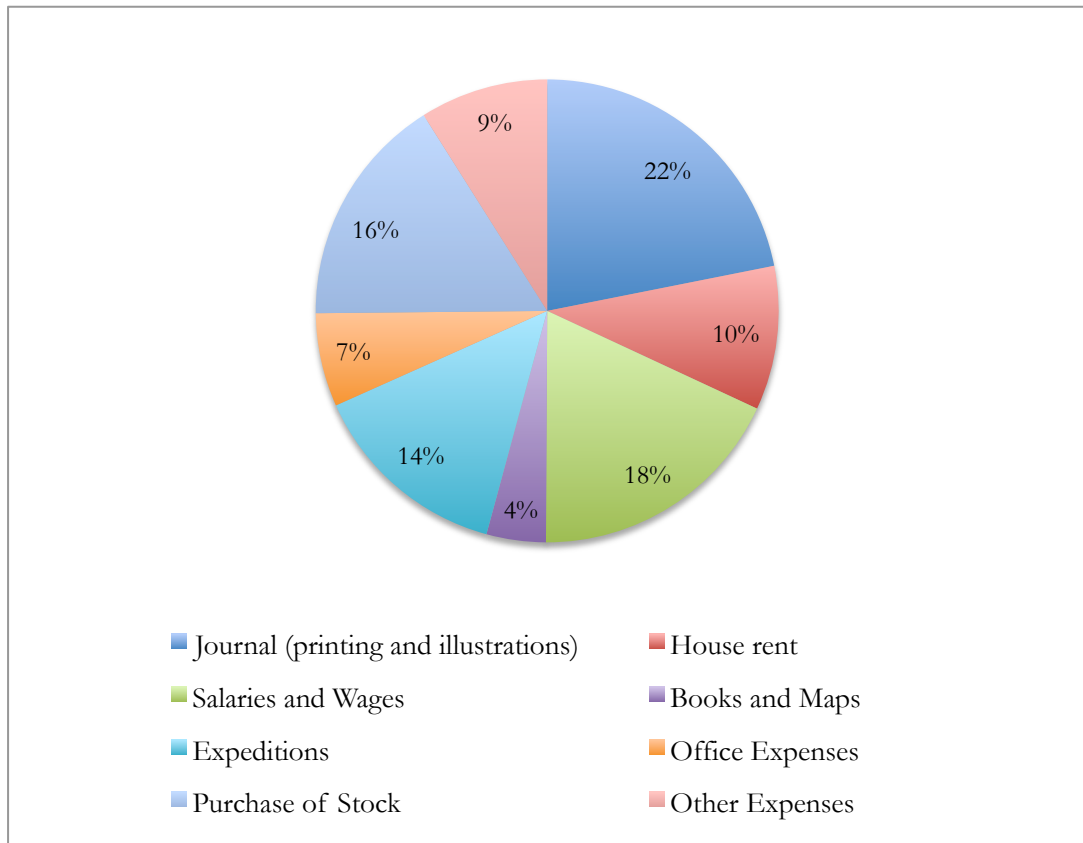


Figure 4.9. Proportion of expenditure from RGS foundation in July 1830 to 31 December 1845 (%). Compiled with data from ‘A Summary of the Receipts and Expenditure’, pp. v-ix.

However, the politics of the requisition were not constrained to the Council meetings and they also played out across the pages of private notices, pamphlets, and the *Athenaeum*. The resolutions conceded by the Council at the hands of the ‘Requisitionists’ were seen by many to have undermined the authority of the institution.¹⁴⁸ An anonymous pamphlet, printed under the title ‘The Royal Geographical Society and its Labours’, was circulated at this ‘opportune moment’ to repudiate such claims of mismanagement.¹⁴⁹ The notice was penned by Smyth and had clearly been

¹⁴⁸ ‘The Geographical Society’, *Literary Gazette*, no. 1528, 2 May 1846, pp. 397-398, p. 397.

¹⁴⁹ Smyth, ‘The RGS and its Labours’, RGS-IBG, WHS/1. Smyth wrote this in the previous year (1845) with the original aim of attracting new supporters.

edited to directly retaliate against Cooley, declaring that the ‘Geographical Society has most zealously carried out every one of its objects’, as far as it was ‘practically possible’.¹⁵⁰

Cooley dismissed this ‘apologist’ as ‘some doughty champion’ who had hastily rushed forward to protect the Society, but ‘with a lance so light and an arm so tremulous, he is not likely to serve the cause which he espouses. In truth, no grubbing tradesman, sallying forth as a knight errant, ever cut a poorer figure’.¹⁵¹ Cooley took up the challenge to reveal the ‘true’ labours of the Society, seeking to cut through the ‘vagueness and exaggeration’ of the Society’s ‘boasted labours’ and tease out the specific details presented by Smyth and the Council.¹⁵² Specifically, the question was raised as to the actual monetary outlay made by the Society towards exploring expeditions and not those provided by external grants. Upon reading the statement made by Smyth that £4,000 had been spent on expeditions and instruments furnished to travellers, Cooley claimed that he could see through the ‘fallacy of rounded numbers’.¹⁵³ A review of the financial reports reveals that the total expenditure drawn from the Society’s own funds for exploration, was only £1,766.¹⁵⁴ Alongside the £1,132 spent on the library, Cooley claimed that the Society only laid out £2,898 on geographical discovery and research, constituting a total proportion of 11 per cent of its total funds, which was significantly lower than the value of 19 per cent presented by the Council.¹⁵⁵ As such, from Cooley’s perspective, this was not only clear evidence of ‘gross mismanagement’, but also that the

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹ [William Desborough Cooley], ‘Learned and Literary Societies: The Royal Geographical Society and its Labours’, *Athenaeum*, no. 966, 2 May 1846, pp. 452-454, p. 452.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 453. Smyth rounded up these values from the ‘Summary of Receipts and Expenditure’ released by the RGS Council.

¹⁵⁴ Total expenditure (1830–1845) on seven expeditions and instruments for travellers was £3,846. This total includes £2,080 contributed to the Society’s enterprises by the Government and various missionary societies. Total receipt (1830–1845) was £27,329. Figures from ‘A Summary of the Receipts and Expenditure’, pp. v-ix.

¹⁵⁵ 10.6 per cent of total expenditure by RGS (1830–1845) was on expeditions and instruments, and books and maps. This breaks down as 6.5 per cent of its total expenditure being spent on expeditions and 4.1 per cent on books and maps.

Council had expressed little zeal or diligence in the promotion of active geographical labours and were rather careless and casual in their approach.¹⁵⁶

This outburst was not Cooley's first attack on the propriety of the Council fuelled by his close inspection of the Society accounts. In particular, the events surrounding his resignation from the Council in 1835 provide the source of his deep-seated acrimony. During this critical episode, Cooley accused Society Secretary Maconochie of 'misconduct' and embezzlement.¹⁵⁷ This culminated in Cooley being wholly discredited by an investigating committee and being forced to forfeit his position, along with his nascent influence, whilst Maconochie was reinstated.¹⁵⁸ Such critical scrutiny and personal bitterness led Cooley to declare that the chief labour undertaken by the Council was 'pretence'.¹⁵⁹ Unsurprisingly, he aligned the domain of the Council with the methods of 'speculative geography', and believed that it should further encourage 'mature speculations' in order to enable any portion of geography to be brought onto new and solid ground.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ [Cooley], 'The Royal Geographical Society and its Labours', p. 453.

¹⁵⁷ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 41. For a full account of this event see, Bridges, 'W. D. Cooley, Part I'.

¹⁵⁸ Bridges, 'W. D. Cooley, Part I', p. 32.

¹⁵⁹ [Cooley], 'The Royal Geographical Society and its Labours', p. 453.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*



Figure 4.10. Stamp of the Royal Geographical Society, c.1840.

The ‘pretence’ of the Society was not just said to be apparent in its ineffectuality, but it was also claimed to be visible in its iconographical identity as typified by the effigy on its seal, which Cooley mocked as representing the Society as ‘a paper globe in a sea of bubbles!’ (Figure 4.10).¹⁶¹ This striking metaphor invoked the sense of a vulnerable entity, precariously balancing on a fragile and effervescent foundation and threatened to simply disintegrate into disposable shreds of sodden paper. The apparent hollow nature of the Society he suggested came from the Council ‘cast[ing] off, with a somewhat arbitrary air, its proper functions’ in order to support its rent, salaries and house expenses.¹⁶² These decisions caused certain Council members to withdraw from the management of the Society. Former Secretary Captain Washington stated that he could

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² [Cooley], ‘The Royal Geographical Society and its Labours’, p. 453.

not return to serve on the Council until it reinstated its active functions and resolved to prioritise funding exploratory enterprises.¹⁶³

The poor state of the Society funds was not seen to have simply been a consequence of increasing infrastructural outlays, but it was held to be a failure born of its first formation. Smyth conceded his former position on the strength of the Society and accepted that the depressed situation was a culmination of the systemic failings of the Society. Whilst its naissance was made under much apparent vigour, he stated that the Society had progressed with little structure or direction, suggesting that the ‘injurious’ union with the Raleigh Club created the impression that the RGS was a traveller’s association, rather than a geographical society.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, he believed this to have been so misleading that it caused a flood of ‘inefficient and questionable members’ who lowered what he held to be the standard of qualification for a nascent scientific institution.¹⁶⁵ Crucially, it was observed that the personnel appointed were armchair authorities and not working geographers. The first two Society Presidents were government colonial ministers and many of their successors were career diplomats who were ‘born to fill chairs’.¹⁶⁶ Such commentary gives credence to David Stoddart’s characterisation of the early years of the Society as dilettante, with its social composition having the external appearance of a travellers’ club supported by gentlemen, only given intellectual credibility by scientist members.¹⁶⁷ The authority of these Council members was openly questioned, and even undermined. Cooley professed that the general membership could neither ‘expect the progress of Geography to be duly registered and appreciated by those who seem hardly to know what Geography is’, nor understand

¹⁶³ ‘Letter from John Washington’, 1 May 1846, RGS-IBG, Correspondence Block 3/794.

¹⁶⁴ Smyth, ‘The Autobiography of Sir John Barrow’, p. 255.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Contemporary description of President Roderick Murchison, given in Stafford, *Scientist of Empire*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁷ Stoddart, *On Geography*, pp. 20-25. Whilst no prosopographical study has been undertaken of the RGS’s membership in this early period, for an overview see Bridges, ‘East Africa in the Age of Exploration’, pp. 225-227; Stafford, *Scientist of Empire*, p. 218.

what constituted the ‘proper domain’ of the Council.¹⁶⁸ Such discussions were not unique to the Society, though, and were also present within contemporary scientific institutions. For example, despite having one of the largest funds of all the scientific institutions in Britain, the Zoological Society undertook financial restructuring measures in 1837. It was forced into a period of reflection to reconsider how to economically promote both ‘legitimate science’ and ‘popular recreation’.¹⁶⁹ However, the tightening on expenses led many to resent the stringent financial retrenchment and it sparked similar fears to those of the RGS: that its scientific foundations would be undermined and eroded.

With recourse to the origins of the Society and the role of ‘geography’ within it, these critical discussions continued the ‘geographical labours’ debate of 1838. Hamilton’s successor as President, geologist George Bellas Greenough, believed he could redirect the focus of criticisms by emphasising the popular appeal of the Society. He averred in his 1840 ‘Address’ that they were an ‘association of travellers rather than geographers’ and therefore every encouragement should be ‘held out for exploration and discovery’.¹⁷⁰ Greenough himself can be viewed as an example of an armchair authority as despite his own geological surveys and excursions across Europe, he was himself an organiser and promoter, rather than a discoverer.¹⁷¹ Smyth dismissed such formal declarations as being ‘vulgar’ acceptations of geographical labour that were non-specialist and sat in direct contradiction to the fundamental purpose of the Society: to advance geography as a ‘department of science’.¹⁷² However, Greenough held that a

¹⁶⁸ F.R.G.S. [Cooley], ‘The Royal Geographical Society’, p. 487.

¹⁶⁹ William Swainson, *A Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural History* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longman, Paternoster-Row; and John Taylor, 1834), pp. 439-40. For more on the financial restructuring of the Zoological Society, see Takashi Ito, *London Zoo and the Victorians, 1828–1859* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2014).

¹⁷⁰ Greenough, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1840), p. lxxxii.

¹⁷¹ John Wyatt, ‘Greenough, George Bellas (1778–1855)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, January 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11432>, accessed 12 December 2015].

¹⁷² Smyth, *RGS and its Labours*, RGS-IBG, WHS/1.

science of geography was an elusive concept and instead of cultivating its development, the Society should be desirous of ‘novelty’ and ‘discovery in general’.¹⁷³ These contradictory communications from Council officers reveal it to be indubitable that an epistemological confusion lay at the core of the Society.

The continual rounds of RGS committees and special meetings, alongside the reshuffling of council positions did not go unnoticed by the wider public as satirical comments and tendentious attacks were featured in the press. In particular, jibes were made in the *Pictorial Times* at how the Society had ‘retrograded in importance and public esteem’:

Poor travellers are now excluded from all opportunities favourable to the development of truth. The insulting sneer, or the cold exclusion of excessive civility, debar them from again troubling the officials with the results of their labours; and the Society is now very generally admitted to be a mere delusion and snare, where a few cunning map-makers and closet geographers combine to denounce discoveries opposed to their theories and vain speculations, and use the means at their disposal to forward their own views, and to abuse the unlucky messenger of what is really true.¹⁷⁴

Beneath the obvious satire, the credibility of the Society as a whole was clearly being called into question. The officials of the RGS were accused of deception in how they conducted their activities with the limited progress of the Society being blamed on internal power relations. The institution was a contested space whose social character was divided according to the epistemological conduct and spatial configuration of its

¹⁷³ Greenough, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1840), p. lxxxii.

¹⁷⁴ *Pictorial Times*, 11 September 1846, cited in Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 56. Roy C. Bridges notes how this ‘sounds like another Cooley diatribe’, see Bridges, ‘William Desborough Cooley’, p. 63.

practitioners. Whilst the spatial binary presented between the traveller cultivating truth and the closet geographer peddling vain speculations was a striking exaggeration, it did capture the essence of the debates over the most credible approach for doing geography.¹⁷⁵

President W. J. Hamilton declared that the Society was at a crucial juncture and needed to either agree on a ‘proper combination’ of these notions of geography, or to continue until its reserves became exhausted and then dissolve itself.¹⁷⁶ He lamented that the results of the Society’s work had ‘hardly equalled our expectations’ and that it was failing to serve both public and scientific interests.¹⁷⁷ At the time of this statement in 1848, the membership of the Society was 670, of whom income could only be claimed from the 273 held as ‘nominally annual subscribers’. Furthermore, the *Journal* was severely diminished, containing only 144 pages in 1848 compared to a high of 590 pages at the start of the decade in 1840.¹⁷⁸ However, the censorious Cooley did not accept the view that it was merely confusion clouding the effective functioning of the Society, and he launched an intense and personal attack on the Council by announcing that its members had willingly surrendered any scholarly or scientific aspirations that the institution may have had in order to support their own sense of superiority. The accusations were made anonymously in 1848 under the common title ‘F.R.G.S’, which was possibly an attempt to make the complaints appear as widely shared views, but it may have also been to avoid negative repercussions as he confessed that the Council worked to silence any complaints.¹⁷⁹ The anonymity Cooley cloaked himself in gave him the confidence to take his criticisms further and he claimed that the inner sanctum of

¹⁷⁵ RGS Secretary Jackson brought these accusations before the Council, but they were declared to be unworthy of notice, see RGS Council Minutes, 9 November 1846, RGS-IBG.

¹⁷⁶ W. J. Hamilton, ‘Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London’, *JRGS*, 18 (1848), pp. xxxi-lxxii, p. xxxi.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, pp. 58-59. These page counts do not include *Journal* front or back matter.

¹⁷⁹ F.R.G.S. [Cooley], ‘The Royal Geographical Society’.

the Society must be held wholly responsible for mismanagement and tyranny. Whilst Cooley was cautious to not mention specific names, he made it obvious that the ‘Anti-geographical’ party was the prime target of blame for these diminishments. He exclaimed:

[U]nder the administration of the Anti-geographicals the Royal Geographical Society, after a rapid development of remarkable vigour, had sunk, weakened and withered as if it had breathed an atmosphere of poison. Its active functions are, confessedly, at an end ... and it has no longer any object but to raise revenue.¹⁸⁰

This party was supposedly formed from the ‘constant and immutable’ gentlemen who had taken possession of the Society from its inception and remained its ‘masters ever since’. From such descriptions, it can be inferred that the ‘not above eight’ members who had this stronghold on the Society Council were Barrow, Greenough, W. R. Hamilton, Renouard, Baily, Murchison, and the two permanent trustees Biddulph and Staunton. The characterisation of the Society as being shrouded in an ‘atmosphere of poison’ was no doubt mediated by Cooley’s past experience of being cast out of a position of power and the potential to gain a place in this inner clique.¹⁸¹

Clearly Cooley had been tirelessly working as a sedulous critic of the Society throughout the 1840s, as he channelled his antipathy towards the Society into industrious action. He threatened to initiate a new rival organisation to the RGS, one where the ‘speculative mind’ could be stimulated and directed by social intercourse:

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 487.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

We trust that we shall soon have such reforms made in the constitution and management of the Royal Geographical Society, as will amount to its complete regeneration. If not, the consequence may be easily predicted: – we shall have forthwith a new Geographical Society. And, in truth, such a Society, opened to all the world at a pound subscription, carefully constituted and liberally conducted, might ... while diffusing gratification and instruction, become, in the metropolis of the British empire, the chief instrument in promoting a most important branch of knowledge.¹⁸²

In directly appropriating phrases from the original 1830 'Prospectus', Cooley strongly expressed his sense of dissatisfaction towards the work of the RGS and the belief that the institution could only be realigned with its founding objects if it underwent a complete regeneration. He quickly realised that the significant reforms he called for were not being seriously considered, or even directly acknowledged, and this led him to answer his own complaints. His response focused on his grievance that the Society was neglecting its duty to form a 'library of the best books on Geography'.¹⁸³ It was announced in December 1846 that a new society had been proposed: the 'Columbus Society', which would print and distribute 'rare and valuable Voyages, Travels, and Geographical Records' for an annual subscription of one guinea.¹⁸⁴ Yet, this plan was soon modified and pushed in the direction of an antiquarian society rather than a 'new' Geographical Society. As such, even from the outset, this alternative association embodied complications and confusion in its purpose. One manifestation of this was how its relationship with the RGS itself changed over time.

¹⁸² [Cooley], 'The Royal Geographical Society and its Labours', p. 454.

¹⁸³ 'Prospectus of the Royal Geographical Society', p. vii.

¹⁸⁴ 'Our Weekly Gossip', *Athenaeum*, no. 998, 12 December 1846, p. 1270.

Conclusions

As the RGS entered the 1850s, Mill observed that the institution ‘stood on the threshold of a career of greatness’.¹⁸⁵ Under the supremacy of Murchison and his ardent promotion of exploration, the Society saw the rise of the ‘explorer’ and an increased attention to methodological regulation and scientific instrumentation, as well as rapid growth in its members, wealth, and influence. It is not hard to understand why this moment is continuously picked up in histories of the Society as being filled with ‘incident’ and ‘action’.¹⁸⁶ Yet, this chapter has sought to redress the lacuna of the first two decades in the history of the Society and the contentious historical development of geographical science. This period is wholly significant in understanding the intellectual purpose and practical activities of the RGS, as defined by the emerging geographical community at the time. Through its presentation of the negotiations of geography’s content, governance, and practice within the RGS, it shows that ‘science’ and ‘geography’ were terms in the making during this period and that this institution was an anxious site of disciplinary development.

Viewed against a backdrop of rising professionalisation in science, the promotion and practice of geographical science by ‘professed geographers’ oscillated between the collection and preservation of knowledge and the active cultivation and sponsorship of knowledge.¹⁸⁷ President Greenough’s 1840 ‘Address’ acknowledged the ‘different feelings, opinions, and desires’ of the Society’s members, but by 1844 Murchison, now in the President’s chair, declared that the Society ‘no longer stands in need of any appeal to principles explanatory of the nature and design of its researches’.¹⁸⁸ Yet, as this chapter has demonstrated, the internal politics of the

¹⁸⁵ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 63.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

¹⁸⁷ Withers, *Geography and Science in Britain*, p. 240.

¹⁸⁸ Greenough, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1840), p. lxxxii; Murchison, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1844), p. xlv.

institution did not match this public assertion of strength and decisiveness as questions were raised, concerns were voiced, and accusations were thrown. Certain members such as Jackson lamented the lack of focus in this period in developing the methodologies of geographical science and procedures of regulation, whilst others, like Cooley, emphasised the role of the 'speculative mind' for advancing geographical scholarship.¹⁸⁹

In this chapter the role of speculation has come to the fore, not just in terms of considerations and reflections of the subject of geography as a science, but also in the act of 'speculating' and in the formation of conjectures. Whilst the role of 'armchair swashbuckler' and 'administrator of science' as filled by Banks and to an extent, by Barrow, oversaw and controlled the flow of information, the 'seated speculator' was called upon to excite curiosity and stimulate inquiry.¹⁹⁰ The initial support for this 'speculative geography' presented the untravelled, critical geographer with a formal and critical purpose, as they focused upon gathering the facts of travel and instigating the act of travel itself. The Delagoa Bay Expedition illustrated the process by which speculations were made and set in motion. This example marks a high point in the history of the critical geography career of Cooley, who, despite never making the journey himself, attained a prominent position at the centre of the Society's first expedition to Africa. This lens of speculation has therefore brought into focus how the Society dealt with the notion of distance from its sites of study. In the first decade of the Society's existence, at least, the field 'out there' and the study 'in here' were not directly defined in opposition to one another.

The following chapter continues the examination of geographical institutions and takes as its focus Cooley's 'new' Geographical Society: the Hakluyt Society. It cannot be assumed that the discussions taking place at the RGS were representative of

¹⁸⁹ [Cooley], 'The Royal Geographical Society and its Labours', p. 452.

¹⁹⁰ See, Miller, 'Joseph Banks, empire, and centres of calculation'; Stern, "Rescuing the Age from a Charge of Ignorance".

the geography being practised in other places at the same time and therefore the view of how and where geography was organised and the labours of the geographers therein is widened. The focus moves to the role of the 'editor' in the Hakluyt Society and the experience of recovering historical narratives of travel and exploration. As such, the analysis turns to look at how the labours of the critical geographer extended beyond the RGS through a distinct discourse of encounter and 'armchair travail'.

Chapter 5

Editorial Encounters: Reframing voyages and travels for the Hakluyt Society

As a Hakluyt Society editor voluntarily recovering for publication ‘rare or unpublished Voyages and Travels’, Thomas Rundall carefully selected an epigraph to introduce his work. Rather than offering a glimpse into the themes of the book, Rundall chose to reflect on the intellectual and physical labour he had exerted in bringing the work to print. To illustrate starkly the moments of recovery, compilation, and synthesis that occur in an episode of editorial encounter, he drew on the words of poet John Milton:

What was scattered in many volumes, and observed at several times by eye-witnesses, with no cursory pains I laid together, to save the reader a far longer travail of wandering through so many deserted authors ... the essay, such as it is was thought by some who knew of it, not amiss to be published; that so many things remarkable, dispersed before, now brought under one view, might not hazard to be otherwise lost, nor the labour lost of collecting them.¹

The passage appropriates the authentic language of the suffering traveller and applies it to the editor’s domestic travels to different libraries and the textual explorations of the foreign histories lying deep within them. Its illocutionary force is emphasised by its position above the long list of contents that the editor had painstakingly compiled. With

¹ John Milton, ‘Pref. to Brief Hist. of Moscovia (1632)’, cited in Thomas Rundall (ed.), *Narratives of Voyages towards the North-West, in Search of a Passage to Cathay and India. 1496 to 1631. With Selections from the early Records of the Honourable the East India Company and from MSS. in the British Museum* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 5, 1849), p. iii.

literary theorist Gérard Genette identifying the epigraph as a ‘password of intellectuality’, it also functions here as a sign of credibility.² The allusion to the book as a vast, wearying voyage was an enduring discourse that permeated the paratextual material of Hakluyt volumes, with editors employing it to legitimise their role in adding to geographical knowledge. However, one contemporary viewed this editorial awareness as ‘inappropriate’. These reflexive statements were objected to as they were seen to displace the ‘real value’ of the actions of the men who authored the original travel narratives.³ Evidently, tensions existed between the textual tradition of reading travel accounts and the embodied practice of experiencing their subject first-hand. It is this critical exchange that has prompted the central discussion of this chapter, as it brings the editor to the fore and engages with their modes of encounter with textual artefacts. In so doing, it demonstrates that the editorial encounters of the Hakluyt Society displayed the experiential paradox that underlay many of the debates surrounding geographical methodologies at that time.

At the time of the Hakluyt Society’s foundation in the mid-nineteenth century, the genre of travel writing was burgeoning and there was a revival in the study of history and the restoration of historical works. Whilst the early history of the Society has received limited attention, the critical work conducted by Roy C. Bridges on its formation has uncovered how, from the outset, the direction of this association was unclear.⁴ The analogy with Elizabethan ‘armchair geographer’ Richard Hakluyt inscribed its identity as an antiquarian society. There was an expectation from the outset that the volumes would commemorate him and the Elizabethan period with popular adventure

² Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 160.

³ J. A. Froude, ‘Art. II – England’s Worthies’, *Westminster Review*, 58 (1852), pp. 32-57, p. 36.

⁴ Roy C. Bridges, ‘William Desborough Cooley and the Foundation of the Hakluyt Society’, in Bridges and Hair (eds), *Compassing the Vast Globe of the Earth*, pp. 51-78; ‘The Literature of Travel and Exploration: The Work of the Hakluyt Society’, *The Journal of the Hakluyt Society*, (April 2014), pp. 1-16. See also, G. R. Crone, “‘Jewells of Antiquitie’, the Work of the Hakluyt Society’, *The Geographical Journal*, 128 (1962), pp. 321-324; Dorothy Middleton, ‘The Early History of the Hakluyt Society 1847–1923’, *The Geographical Journal*, 152 (1986), pp. 217–224.

accounts celebrating national glory, rather than making any significant contributions to its parent body, the RGS, and to the promotion of geographical science. As such, the Hakluyt Society came to be seen as ‘more of a haven for those interested in travel in the older and more romantic sense’.⁵ However, founder Cooley and his successor as Secretary of the Society, Richard Henry Major, advocated for the editor to undertake scholarly analysis and independent research as its editorship drew together the ‘air-borne as well as chair-borne geographers’.⁶ This presents a key point of departure in investigating how the Hakluyt Society presented travel narratives – as either a scientific source, or as a piece of historical literature – and in asserting the central role of the editor in mediating these decisions.

Recent research from several scholarly quarters has drawn attention to the complex relationships between travel and exploration, and the resultant narratives in print, by focusing on the material form and epistemological content of such books.⁷ Yet whilst studies of particular important figures in the Hakluyt’s history have been made, these have not substantially engaged with debates surrounding the complexities of geographical authorship and editorship.⁸ This has meant that the intellectual, material, and spatial politics of encountering texts and how they were discursively reframed and materially repackaged by the Hakluyt Society have been overlooked. This chapter re-examines the early history of the Society in two ways: firstly, by firmly positioning the editor at its centre and secondly, by critically examining how editors reframed historical narratives of voyages and travels for the Hakluyt Society. Despite the ‘skeletal nature’ of the primary material related to the Society, this chapter takes as its main empirical focus

⁵ Roy C. Bridges and P. E. H. Hair, ‘Epilogue: The Hakluyt Society and World History’, in Bridges and P. Hair (eds), *Compassing the Vaste Globe of the Earth*, pp. 225-239, p. 238.

⁶ Comment made by R. A. Skelton, in Lord Rennell of Rodd, Edward Lynam, William Foster and R. A. Skelton, ‘Richard Hakluyt: Discussion’, *The Geographical Journal*, 109 (1947), pp. 171-174, p. 173.

⁷ Leslie Howsam, *Old Books, New Histories: An Orientation to Studies in Book and Print Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Innes M. Keighren, *Bringing Geography to Book: Ellen Semple and the Reception of Geographical Knowledge* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010); Ogborn and Withers (eds), *Geographies of the Book*; Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print*.

⁸ See Bridges and Hair (eds), *Compassing the Vaste Globe of the Earth*.

the one hundred books that make up the Hakluyt Society First Series and the fifty-eight individual editors and translators who produced them (1847–1899).⁹ These volumes are supplemented by the Council Minutes, which, whilst only providing the ‘barest facts’, still enable an examination of decisions related to book production and of the relationship between the Council and the editor.¹⁰ These sources are mobilised to examine the position and experience of the Hakluyt editor.

The first part of this chapter builds on Bridges’ history, placing the emergence of the Hakluyt Society within the debates about geographical labour at the RGS outlined in the last chapter. In so doing, it draws on Daniela Bleichmar’s notion of ‘bookish travel’ to discuss the wider methodological debates surrounding reading, instrumentation, and scientific practice at this time.¹¹ These debates frame the intellectual imperatives of the new Society in the second part of this chapter, which deals with editorial practice. The role of the editor in the Society is outlined alongside an examination of the individuals who volunteered as editors, the material they chose, and their relationship with the Council. In questioning the extent to which editing in this context can be viewed as a form of ‘armchair travail’, consideration is given to how editorial encounters were structured to highlight the international social, scientific, and literary networks involved in these ventures. The third element of this chapter examines the presentation of volumes. Genette’s evaluation of the importance of the paratext – book covers, title pages, prefaces, introductions, and illustrations – is drawn on to explore how the words and worlds of historical narratives were reassembled and given new meaning by their editors as a Hakluyt Society volume.¹² Famed explorer Richard Francis Burton was amongst these editors and his approach to editing for the Hakluyt is

⁹ Middleton, ‘Early History of the Hakluyt Society’, p. 218. Taking account of multi-volume issues, the one hundred books of the First Series comprised seventy-seven separate editions.

¹⁰ Middleton, ‘Early History of the Hakluyt Society’, p. 217.

¹¹ Bleichmar, *Visible Empire*, pp. 54-55.

¹² Genette, *Paratexts*. See also, Gérard Genette, ‘Introduction to the Paratext’, *New Literary History*, 22 (1991), pp. 261-272.

considered here. Whilst not an assessment of the accuracy or success of Burton's editorial approach, this example demonstrates the spatial politics of encountering place and considers the entangled relations between scholarship, science, and method that underwrote the experience of the Hakluyt Society editor.

Assembling Tools for 'Bookish Travel'

For the geographer, the significance of reading and comprehending past labours was laid out in the RGS Prospectus: 'the greatest utility' was 'to be aware, previously to his setting out, of what has been already done, and what is still wanting, in the countries he may intend to visit'.¹³ As such, access to past travel and cartographic materials was viewed as integral for enabling practical research and scholarly study. The use of books enabled credibility to be established by aiding in scientific training and signalling an adherence to communities of practitioners through a familiarity with specific publications and methodologies. In particular, as has been shown in previous chapters, individual Society members, such as Barrow, Jackson, Smyth and Cooley saw such active engagements with texts to be fundamental for facilitating exploratory work and developing knowledge of extant geographical accounts.

The 'bookish' learning advocated by these individuals was predicated on the extension of philological scholarly traditions, and emphasised the significance of books beyond their role as simply reference material. Books were used not only as sources of information, but also as key instruments in observing and presenting speculative geographies. Cooley employed books to provide reference points against which to compare specific questions, and to interpret their evidence as answers.¹⁴ These textual tools can be seen to have operated within a 'bookish loop' of knowledge, in which

¹³ 'Prospectus of the RGS', p. vii.

¹⁴ As discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

books were read, stimulated new enquiries, and incited new information to be published, and thus fed back into the cycle of knowledge production. As suggested by Bleichmar, a shortage of books, or a lack of space in which to engage with them, could lead to ‘observational paralysis’. Such incapacity would adversely affect the textual and physical routes being taken by both the ‘bookish observer’ in the study and the ‘bookish traveller’ who relied on books and maps in the field; both would be left ‘disarmed’ and unable to make sense of the observations and measurements being made.¹⁵ This ‘observational paralysis’ was seen to have had tangible effects upon the RGS’s exploratory activities. Cooley lamented that the ‘ignorant’ Alexander had not read enough of past voyages and explorations in preparation for his Delagoa Bay Expedition, and had subsequently not sufficiently developed his knowledge of the region.¹⁶

Despite the Council of the RGS being ‘particularly anxious’ that its library and map and chart collections be as complete as possible, progress in these areas was, by 1841, deemed to be ‘far from satisfactory’.¹⁷ The main explanation given was a practical one, with the lack of space being continually referred to whenever the ‘Library’ was discussed in Council meetings. RGS President W. R. Hamilton revealed how ‘our books and maps are piled in heaps on the chairs and tables above-stairs in the most deplorable confusion’.¹⁸ This literal sense of disarray was viewed as a material metaphor for the inability of the Society to establish itself a credible centre of geographical scholarship, knowledge production and exchange. The critical eyes of Cooley saw such a ‘state of disorder’ further amplified by the lack of a catalogue, making it ‘absurd’ to suppose that the informal library could even be used.¹⁹ The reader who encountered such chaotic

¹⁵ Bleichmar, *Visible Empire*, pp. 54-55.

¹⁶ ‘Reviews: *An Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa*’, p. 665.

¹⁷ ‘1841: Report from the Council’, p. vi; ‘At the Annual General Meeting, May 15, 1837: Report from the Council’, *JRGS*, 7 (1837), pp. v-xiii, p. xi.

¹⁸ William R. Hamilton, ‘Address to Royal Geographical Society of London’, *JRGS*, 9 (1839), pp. xlvii-lxxxvi, p. xlvi.

¹⁹ F.R.G.S. [Cooley], ‘The Royal Geographical Society’, p. 486.

arrangements saw them as a ‘painful way of getting knowledge’ that could negatively impact the progress of research, as ‘after days of weary waiting, dusty rummaging, and sickness of hope deferred, [the reader] gave up the enterprise as a ‘game not worth the candle’.²⁰

Whilst the last chapter outlined how the Society laboured to encourage the mobile act of travel, the Council was yet to form a sufficient stationary site of domestic knowledge accumulation; a place where the results of voyages could be stored and made available to its members. Crucially, the Council was acutely aware that it could not perform critical social and scientific functions, as it was unable to provide space

for reading, for drawing, for comparing and construction of maps, for the exhibition of instruments, for the reception of strangers, and for what is by no means the least useful or the least agreeable of our pursuits, the mutual exchange of ideas amongst the members of the Society.²¹

Such an explicit outline of these ‘very serious inconvenience[s]’ indicates how the Society was struggling to accommodate its members and thus become the arena of communication and space of instruction it desired.²²

The issues surrounding library organisation and access to materials were not unique to the RGS, and the Council’s concerns were expressed amid a national debate about the use, funding, and governance of libraries across Britain. These critical conversations centred on democratising spaces of reading and reforming the architecture and spatial layout of reading rooms, particularly focusing on the national

²⁰ Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays in Five Volumes*, 5 vols, vol. 4 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1899), p. 8. For a critical examination of the issues of cataloguing and access at the British Museum, see Rosemary Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 144-145.

²¹ Hamilton, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1839), p. xlvi.

²² *Ibid.*

library of the British Museum. The creation of the ‘public library’ emerged from these discussions through the Public Libraries Act of 1850.²³ Specifically, this was a debate about public and private spheres, not just in terms of money, but also in modes of organising and inhabiting space. The catalogued library and an accessible reading room were a melding of both the public dimensions of club life and the private acts of cabinet scholarship, with knowledge exchange occurring within a communal space. The active reading space of the library came to be characterised as a ‘knowledge workshop’; this was a place where ‘raw material is worked up, to be afterwards diffused, perhaps as far as the English language is spoken’.²⁴ Yet whilst the British Museum Reading Room became the ‘office of many’, such a shared physical space was held to be counter-productive by those who saw reading as a private and solitary act (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).²⁵

²³ This Act was a catalyst for the development of the ‘public library’, in which libraries were supported mainly by public money, rather than by private endowment or subscriptions.

²⁴ ‘The British Museum. — No. II’, *The Penny Magazine for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, no. 286, 17 September 1836, pp. 364-366, p. 365.

²⁵ Susan David Bernstein, ‘Reading Room Geographies of Late-Victorian London: The British Museum, Bloomsbury and the People’s Palace, Mile End’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 13 (2011), available online at: <http://19.bbk.ac.uk>. The debate on the need for free access and lending libraries was summarised in ‘The London Library’, *Spectator*, 27 June 1840, p. 14.



Figure 5.1. 'The British Museum: The Reading Room, with many readers', engraving by H. Melville, after T. H. Shepherd, 1841 © Wellcome Library, London.



Figure 5.2. 'Thomas Carlyle' and his 'closet to oneself', by Helen Allingham, 1879. Courtesy of Google Cultural Institute.

At the RGS, Hamilton clearly indicated his intention to follow suit and merge the private space of the cabinet at home with the public dimensions of ‘clubbing’ and sociability.²⁶ Whilst there was a widespread belief that this could be achieved when the Society relocated to its own occupancy in 1839, the library did not receive immediate attention or a corresponding injection of funds. Despite the claim that suitable apartments would lead to a ‘speedy completion’ of their library collections, the actions of the Council did not extend beyond these statements.²⁷ From the Society’s foundation to 1845, only four per cent of its funds went towards acquiring books and maps and no money was made available for maintenance or restoration. Yet, this minimal expenditure was still seen as ‘too liberal’.²⁸ The sense of such supplementary value was evident upon the resignation of the Society Librarian, John Shillinglaw, in September 1846 as the Council abolished the Librarian position and substituted it with a Clerk at a lower salary.²⁹

The contents of the library were formed chiefly from donations and the responsibility of providing library materials was placed on the ‘collective exertions of members’.³⁰ Frequent appeals led to an increase in materials from around 400 volumes in 1832 to over 4,000 volumes, 1,000 pamphlets, and 10,000 maps by 1850.³¹ Significantly, over this period, the Society developed and extended an international exchange network as it began to receive increasing donations from Foreign Academies, with honourable acknowledgments being given to the *Dépôt de la Marine*, Paris as one of its most generous donors.³² The circumstances of the library were finally reviewed in

²⁶ Hamilton, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1839), p. xlvi.

²⁷ ‘1840: Report from the Council’, p. vi.

²⁸ [Cooley], ‘The Royal Geographical Society and its Labours’, p. 453.

²⁹ ‘Report of the Council’, *JRGS*, 17 (1847), pp. v-x, p. v.

³⁰ ‘1841: Report from the Council’, p. vi.

³¹ Markham, *Fifty Years’ Work of the RGS*, p. 100.

³² ‘At the Annual General Meeting, May 21, 1838: Report from the Council’, *JRGS*, 8 (1838), pp. iii-xviii, p. vii.

1849.³³ Despite one of its chief aims being to ‘obtain books which are beyond the reach of most individual purchasers’, the Committee found that the collection was ‘least rich in old books of importance’.³⁴ Cooley had already surveyed the Society’s collections and derided that the library was ‘wholly deficient’ in what he held to be fundamental geographical texts, specifically the collections of travels compiled by Giovanni Battista Ramusio, Richard Hakluyt, and Samuel Purchas. Without such works the Society could not lay claim to being a ‘central geographical library’.³⁵ As such, Cooley aimed to provide easier access to such sources and he sought to do this outside the institutional confines of the RGS. His first move was to found a publication series called *The World Surveyed in the Nineteenth Century*, which would make the work of distinguished foreign travellers available in English. The intention of the series was to lay open the ‘mine’ of valuable practical and scientific information, ‘to work its richest ores; and rejecting the dross, to lay up the pure metal among the treasures of our literature’.³⁶ This was a clear promotion of Cooley’s personal approach to the study of geography, in that it required the critical collation of historical and contemporary sources. Cooley wanted to encourage the ‘intellectual pursuit’ of bookish travel as he argued that textual accounts gave the reader the ‘widest field of observation’ to view the earth and its inhabitants.³⁷ Yet, the series itself only produced two volumes in 1845 and 1848 due to its publisher, Longmans, declining to pursue it further.

Cooley pledged to personally develop what he saw to be the needs of geographical scholarship and to remedy the lack of ‘care or diligence’ the Council had

³³ ‘Report of the Council’, *JRGS*, 19 (1849), pp. v-xiii, p. vii.

³⁴ Markham, *Fifty Years’ Work of the RGS*, p. 105.

³⁵ F.R.G.S. [Cooley], ‘The Royal Geographical Society’, p. 486.

³⁶ William Desborough Cooley (ed.), *The World Surveyed in the XIXth Century; or, Recent Narratives of Scientific and Exploratory Expeditions: (Undertaken chiefly by command of foreign governments). Translated and (where necessary) abridged, by W. D. Cooley, Vol. I: Journey to Ararat by Dr Freidrich Parrot* (London: Printed for Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845), p. vi; *The World Surveyed in the XIXth Century ... Vol. II and III: Travels in Siberia* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1848).

³⁷ Cooley (ed.), *The World Surveyed, Vol. I*, preface.

shown in managing the library.³⁸ This came to fruition with the bold decision to establish a new society. This formal motion for a publication series in December 1846 aimed to extend intellectual learning through the mobilisation of literary resources. It did not present a fixed collection in a permanent structure, but its books were to circulate through subscriptions.³⁹ The access thereby provided by such a scheme served to meld the public and private spaces of reading as interested readers could handle geographical records either at home through personal subscription or in a public space such as a club, learned society, or public library. The first meeting of the new Society was held at the London Library on 15 December 1846, where a Provisional Council was appointed, whose chosen members attest to the vast range of exploratory, scientific, scholarly, and military interests that coalesced within this new body and its links to other major learned institutions.⁴⁰ Whilst these men would come to decide on the design of these tools of bookish travel, it was the editors of the Society volumes who forged them. The following sections of this chapter focus on the role of the editor who sat between the public and private sites of encounter, relaying the perspectives of the travellers' eyes that saw, and the editors' eyes that read centuries later.

Antiquarian Associations: Richard Hakluyt and editing as armchair travail

From the formal founding of the new Society to its first General Meeting, the project came to be modified in significant ways, with the most obvious being its name becoming the Hakluyt Society.⁴¹ The original choice of 'Columbus' by Cooley was

³⁸ F.R.G.S. [Cooley], 'The Royal Geographical Society', p. 486.

³⁹ 'Our Weekly Gossip', 12 December 1846, p. 1270.

⁴⁰ Under the chairmanship of Roderick Murchison, this collective were Cooley; W. R. Hamilton; Dr Andrew Smith, Keeper of Zoology at the British Museum; John Edward Gray; Vice Admiral Sir Charles Malcolm; bibliographer and antiquary Bolton Corney; and the British Museum Principal Librarian, Sir Henry Ellis.

⁴¹ Changes were approved at the first General Meeting of the Hakluyt Society on 4 March 1847. For a detailed comparative study of the changes between the 'Columbus Society' Prospectus and the 'Hakluyt

deliberate and symbolised an alignment with a figure he personally admired due to his ‘individual genius and enthusiasm’. Cooley assessed Columbus’ discovery of the New World to be a ‘superior’ achievement in the history of man and he no doubt hoped it would inscribe a clear precedence for the new Society.⁴² Despite this justification, the change in name was effected at the first Society meeting, with the explanation that:

The Columbus Society ... was, on further reflection, considered to be descriptive of a Society established for promulgating fresh geographical discoveries, than one of the printing the labours of early voyagers and travellers; and the name of the Hakluyt Society was therefore substituted in its stead.⁴³

This justification reveals that the practical point of Columbus being viewed as an active ‘doer’ and Hakluyt as a sedentary ‘recorder’ was a primary concern. Whilst Bridges has disregarded this as a ‘slightly odd argument’ and one that was perhaps made in the course of a series of discussions regarding the name, when situated within the wider contentious context of geographical labour it is a significant point.⁴⁴ This shift should be viewed as more than simply discursive; it was semantic, and signalled a material tension in the intellectual and practical purpose of the Society. Under the title ‘Hakluyt’, the Society became explicitly aligned with the avid Elizabethan collector of travel narratives. Having never travelled beyond Paris, Sir Richard Hakluyt has been viewed as one of the first ‘armchair geographers’ and has been charged with setting up the legacy of ‘armchair travel’.⁴⁵ His primary activity was editing travel accounts and he spent his life immersed

Society’ Prospectus, see Bridges, ‘William Desborough Cooley and the Foundation of the Hakluyt Society’, pp. 62-72.

⁴² Cooley, *Maritime and Inland Discovery*, vol. 1, p. 381.

⁴³ ‘Our Weekly Gossip’, no. 999, 19 December 1846, pp. 1301-1302, p. 1301.

⁴⁴ Bridges, ‘William Desborough Cooley and the Foundation of the Hakluyt Society’, p. 67.

⁴⁵ E. G. R. Taylor, ‘Richard Hakluyt’, *The Geographical Journal*, 109 (1947), pp. 165-171, p. 165; Claire Jowitt, ‘Hakluyt’s Legacy: Armchair Travel in English Renaissance Drama’, in David Carey and Claire

in the discourses and movements of others, as he recovered and collected information to complete his 'prose epic', *The Principal Navigations*.⁴⁶ The new name therefore signified a Society positioned to pick up Hakluyt's mantle and rescue 'rich treasures of geographical information'.⁴⁷

The original prospectus reveals how Cooley had derived inspiration from the sixteenth and seventeenth-century labours of Ramusio, Hakluyt, Purchas, and Theodore de Bry, who had edited 'highly prized collections' of voyages and travels.⁴⁸ The words of Hakluyt himself were appropriated as a central guiding statement to 'bring Antiquities, smothered and buried in dark silence, to light'. Cooley claimed that the new Society would reproduce these records 'on a plan more comprehensive than Hakluyt's as well as more in the spirit of an advanced literary age'.⁴⁹ His creative impulse was therefore not simply to follow Hakluyt, but to pioneer a new direction and 'commemorate the achievements of all civilized nations in the career of discovery, and to exhibit the constant progress of exploration and intercourse, of the study of man, and of physical inquiry throughout the globe'.⁵⁰ As such, this vision sought to extend the geographical scope and chronology of encounter in a way similar to Ramusio's *Navigazioni* and the de Bry collections. Whilst Hakluyt included a far greater number of accounts, the editorial focus of his collection was on the 'nation' and he dealt specifically with English documents. In contrast, the compendiums of Ramusio and de Bry took material from a range of backgrounds and locations, including English, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, German, and French sources.⁵¹ Despite Cooley's ambitious aim to trace a similar path to

Jowitt (eds), *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 295-206.

⁴⁶ Froude, 'England's Forgotten Worthies', p. 34.

⁴⁷ Bridges, 'William Desborough Cooley and the Foundation of the Hakluyt Society', p. 68.

⁴⁸ 'The Columbus Society', BL, Collection of Prospectuses, 741.k.1.(11).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Michiel van Groesen, *The Representation of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634)* (BRILL: Leiden, 2008); George B. Parks, 'Ramusio's Literary History', *Studies in Philology*, 52 (1955), pp. 127-148.

these other celebrated collectors, the route was adjusted to make the scope of its concern entirely historical and the chronological focus was later set to be ‘from an early period of exploratory enterprise to the circumnavigation of Dampier’.⁵² Consequently, it was decided that the name Columbus embraced a ‘greater universality’ that did not reflect this newly specified focus on historical material.⁵³ The Provisional Council also felt that the Society would appeal to a wider audience if it emphasised national achievement, and the ‘Geographical Records’ to which the new prospectus referred were therefore expanded to include ‘the more important early narratives of British enterprise’.⁵⁴ This was clearly a calculated decision as the Society’s foundation coincided with a resurgence of interest in the formation of national histories and literary antiquities.⁵⁵ However, whilst other groups that emerged in this period were focused on history, the Hakluyt Society was described as extending ‘historical geography in all its branches’.⁵⁶

Taken together, the analogy with Hakluyt and historical study moved the Society away from the one originally projected by Cooley. These subtle, yet significant, changes

⁵² ‘The Hakluyt Society’, BL, Collection of Prospectuses, 741.k.1.(14).

⁵³ ‘Our Weekly Gossip’, 19 December 1846, p. 301.

⁵⁴ ‘Hakluyt Society’, BL, 741.k.1.(14).

⁵⁵ This revival in the study of history, particularly of Tudor exploits, was marked by a shift in the study and practice of history, with a move away from tradition and theories towards revisiting original documents, see Henry Hallam, *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages*, 3 vols (3rd edn, London: John Murray, 1822); the publication of historical texts, such as Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* (first time it was published for 200 years, 1809–1812); Samuel Pepys’ *Diary* (first published edition appeared in 1825); increasing access to primary materials through the opening of public institutions, such as the Public Record Office; the reorganisation and recataloguing of material at national institutions, such as the British Museum and India Office; the foundation of other private historical text publication societies, such as the Bannatyne Club (1823) and the Spalding Club (1838) in Scotland, and the Camden (1838), Shakespeare (1840), and Percy (1840) Societies in Britain. The Camden Society was mentioned as a successful model for the Hakluyt Society to follow in its ‘Prospectus’. For more on the selection of material and the editorial work of the Camden Society, see Charles Johnson, ‘The Camden Society, 1838–1938’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser. 22 (1940), pp. 23–38, p. 24; John Gough Nichols, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Works of the Camden Society* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1862).

⁵⁶ Edward Lynam, ‘The Present and the Future’, in Edward Lynam (ed.), *Richard Hakluyt and His Successors: A Volume Issued to Commemorate the Centenary of the Hakluyt Society* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1946), pp. 171–189, p. 183. See also, J. H. Parry, ‘Hakluyt’s view of British history’, in D. B. Quinn (ed.), *The Hakluyt Handbook, Volume I* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1974), pp. 3–7, p. 4. His empirical approach of extracting and compiling texts was not in line with the labours of historical reconstruction that were undertaken by many of his contemporaries on English history, such as William Camden, Matthew Parker, or Robert Cotton.

served to inscribe an identity of an antiquarian association telling popular stories of travels, rather than as a scholarly society seeking to mobilise a bookish infrastructure to ‘rival’ the labours of the RGS. The consensual agreement to the changes speaks to the collaboration between its early members who worked closely together. In particular, their combined personal qualities enabled them to ‘keep Cooley in harness’ and, despite the changes to his original vision, he agreed to become its first Secretary.⁵⁷ Yet this control over his influence led to Cooley being obscured in the narrative that developed of the Society’s formation. Whilst the parentage of the Hakluyt Society has been outlined clearly here, over the course of the late nineteenth century, its lineage was rewritten. Its origins were altered from a Society born as a reaction to an institution that was seen to be failing, into one that was a direct descendent of that institution with a firmly cemented and harmonious relationship. With key personnel such as Murchison and Markham straddling authoritative offices across both Societies, the RGS and the Hakluyt appeared from the official outset as contemporaneous associations. The ‘Address’ given to the Hakluyt Society by Markham in 1896 to celebrate its fiftieth year did not mention Cooley.⁵⁸ It was only in the 1946 Centenary Retrospective that Cooley was given ‘the credit of having conceived and carried through the formation’ of the Society, a fact that had ‘hitherto been so completely forgotten’.⁵⁹

The obfuscation of any form of rivalry between the institutions was made when the founding of the Hakluyt Society was formally announced by the RGS. In this declaration, the new Society was further distanced from the active traveller Columbus and brought closer to the sedentary, synthesising practices of Hakluyt. Its role was

⁵⁷ Bridges, ‘William Desborough Cooley and the Foundation of the Hakluyt Society’, p. 71.

⁵⁸ Markham gave a list of ‘distinguished persons’ who founded the Society, but did not include Cooley, see Clements R. Markham, *Richard Hakluyt: His Life and Work. With a Short Account of the Aims and Achievements of the Hakluyt Society* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1896), pp. 10-11. Markham proved he was not unaware of the role Cooley played, see Clements R. Markham, ‘Obituary: R. H. Major, FSA’, *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 13 (1891), pp. 489-491, p. 489.

⁵⁹ Foster, ‘The Hakluyt Society: A Retrospect’, p. 143.

described by the RGS as being a publisher of interesting sources of information and points of reference, but that they did ‘not expect novelties or discoveries from them’.⁶⁰ This promoted the Society as one that could confer great literary benefits, but did not directly initiate new or even speculative knowledge. It stood to consciously inscribe the armchair practice of acquainting the self with the world through reading, and embodied the experiential paradox that underlay the many debates surrounding geographical methodologies at that time. The Society becoming a conduit for others’ words was consistent with the popular image of Hakluyt as an editor, drawn by his friend and patron Sir Walter Raleigh who depicted him working as a ‘silent man, seated in the dark corner ... whose questions ... divert attention from himself, and direct it to the moving tales that come in answer to them’.⁶¹ Positioned sitting in the background of narratives, Hakluyt drew on an established humanist trope, as he worked to reassemble ‘the torne and scattered limmes of our ancient and late Navigations by Sea’ into one coherent body.⁶² For Hakluyt, the central tenet of editing was being faithful to the original narrative leaving documents ‘so neere as the written copies would give me leave ... without alteration’.⁶³ Editorial interventions were to be minimal in order to enable the reader to see through the editor to the actual witnesses of the narratives, and then through these arranged narratives to the wider history in which they took place.⁶⁴

However, this editorial labour was a complex practice that could not neatly present a clear-cut distinction between participating in the act of travel and accumulating its facts. Despite being the figure behind the texts, Hakluyt was less the

⁶⁰ Hamilton, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1840), p. lxx.

⁶¹ Walter A. Raleigh, ‘The English Voyages of the Sixteenth Century by Walter Raleigh’, in Richard Hakluyt (ed.), *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation*, 12 vols, vol. 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 Edition), pp. 1-120, p. 75

⁶² Richard Hakluyt, ‘A Preface to the Reader as touching the Principall Voyages and Discourses in the First Part of the Second Edition, 1598’, in Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages*, vol. 1, pp. xxxix-lxx, p. xxxix.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. l.

⁶⁴ For a full account of Hakluyt as ‘editor’, see Mary C. Fuller, *Voyages in Print: English Narratives of Travel to America 1576–1624* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

silent man sat in the shadows but was instead ‘curiously central’, working to direct attention and command the tales he wished audiences to hear.⁶⁵ In his own time, he had been active in a wide circle of scholars, navigators, merchants, and courtiers, communicating with many travellers, leading him to occupy a significant position as a ‘geographical consultant’ to Raleigh’s coterie of explorers, the East India Company and other international mercantile ventures.⁶⁶ While centrally positioned in this social network of information exchange, he actively sought out textual artefacts, recovered them from different repositories, and situated them in new contexts for new audiences. Hakluyt often described his ‘editorial travels’ as the physical displacement and replacement not only of the materials that were moved from obscurity into print, but also of the journeys taken in search of these materials.⁶⁷ The work of the editor therefore was not simply a principle, but a physical and intellectual activity. In recounting his experiences of preparing his 1598 *Principal Navigations*, Hakluyt appropriates the authentic language of travel and the bodily characteristics of voyages of discovery:

[W]hat restlesse nights, what painfull dayes, what heat, what cold I have indured; how many long & chargeable journeys I have traveled; how many famous libraries I have searched into; what varietie of ancient and moderne writers I have perused; what number of old records, patents, privileges, letters, &c. I have redeemed from obscuritie and perishing ... [and] what faire opportunities of private gaine, preferment and ease I have neglected.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 143.

⁶⁶ D. B. Quinn, ‘Hakluyt’s Reputation’, in Quinn, *Hakluyt Handbook*, pp. 133-154, p. 149.

⁶⁷ Fuller, *Voyages in Print*, p. 155.

⁶⁸ Hakluyt, ‘A Preface to the Reader ... in the first part of the Second edition, 1598’, pp. xxxix-xl.

Despite not undertaking the voyages himself, his conflation of the armchair traveller with the active traveller served to position him as a figure of mastery and authority who had literally sat in opposition to many physical and mental impediments and managed to overcome them. It also provided physical evidence, not just through the recovered textual body, but his broken body and fatigued mind, that he was committed to his cause of rescuing travel records from the ‘greedy and devouring jaws of oblivion’.⁶⁹ Despite writing in 1584 that he was ready to go himself into the ‘action’ and travel to America, he never made the journey and completed most of his work in his study at home.⁷⁰

Whilst not directly claiming the same literal travails as Hakluyt, the new Society extended this notion of armchair travail and linked critical reading and collation directly to the development of knowledge through active exploration.⁷¹ The envisaged collection would comprise a combination of ‘extremely rare and hardly known works ... valuable narratives which may be re-edited at the present day with great advantage’; ‘neglected or forgotten works’; ‘works recently brought to light’; and ‘valuable ... still remaining unpublished’ manuscripts.⁷² Whilst it initially appeared that the Council would dictate a list of works to be undertaken, no decision was formally agreed upon.⁷³ Rather, an abridged list of suggested works was released and appended to the Society ‘Prospectus’. It contained over twenty suggestions as to possible sources, authors, and accounts that were desirable for both their historical and geographical importance. The first publications were centrally chosen by the Council, and it was decided that Hakluyt’s own volume *Divers Voyages* should be ‘immediately prepared for the press’ as its initial

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. xxxix.

⁷⁰ ‘Letter from Hakluyt to Sir Francis Walsingham’, 7 January 1584, cited in Jowitt, ‘Hakluyt’s Legacy’, p. 296.

⁷¹ ‘Hakluyt Society’, Hakluyt Society’, BL, 741.k.1.(14).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 2 February 1847, BL, Mss Eur F594.

literary offering, to be followed by *The Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton*.⁷⁴ However, neither of these commitments could be directly fulfilled.⁷⁵ As such, it became clear that the list of ‘suggested works’ should serve as a guide and not a formally prescribed publication programme. The main requirements for proposed works were that they offered ‘full and original accounts’ and that they were not under contract elsewhere.⁷⁶

Despite publishing its first two volumes, problems began to emerge by the end of 1847, and it was soon observed that this ‘attractive plan’ had not attained the ‘prosperous conditions’ it was projected to reach.⁷⁷ The Hakluyt Society was plagued by financial and subscription concerns similar to those affecting the RGS.⁷⁸ Moreover, whilst Cooley had complained about mismanagement at the RGS, he showed himself to be ineffectual, irritable and disorganised as Hakluyt Society Secretary, and it was suggested that he had been actively dissuading people from paying their subscriptions. Cooley was forced to ‘retreat’ from the Society he originated under the same accusations he had levelled at the RGS and he tendered his resignation in May 1847; whether this was due to self-sabotage or his own obsessional attitude remains unclear.⁷⁹ Markham claimed that Cooley did not view mismanagement as the central issue, but believed that

⁷⁴ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 16 March 1847, BL, Mss Eur F594.

⁷⁵ *Divers Voyages* was ‘deferred’ because American bibliophile Obadiah Rich was already preparing a facsimile version, see Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 20 April 1847, BL Mss Eur F594. Henry Middleton’s *Voyage* was delayed due to ‘some unavoidable suspensions’, as detailed in Bolton Corney, ‘Advertisement’, in Bolton Corney (ed.), *The Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton to Bantam and the Maluco Islands; being the Second Voyage set forth by the Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East-Indies* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 19, 1855), pp. i-xi, p. x.

⁷⁶ ‘Hakluyt Society’, Hakluyt Society, BL, 741.k.1.(14). The First Series included less than half of the suggested works. The first publication was C. R. Drinkwater Bethune (ed.), *The Observations of Sir Richard Hawkins Knt., in his Voyage into the South Sea in the Year 1593. Reprinted from the Edition of 1622* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 1, 1847). Suggestions for volumes were discussed as they were received, but the scanty detail of the Council Minutes prompts the inference that the Council did not have a set programme in place and rather works were published as they became available.

⁷⁷ William Jerdan (ed.), ‘The Hakluyt Society: Old Arctic Voyages’, *Literary Gazette*, 14 July 1849, pp. 514-515, p. 514.

⁷⁸ ‘Report for 1852’, printed in George T. Staunton (ed.), *The History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China and the Situation Thereof. Compiled by the Padre Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza, and now Reprinted from the Early Translation of R. Parke* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 14). The Society assembled a sub-committee to discuss and resolve ‘the mode of publication at present adopted by the Hakluyt Society’, see Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 26 March 1849, BL, Mss Eur F594. These events are discussed in more detail in Bridges, ‘William Desborough Cooley and the Foundation of the Hakluyt Society’, pp. 74-76.

⁷⁹ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 1 May 1847, BL, Mss Eur F594.

‘the absence of competent editors ... and the lack of interest in the subject’ would cause the project to fail.⁸⁰

Although the Society’s membership never exceeded 330 in the nineteenth century, the First Series of one hundred volumes involved the voluntary labours of fifty-eight individuals who worked as editors and translators for the Hakluyt Society and whose competency came to be mediated by the Council. Editors were not simply charged with preparing volumes, but they were given the autonomy to decide their method and style. It is shown in the following section that their encounters with texts did not have a formal structure. Editors were not furnished with direct instructions that prescribed their approach, rather their intellectual directions and textual encounters operated informally through social and scholarly connections; a system that the Society came to term, one of ‘literary co-operation’.⁸¹

‘Leisure’ and ‘Literary Co-operation’: Being a Hakluyt Society editor

The actual labour of mining and recovering the textual trails of past travellers occurred through a ‘system of literary co-operation’, in which the ‘acquirements, taste, and discrimination of a number of individuals, who feel an interest in the same pursuit are thus brought to act in voluntary combination’.⁸² A wide network of proactive contributors was required, at the centre of which was the voluntary editor who initiated encounters with historical travel accounts and brought them to the attention of the Society Council. Whilst recommendations were made for future editions and editors acknowledged that they were encouraged to undertake specific works, the Council

⁸⁰ Bridges, ‘William Desborough Cooley and the Foundation of the Hakluyt Society’, p. 74.

⁸¹ Statement appeared in the Hakluyt Society’s ‘Statement of Aims’, first printed in William Desborough Cooley (ed.), *Sir Francis Drake his Voyage, 1595, by Thomas Maynarde, together with the Spanish Account of Drake’s Attack on Puerto Rico* [edited from the Original Manuscripts by W. D. Cooley] (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 4, 1849).

⁸² Ibid.

generally waited for self-appointed editors to proffer suggestions to them. Indeed, its publication procedure has been described as ‘reactive rather than proactive’: its editions were ‘never systematically determined’, but rather appeared through ‘serendipity’.⁸³ The role of the Council in this process was to consider proposals against criteria that went beyond relevance and scholarly value, and approvals were also determined also by calculating the cost of publication.⁸⁴ Despite this decision-making process leading to deferred publication dates, there was only one instance of a proposed volume being rejected outright for the First Series, and this was due to it falling outside the chronological limitations.⁸⁵

With no exact publication programme in place, the Society operated a tiered system of ‘published works’, ‘other works in progress’, and ‘works suggested to the Council for publication’.⁸⁶ There was no formal guidance given by the Council on timescale, but it did communicate with proposed editors to learn their ‘intentions respecting the completion of a volume’.⁸⁷ The ‘published works’ appeared when they were ready, as editors took varying amounts of time to complete their edition. Additionally, not all of the works approved materialised in print due to delays, withdrawals, and even the death of an editor. Many editions were subject to what has been termed, the ‘archetypal Hakluyt delay’.⁸⁸ One of the longest intervals between proposal and publication was 101 years for *Leo of Rozmital*, which was proposed in 1856 and deferred by the Council until its appearance in Malcolm Letts’ edition of 1957.⁸⁹ A further notable complication was changes in editorship, which led to the 1858 proposal

⁸³ Hair, ‘From Past to Future’, p. 46.

⁸⁴ Terms outlined in Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 20 April 1847, BL, Mss Eur F594.

⁸⁵ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 20 November 1871, BL, Mss Eur F594.

⁸⁶ Appeared alongside the Hakluyt Society’s ‘Statement of Aims’, first printed in Cooley (ed.), *Sir Francis Drake his Voyage, 1595*.

⁸⁷ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 1 May 1848, BL, Mss Eur F594.

⁸⁸ Middleton, ‘Early History of the Hakluyt Society 1847–1923’, p. 220.

⁸⁹ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 18 November 1856, BL, Mss Eur F594; Malcolm Letts (ed.), *The Travels of Leo of Rozmital through Germany, Flanders, England, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy 1465–1467* [translated from the German and Latin by Malcolm Letts] (Cambridge: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, Second Series, no. 108, 1957).

of *The Fifth Letter of Hernan Cortes* being postponed until 1868, and the early African work, *History and Description of Africa*, taking thirty-two years to complete.⁹⁰ Generally, the Council embraced a flexible and adaptable publication procedure, as it endeavoured to accommodate the voluntary nature of the work and recognised that the role of editor was pursued as an avocation and, in this sense, a form of amateur scholarship. Whilst ‘amateur’ has many meanings, its association with the Hakluyt Society was understood as those who were ‘devoted’ to their task and subject matter.⁹¹ This was clearly established from the outset when Richard Henry Major agreed to undertake the ‘highly interesting’ translation of the sixteenth-century *Notes upon Russia* on the understanding that it would be completed ‘at his leisure’.⁹² As such, the ability of the Society to successfully publish relied on the cultivation of a coterie of enthusiastic and committed devotees who were able and willing to pursue editing part time, alongside other social or professional commitments. In reflecting on the preparation for his Hakluyt volume, John Barrow the younger commented that the ideal Hakluyt editor needed to possess both ‘leisure’ and ‘great scholarly ability’.⁹³

⁹⁰ *The Fifth Letter of Hernan Cortes* was first proposed on 13 February 1858 and, after several changes of editor, published: Don Pascual de Gayangos (trans.) *The Fifth Letter of Hernan Cortes to the Emperor Charles V, containing an Account of his Expedition to Honduras* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 40, 1868). *History and Description of Africa* was initially offered to Francis Galton in January 1864, which came to be taken over by African explorer Heinrich Barth, but was left unfinished by his death in 1866. It was published thirty years later: Robert Brown (ed.), *The History and Description of Africa and of the Notable Things therein contained, written by Al-Hassan, Ibn-Mohammed Al-Weẓāz Al-Fasi, a Moor, baptised as Giovanni Leone, but better known as Leo Africanus. Done into English in the Year 1600, by John Pory*, 3 vols (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, nos. 92, 93, 94, 1896).

⁹¹ Comment made by RGS President Lord Rennell of Rodd, in Rennell of Rodd, Lynam, Foster and Skelton, ‘Richard Hakluyt: Discussion’, p. 174.

⁹² Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 18 April 1847, BL, Mss Eur F594. This volume was published four years later: R. H. Major (ed. and trans.), *Notes upon Russia: Being a Translation of the earliest Account of that Country, entitled Rerum Muscoviticarum commentarii, by the Baron Sigismund von Herberstein, Ambassador from the Court of Germany*, 2 vols (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 10, 1851; no. 12, 1852).

⁹³ John Barrow, ‘Introductory Remarks’, in John Barrow (ed.), *The Geography of Hudson’s Bay: Being the Remarks of Captain W. Coats, in many Voyages to that Locality, between the Years 1727 and 1751. With an Appendix containing Extracts from the Log of Capt. Middleton on his Voyage for the Discovery of the North-West Passage in H.M.S. “Furnace”, in 1741–1742* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 11), pp. i-x, p. i.

The 'leisured amateur' has since become a central trope in characterising Hakluyt Society editors.⁹⁴ Whilst the Council itself included members of the aristocracy, the editors belonged to a wider social order associated with a newly empowered middle class.⁹⁵ A broad depiction of the social make-up of the of fifty-eight individuals acting as editors and translators for the First Series indicates that they tended to be either wealthy gentlemen of leisure, devoted scholars from the British Museum and India Office, or of a 'service class' of administrators and other military, naval, and colonial officials working overseas.⁹⁶ Of these, many were active participants within the wider culture of historical scholarship and scientific enquiry, contributing their labours to other institutions, such as the RGS, Royal Society, Linnean Society, and British Archaeological Association. Moreover, almost all had direct experience of travel, having travelled, lived or worked abroad, and seven editors held RGS Gold Medals for various exploratory enterprises and services to geography.⁹⁷ As it has been suggested elsewhere, the 'gentlemanly order' of the domestic was paralleled by a 'gentlemanly diaspora' which precipitated a renewed interest in overseas affairs and imperial activities.⁹⁸ This was reflected in contributions from active and retired members of the Bengal, Madras, and Ceylon Civil Services.⁹⁹ Yet, the Society's editors were not all national representatives, and there were several international editors who contributed from the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Portugal, and Argentina.

⁹⁴ The topic of the Hakluyt Society as a 'body of amateurs' first entered a discussion at the RGS following E. G. R. Taylor's 1947 'Richard Hakluyt' lecture, see Rennell of Rodd, Lynam, Foster and Skelton, 'Richard Hakluyt: Discussion', p. 173. The term 'leisured amateur' appears in G. R. Crone 'Jewells of Antiquity', p. 321. For further discussion, see Middleton, 'Early History of the Hakluyt Society', p. 220; Bridges and Hair, 'Epilogue', pp. 234-235.

⁹⁵ Bridges and Hair, 'Epilogue', pp. 234-235.

⁹⁶ Bridges, 'Europeans and East Africans in the Age of Exploration', pp. 220-232.

⁹⁷ These were: Robert Hermann Schomburgk (1840); Charles Tilstone Beke (1845); Admiral William Henry Smyth (1854); Captain Richard Collinson (1858); Captain Richard Burton (1859); Colonel Henry Yule (1872); and Clements R. Markham (1888).

⁹⁸ Bridges and Hair, 'Epilogue', pp. 234-235; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2000* (2nd edn, London: Longman, 2001), p. 56.

⁹⁹ These included Arthur Coke Burnell of the Madras Civil Service; Albert Gray and Harry Charles Purvis Bell of the Ceylon Civil Service; and Edward Gray of the Bengal Civil Service.



H. S. ESTCOTT.

A MAN OF THE WORLD, RECENTLY YET *FOR-MORLEY* APPOINTED TO THE GENERALISSIMOSHIP OF THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW FORCES.

Figure 5.3. 'H. S. ESTCOTT' [T. H. S. Escott]: A Man of the World, recently yet *for-Morley* appointed to the Generalissimoship of the Fortnightly Review Forces', *Punch*, vol. 83, 16 September 1882, p. 130.

In line with the wider context of Victorian editorship, the Society's editors were principally male.¹⁰⁰ The construction of the masculine editor as a 'man of the world', who was able to place his hand on any part of the globe and attain information with

¹⁰⁰ Beth Palmer, *Women's Authorship and Editorship in Victorian Culture: Sensational Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Despite male predominance, there were two women associated with the First Series publications: the wife of Richard Henry Major, who produced five copied drawings for R. H. Major (ed.), *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia Britannia; expressing the Cosmographie and Comodities of the Country, together with the Manners and Customes of the People. Gathered and observed as well by those who went first thither as collected by William Strachey, Gent. the first Secretary of the Colony* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 6, 1849) and Alice Wilmere, who translated Norton Shaw (ed.), *Narrative of a Voyage to the West Indies and Mexico in the years 1599–1602* [translated from the original and unpublished manuscript, with a Biographical Notice and Notes by Alice Wilmere] (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 23, 1859).

ease, became clearly engrained in visual culture by the mid-nineteenth century (Figure 5.3). Editor and journalist Thomas Hay Sweet Escott was depicted in *Punch* reclining and reading in his armchair, with a quill marked 'KOSMOS' to symbolise his intent to achieve Humboldt's utopian vision of representing the universe in a single work.¹⁰¹ The globe patterned blanket covering his legs signifies how the editor was firmly wrapped up in a nexus of worldly knowledge and how, even from such a sedentary position, he was able to command the resources of the scientific and literary world. Indeed, the act of editing was neither an immobile, nor an indolent process. With texts being framed as artefacts to be recovered and re-presented, the Hakluyt Society set interested individuals in motion, actively searching for desired documents, or coming forth with the chance discovery of hitherto unknown archive material. The editor proceeded as either the procurer of the document, a witness to its recovery, or the recipient of one. The publication of a Hakluyt volume was often framed as the culmination of an obsessive mission, which required exploring new and untrodden ground in the search for an elusive source and its recovery represented not only a valuable addition to knowledge, but also a personal triumph.¹⁰²

Editions themselves were formed from 'documents' of either manuscript or printed sources, or a combination of both.¹⁰³ The chronological limitation meant that the First Series drew heavily on sources from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which were supported by texts from earlier periods. The Council would often

¹⁰¹ 'Punch's Fancy Portraits. – 101: H. S. ESTCOTT' [T. H. S. Escott]: A Man of the World, recently yet *for-Morley* appointed to the Generalissimoship of the Fortnightly Review Forces', *Punch*, vol. 83, 16 September 1882, p. 130.

¹⁰² See Corney, 'Advertisement', in Corney (ed.), *Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton*, p. x; George Percy Badger, 'Editor's Preface', in George Percy Badger (ed.), *History of the Imâms and Seyyids of Omân by Salîl-ibn-Razîk, from A.D. 661–1856* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 44, 1871), no page numbers.

¹⁰³ Volumes in which the base work is a single unpublished manuscript: First Series, nos. 36 and 37 (1866); no. 65 (1882); nos. 74, 75, 78 (1887–1889).

stitch together shorter documents to make a ‘sufficient volume’.¹⁰⁴ Whilst not dealing directly with the documents, the Council regularly consulted on best procedure when editors were dealing with passages they saw as ‘unfit for publication’, and advised on how to modify texts in order to maintain a ‘faithful picture’, without impairing the value of the work.¹⁰⁵ Future editors also directed questions on how to handle newly recovered works and partial manuscripts to the Council. On occasion, this led to the Council being used to comment on authenticity, particularly for obscure or hitherto unseen material. The first request of this kind was made to Major and Henry Ellis, who were called upon to examine and report on the ‘genuineness of documents’ proposed to be appended to a reprint of Sir Walter Raleigh’s sixteenth-century text, ‘Discoverie of Guiana’.¹⁰⁶ This drew on the specialist knowledge of these two gentlemen, who both held authoritative positions at the British Library and had experience handling antiquities, difficult sources, and travel-related materials. The document in question was preserved among the manuscripts of Sir Hans Sloane in the library of the British Museum and Major reported that it was ‘genuine’.¹⁰⁷ Such a collective agreement as to its provenance would serve to frame its credibility in the eyes of the reader.

The original intention of the Society, favoured by its founder Cooley, was to spread the view beyond English ventures and assemble material related to international

¹⁰⁴ These were formed from ‘pieces of the same ages and bearing the same subject’, see Lord Stanley of Alderley, ‘Introduction’, in Lord Stanley of Alderley (ed.), *Travels to Tana and Persia, by Josafa Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini* [translated from the Italian by William Thomas and S. A. Roy] (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 49, 1873), pp. v-xi, p. v. The term ‘collections’ first appeared in a title in 1855, see Adam White (ed.), *A Collection of Documents on Spitzbergen & Greenland, comprising a translation from F. Marten’s Voyage to Spitzbergen: A Translation from Isaac de la Peyrère’s Histoire du Groenland: and God’s Power and Providence in the Preservation of Eight Men in Greenland nine months and twelve dayes* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 18, 1855).

¹⁰⁵ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 16 May 1848, BL, Mss Eur F594.

¹⁰⁶ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 21 December 1847, BL, Mss Eur F594.

¹⁰⁷ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 19 January 1848, BL, Mss Eur F594. The document was titled ‘Of the Voyage for Guiana’ and was printed in the ‘Appendix’ of Robert H. Schomburgk, *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana, with a Relation of the Great and Golden City of Manoa (which the Spaniards call El Dorado), etc. Performed in the Year 1595, by Sir W. Raleigh, Knt., Captain of Her Majesty’s Guard, Lord Warden of the Stanneries, and Her Majesty’s Lieutenant-General of the Country of Cornwall. Reprinted from the Edition of 1596, with some Unpublished Documents relative to that Country* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 3, 1849), pp. 131-229.

travel. This call was answered by the editors, who responded with over two-thirds of the First Series being related to the activities of international travellers, and many editions offered material from foreign language texts.¹⁰⁸ The emphasis on ‘geographical material’ in the Society’s aims saw close connections being made with contemporary exploratory interests. Specifically, literature referring to the search for the North West and North East Passages was prominent and in tune with the interest in Arctic exploration being pursued by the Royal Navy. However, despite the publicity surrounding the mid to late nineteenth-century exploration of Nilotic and sub-Saharan Africa, there was a significant silence in relation to the African continent. Yet, this was not because there was a lack of interest extended to the Society. Famed African explorer and linguist Richard Francis Burton proposed to edit a volume on the ‘Diary of Dom Francisco de Lacerda e Almeida’, who travelled to the Cazembe kingdom.¹⁰⁹ Burton explained to the Council that he had translated the text from the Portuguese with ‘considerable expenditure of time and effort’. However, the Council decided to decline this offer as, being produced in 1798, it fell a century after the chronological limit which ‘must be strictly adhered to’ when considering proposals.¹¹⁰

Despite this international view, the physical pursuit of documents mainly took place in British repositories such as the British Museum, Public Records Office, and India Office. Yet Bethune asserted that Hakluyt would not ‘be contented with a translation if better materials could be obtained’, and therefore the Hakluyt editor

¹⁰⁸ Spanish was the most common among the foreign-language sources drawn on by First Series editors. One edition employed sources in Latin, Persian, Russian, and Italian: R. H. Major (ed.), *India in the Fifteenth Century. Being a Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India in the Century preceding the Portuguese Discovery of the Cape of Good Hope; from Latin, Persian, Russian, and Italian Sources, now first translated into English* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 22, 1857). Editions based on a foreign language text provided the English translation. The full original text rarely appeared alongside the translation. Rather, the First Series would sometimes provide passages of Spanish, Latin, Italian, or French in a footnote or an appendix, and, very occasionally, short extracts from the original source language were reproduced within a translation, such as in Latin and, in one example, Turkish. It was not uncommon for the translation itself to be an existing one that had been re-edited, and these were often contemporary with the foreign source. These editions did not usually offer an editorial commentary on the early translations.

¹⁰⁹Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 20 November 1871, BL, Mss Eur F594. Brown (ed.), *The History and Description of Africa* was published after the apex of interest in 1895.

¹¹⁰ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 20 November 1871, BL, Mss Eur F594.

should make ‘diligent’ inquiries after original documents.¹¹¹ This sentiment led many editors to widen their search beyond national institutions and work to acquire original material from foreign archives. Major recounted his tireless search to locate a narrative published in 1701 of Willem de Vlamingh’s expedition between the Cape of Good Hope and Batavia in 1685:

This exceedingly scarce narrative, which has been zealously sought for by the editor for several years, and had eluded the search of previous writers, reached his hands at the very critical moment to admit of its being translated and inserted in its proper place in the volume ... Grateful duty to state that it is solely to the zeal, intelligence, and kindness of Mr Frederick Muller, of Amsterdam, that he is indebted for the good fortune of procuring the use of the document.¹¹²

Such a statement introduces the local scholar and collector as significant figures in mediating access to original works and drawing attention to recently recovered works. The position of the editor at the centre of the Hakluyt system of ‘literary co-operation’ was held in place through social and intellectual exchange as editors specifically requested documents to be retrieved, or were informed of potentially interesting items. Underpinned by goodwill, this active procurement network was necessary for the editor as they learnt through friends, acquaintances, and professional contacts, the existence and location of materials, and they often depended on these connections for material

¹¹¹ C. R. Drinkwater Bethune, ‘Preface’, in C. R. Drinkwater Bethune (ed.), *The Discoveries of the World, from their First Original unto the Year of Our Lord 1555, by Antonio Galvano, governor of Ternate. Corrected, Quoted and Published in England, by Richard Hakluyt, (1601)* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1862), pp. i-iv, p. i.

¹¹² R. H. Major (ed.), *Early Voyages to Terra Australis, now called Australia: a Collection of Documents, and Extracts from early Manuscripts Maps, illustrative of the History of Discovery on the Coasts of that vast Island, from the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century to the Time of Captain Cook* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 25, 1859), p. 113.

descriptions, handwritten transcripts or preferably, the loan of the documents themselves. With a global reach and a bank of editors who each drew on their own wealth of social contacts, experiences, and research interests, the Hakluyt Society's network of contributors was vast. The spatial extent of these interactions is apparent in the editors' acknowledgments crediting the involvement of individuals and institutions in the retrieval and comprehension of specific documents.¹¹³ Whilst there existed a pronounced geography that centred on the national repositories in which editors resided, distinct concentrations of material elsewhere were also apparent. Beyond Britain, these encompassed the archives of the Dutch East India Company at The Hague, the Barcelona Library, the Public Library at Dieppe, and the National Library of Spain.

Clearly, the geography of the Hakluyt Society was not limited to the loaned rooms of the Council in London or the physical location of the editor, but a wider geography of scholarly exchange and association was established through which knowledge and sources were contributed and circulated. Whilst travel to other repositories did occur it did not always prove fruitful as Major found when he spent time working on the archive of the Dutch East India Company in the Royal Archive at The Hague. He claimed that he had 'spared no pains, by inquiry in Holland and Belgium' to trace the existence of a 'lost' journal detailing the first discovery of the south coast of New Holland in 1627, but this was 'without success'.¹¹⁴ Yet this visit enabled him to call attention to 'a yet unsifted mass of thousands of volumes', with the

¹¹³ Markham stated he was 'indebted' to Don Benjamin Vicuna Mackenna, an eminent Chilean writer and politician, who uncovered the manuscript for his 1862 volume from a collection of documents at the National Library of Madrid. See, Clements R. Markham, 'Introduction', in Clements R. Markham (ed.), *The Life and Acts of Don Alonzo Enriquez de Guzman, a Knight of Seville, of the Order of Santiago, A.D. 1518 to 1543* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 29, 1862), p. xiii-xxv, p. xiv. Captain Drinkwater Bethune obtained an original copy of a work from the American, John Carter Brown, which had previously been sought by Hakluyt. This led Bethune to note the omissions and additions between Hakluyt's English version and the original document. See, Bethune, 'Preface', in Bethune (ed.), *Discoveries of the World*, pp. i-ii.

¹¹⁴ R. H. Major, 'Introduction', in Major (ed.), *Early Voyages to Terra Australis*, pp. i-cxix, p. lxxxviii.

hope it would encourage further research.¹¹⁵ This presents one of the earliest suggestions that the Society could mobilise a collection network that was centrally controlled to focus on specific repositories and transform itself into a knowledge centre that could connect modern science, commerce, and imperial interest across the globe.

Despite the Society having been viewed as a ‘historical intelligence bureau’ that could retrieve ‘lost information’ of potential importance to British expansion, it was not a Banksian centre of calculation.¹¹⁶ Its laissez-faire approach stood in marked contrast to the model exacted by Barrow, who used his position as a contributor to the *Quarterly Review* to not only manage and communicate the information he received, but also to direct its collection and reception. Positioning himself as the chief promoter of British Arctic exploration, Barrow used this periodical as a conduit for his geographical speculations and penned more than 200 articles between 1809 and 1841.¹¹⁷ His role in encouraging the publication of accounts of exploration was a self-serving enterprise which saw him recruit authors, advise them on how to write, negotiate their publication deals, act as a referee and editor for manuscripts, and he would use the pages of the *Quarterly* to publicise their work.¹¹⁸ Evidently, the Hakluyt’s diffuse system of literary co-operation, which embraced the tastes of a number of individuals, operated differently to the dogmatism of Barrow, who reflected his own values. Indeed, Barrow’s son expressed his own confusion surrounding the ‘bounden duty’ of a Hakluyt editor and how he should present his Hakluyt volume to its readers.¹¹⁹

Whilst these examples serve to highlight the multiple-agency nature and spatial extent of the Hakluyt’s system of literary co-operation, they also present the multiple

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. xi.

¹¹⁶ Stafford, *Scientist of Empire*, p. 24.

¹¹⁷ Kim Wheatley, ‘The Arctic in the *Quarterly Review*’, *European Romantic Review*, 20 (2009), pp. 465-490; J. M. R. Cameron, ‘John Barrow, The *Quarterly*’s Imperial Reviewer’, in Jonathan Cutmore (ed.), *Conservatism and the Quarterly Review: A Critical Analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 133-150.

¹¹⁸ For more on this process and Barrow’s relationship with the publishing house of John Murray, see Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print*.

¹¹⁹ Barrow, ‘Introductory Remarks’, pp. i-ii.

movements of knowledge that were occurring between the recovery of texts and their publication as Hakluyt volumes. This physical displacement was also marked by a rhetorical shift as these diverse works came together to form a collection that co-existed under the title of the 'First Series'. The Council made itself responsible for its editors' opinions and reviewed the proofs of each work, especially the prefatory and introductory material prepared personally by each editor. This professional preoccupation was communicated on a volume's opening page, which declared that it had been 'issued by the Hakluyt Society'. These surrounding discourses, or 'paratexts', enabled the texts to 'make a book of itself, and propose itself as such': a Hakluyt Society volume.¹²⁰ The texts were rarely presented in an unadorned state, but were accompanied by titles, prefaces, introductions, and frontispiece illustrations. Whilst Genette asserts that such paratextual arrangements are 'always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author', the complicating factor for the Hakluyt Society is that its volumes are multi-authored, edited, and co-collected.¹²¹ As such, the paratextual apparatus does not only serve to communicate the authenticity and value of the historical texts being framed, but is also reveals the uncertain relationship that existed between the Society, the editor, and the texts they published. The following section unpacks the paratextual dynamics of the Hakluyt volumes to examine how the Hakluyt Society made the printed work, and the divergent routes editors chose to guide the readers through their books.

Guide to the Book: Paratext and the presentation of a 'Hakluyt volume'

As preparations for the first Hakluyt Society volume were underway, the Council affirmed that this initial offering would establish a 'type and form' of print layout that

¹²⁰ Genette, 'Introduction to the Paratext', p. 261.

¹²¹ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2.

would then ‘be uniformly adopted for the Society’s subsequent publications’.¹²² The institution of a specific transtextual relationship would frame the work as one produced by the Hakluyt Society. As such, the surrounding apparatus of the text served not only to bind the document together materially as a book, but also to bind it symbolically to the wider Hakluyt collection of works. One of the first decisions was the choice of image to appear on the cover of each Society volume.¹²³



Figure 5.4. Magellan’s ‘Victoria’ as adopted for the Hakluyt Society logo.

It was agreed that a vignette of Magellan’s ship the ‘Victoria’ would be embossed on the cover of each publication (Figure 5.4). This image, said Cooley, served as ‘a monument to the most remarkable journey ever performed’, the first circumnavigation of the world.¹²⁴ As an ‘entryway paratext’, the cover provides the

¹²² Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 23 March 1847, BL, Mss Eur F594.

¹²³ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 20 July; 17 August 1847, BL, Mss Eur F594.

¹²⁴ Cooley, *History of Maritime and Inland Discovery*, p. 52. For more on the iconography and history of this image, see Bridges, ‘The Legacy of Richard Hakluyt’, pp. 312-314.

universal frame for a book, shaping a reader's initial impression and understanding as they take their first steps into the text.¹²⁵ The Council recognised that the diverse contents of each volume necessitated against homogeneity, but that the cover image could condition the critical perspective of the reader as to the purpose of the Society. Whilst the logo itself sat as an imperial symbol of European power and knowledge, it also framed the practical intentions and political purpose of the Society. It emphasised the initial commitment to an international approach that may otherwise have been lost under the Hakluyt name with its specific association with British interests. The materiality of the cover also transformed the book as an object into a sign to steer readers to have certain expectations of, and produce particular readings of its contents. Symbolically, *Victoria* further drew on the experiential paradox of encounter, with the book acting as a vessel to transport the reader intellectually around the globe on a sea of words, as represented by the books' blue binding. It is possible that such a majestic sign embossed in gold was also chosen to materially signify the superiority and endurance of the new Hakluyt Society compared to the RGS, whose stamp Cooley likened to an insignificant and ephemeral 'paper globe'.¹²⁶

The logo was all that appeared on the cover of every volume, while the short title, volume number and 'Hakluyt Society' were printed on the spine. As such, each recovered text was re-wrapped specifically for the Hakluyt and any individual flourishes that hinted to the contents were not featured. Declarations of a work's individual purpose were made through three different title pages: 'a general and common title'; 'a special title'; and a 'particular title page' (Figure 5.5).¹²⁷ Whilst providing an entry into

¹²⁵ Jonathon Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp. 40-41.

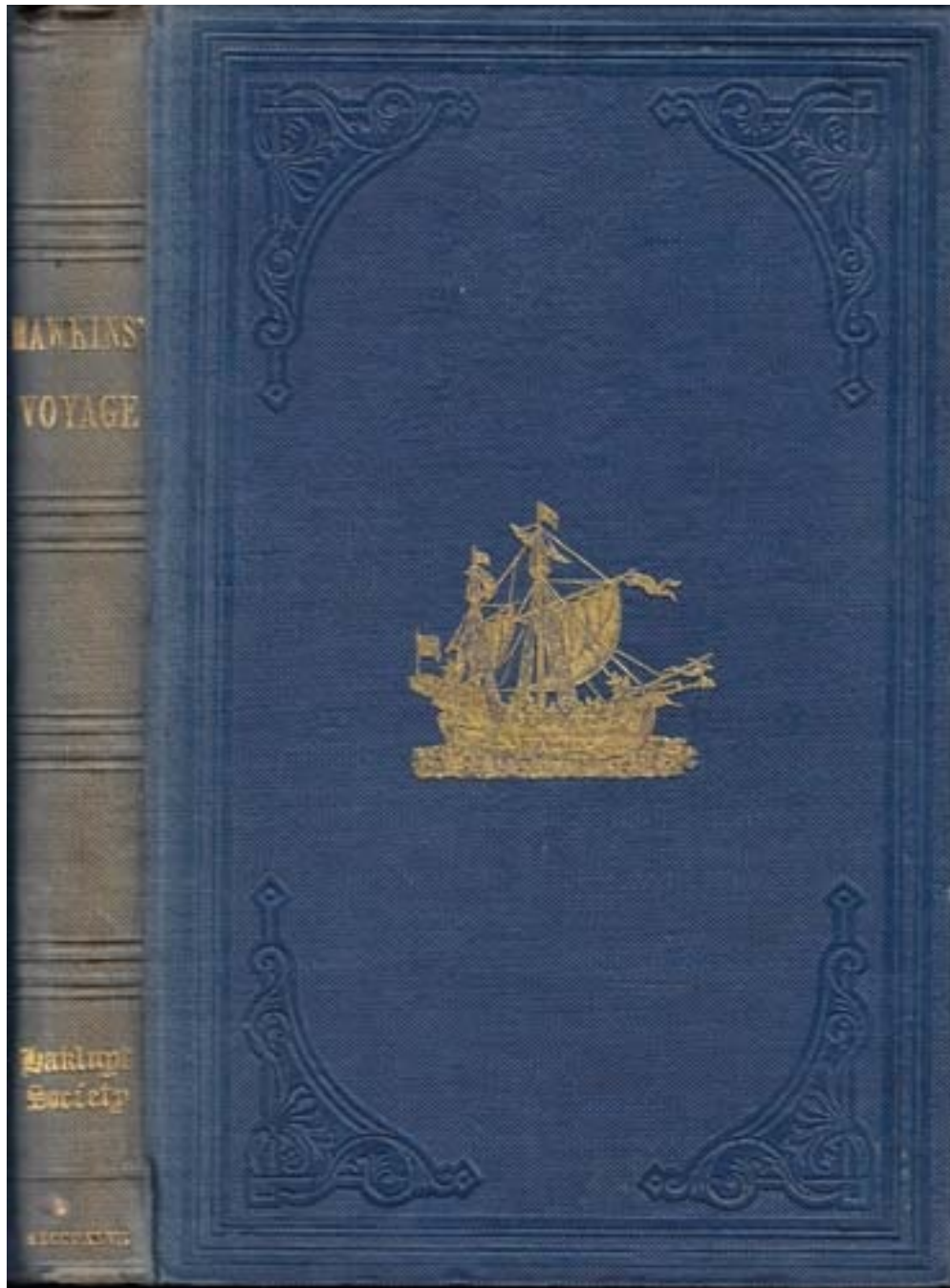
¹²⁶ [Cooley], 'The Royal Geographical Society and its Labours', p. 453.

¹²⁷ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 19 October 1847, BL, Mss Eur F594. Each title page had a different purpose: 'general and common title' stated that the volume was printed for the Hakluyt Society; 'special title' gave the title of the newly recovered and reprinted work with the names of the editor and translator, and its bibliographical information; 'particular title' reproduced the original title page of the work in question. Within this arrangement, a list of 'Council Members' followed the 'special title' page. Each year,

the text, the titles also functioned as critical hermeneutic bookmarks. They served to orientate the reader as to how the text should be read, and signposted when the narrative shifted from the contemporary words of the Society and the individual editors into the specific historical text itself. Moreover, this was also a specific epistemic arrangement that revealed the negotiated layers of credibility between the source, its provenance and recovery, and the editor and the Society. The book was therefore immediately introduced through the authoritative lens of a learned society, which captured each individual encounter made in the production of the book and framed it as a collective effort on behalf of the Hakluyt Society. Despite these moves towards a common appearance, the Council left other decisions regarding frontispieces, indexes, and illustrations to individual editors.¹²⁸

usually within the first volume of the year, the 'Annual Report' was printed, alongside the Society prospectus, lists of publications, rules of the Society, and a list of its members. These were printed at the very front, before the 'general and common title'.

¹²⁸ Editors were required to source and form any additional texts they wished to include, and they needed to approach the Council to gain permission for their inclusion. Robert Schomburgk made the first request of this type, and asked that a map he had personally compiled be printed within his work. The Council assented after considering the expense of this request. The estimate for the map was given 'that it shall not exceed £20'. See Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 19 January 1848, BL, Mss Eur F594.



Book Cover

Figure 5.5. Hakluyt Society Book Cover and Title Pages.
From C. R. Drinkwater Bethune (ed.), *The Observations of Sir Richard Hawkins, Knt., in his Voyage into the South Sea in the Year 1593. Reprinted from the Edition of 1622* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 1, 1847).

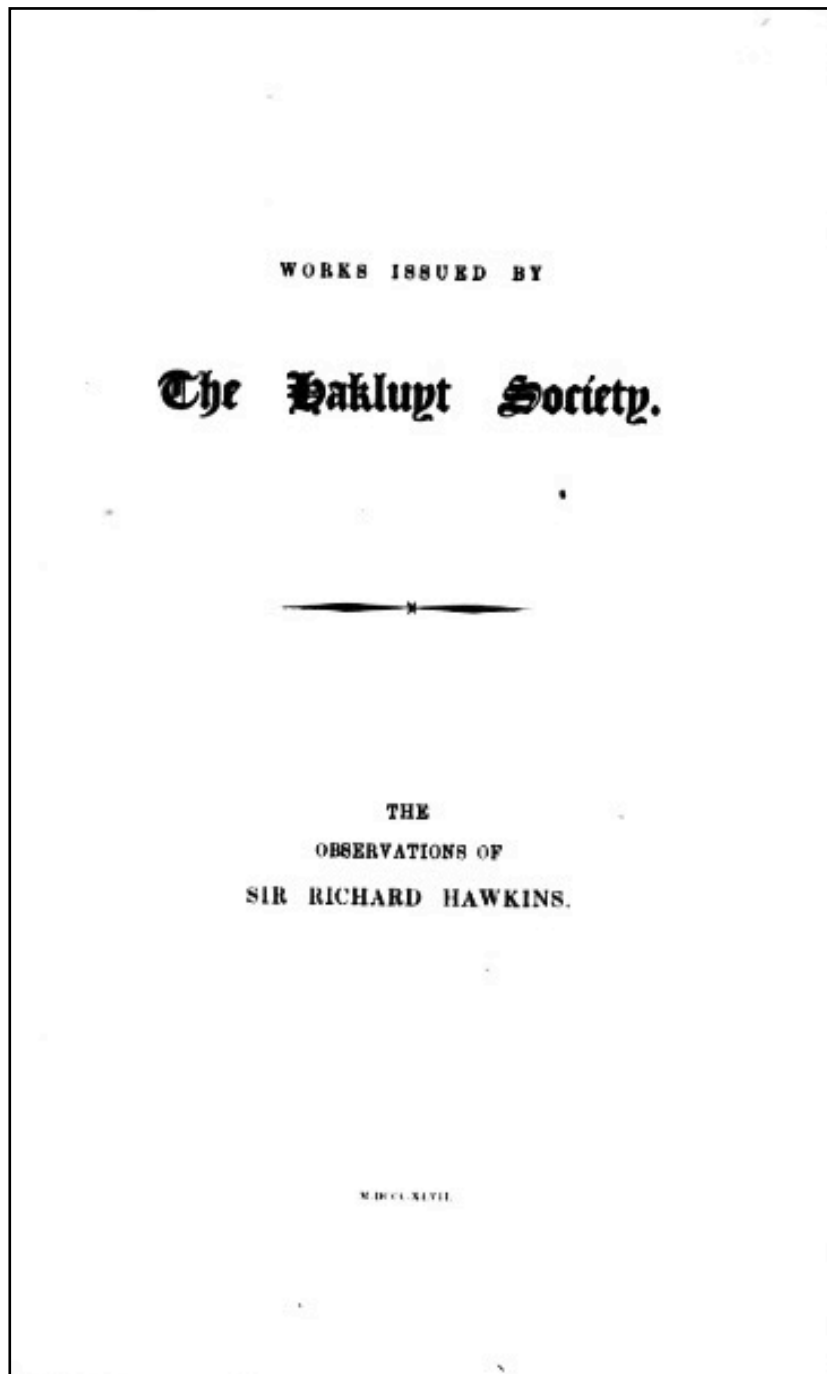


Figure 5.5: General and Common Title Page: 'Works issued by the Hakluyt Society'.

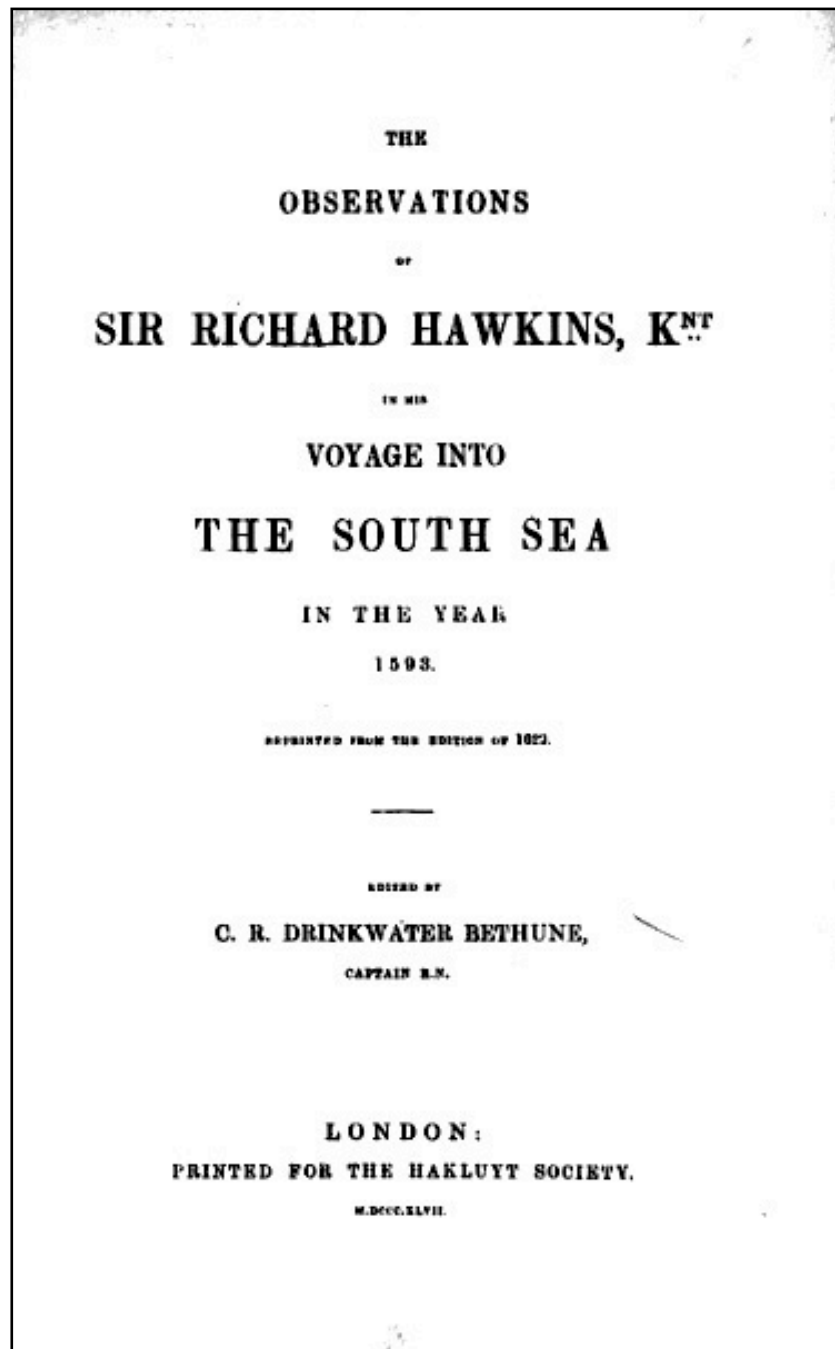


Figure 5.5: Special Title Page.

THE
OBSERVATIONS
OF
S^{IR} RICHARD HAVV-
KINS KNIGHT, IN HIS
VOIAGE INTO THE
South Sea.

Anno Domini, 1593.



*Per varios Casus, Artem Experientia fecit,
Exemplo monstrante viam.* -Manil. li. 1.



LONDON

Printed by *I. D.* for IOHN IAGGARD, and are to be
sold at his shop at the Hand and Starre in Fleeto-streete,
neere the Temple Gate. 1622.

Figure 5.5: Particular Title Page.

The practical contribution of the Hakluyt's editors was instilled with critical importance when the Council authorised 'explanatory introductions' to be prepared with editions.¹²⁹ Such prefatory material has been said to hold the 'chief function' of ensuring a 'text is read properly', and these opening editorial tracts would serve to directly speak the message of the Hakluyt Society as mediated by both the editor and the Council.¹³⁰ The Hakluyt's 'explanatory introductions' appeared in many guises, as a 'Preface', 'Introduction', 'Introductory Remarks', 'Advertisement', and 'Biographical Notice'.¹³¹ The introductions were bookended between the special title page and the original title page, which physically demarcated them as standalone 'chapters' for the reader. As such, the editor was placed, both materially and epistemologically, in a position of authorship. The introductions were a form of narrative synthesis that relied primarily on the use of the recovered narrative and other documents to summarise and explain the contents of the book. The editor sought to integrate relevant detail in order to provide a total description of the work and, through the collation and combination of those details, make it intelligible to the reader. As G. M. Asher expounded:

The original records of a navigator's or traveller's exploits, if properly elucidated by notes and introductory remarks, constitute the most authentic portraiture of him that can be offered to the geographical reader ... the editor has also to

¹²⁹ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 17 August 1847, BL, Mss Eur F594.

¹³⁰ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 197.

¹³¹ An introduction was a feature of every Hakluyt volume, whereas prefaces were used at the editor's discretion. Generally, the prefaces detailed the situation surrounding the document's recovery and acknowledged the individuals and institutions involved in bringing it to publication. The introductions served to inform the reader about the text and its historical context, and provided a short biography and bibliographic history. For a critical account of the distinctions between an introduction and a preface, see Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 161-162.

present a most complicated subject in a clear and readable form; and this too in a language foreign to him.¹³²

Editors often sought to simplify the narrative by following the path of the author and arranging the material logically, either by chronology or geography. George Percy Badger took a more perambulatory approach, ‘leading the reader over the route pursued, halting here and there to illustrate the traveller’s journeyings by brief sketches of the history of the countries visited, and the different people with whom he came into contact’.¹³³ However, the enunciative character of the editorial voice was not systematic and was regularly modified to suit the individual editor and the specific travel narrative being introduced.¹³⁴

With no formal guidance beyond the need to be ‘explanatory’, the scholarly apparatus set up by editors to accompany their reprints or translations varied greatly in length and content over the First Series.¹³⁵ The first volume featured ‘exiguous scholarly apparatus’ with only ten pages of introductory text.¹³⁶ In this initial offering, C. R. Drinkwater Bethune described his role as one of simply presenting the text to be read, confining ‘his labours to reproducing the text of the original, with only such slight alterations as were necessary’. These ‘alterations’ were to aid clarification such as ‘explanations of obsolete words and technical terms as might embarrass an unprofessional reader ... and adding such remarks as occurred to him while correcting

¹³² G. M. Asher, ‘Introduction’, in G. M. Asher (ed.), *Henry Hudson the Navigator: the Original Documents in which his Career is recorded* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 27, 1860), pp. i-ccxv, p. ii.

¹³³ George Percy Badger, ‘Introduction, by the Editor’, in George Percy Badger (ed.), *The Travels of Ludovico de Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508* [Translated from the Original Italian Edition of 1510, with a Preface by John Winter Jones] (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 32, 1863), pp. xvii-cxiii, p. xxiv.

¹³⁴ R. H. Major, ‘Preface’, in R. H. Major, (ed.), *Voyages of the Venetian Brothers, Nicolò and Antonio Zeno, to the Northern Seas in the XIVth Century, comprising the latest known Accounts of the Lost Colony of Greenland; and of the Northmen in America before Columbus* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 50, 1873), pp. i-ii, p. i.

¹³⁵ The Hakluyt Society’s first ‘Hints to Editors’ did not appear until 1929.

¹³⁶ Hair, ‘The Hakluyt Society’, p. 8.

the proof sheets'.¹³⁷ His 'Editor's Preface' was presented in an accessible style, setting out the context in which these early navigators sailed and the considerations under which the Council accepted the work for early publication. Bethune's editorial intention clearly retained a practical connection to Hakluyt's own qualities by emphasising the value of the original narrative and allowing the author's own voice to be the most prominent.

As the First Series progressed, much of the introductory material expanded to comment on the wider intellectual context; namely, as one editor put it, the 'Archaeology of Geography'.¹³⁸ Whilst there still existed a heavy emphasis on the text itself, editors increasingly came to understand their role as situating the narratives in the wider context of geographical knowledge and contemporary travel accounts.¹³⁹ This editorial discourse could therefore communicate the broader intellectual imperative of the Society. As the main proponent of editors constructing such a frame, Major advocated that the historical narratives should not exist in a 'remote period', but that the position a narrative 'holds in the history of the exploration of the country treated of should be explained'.¹⁴⁰ However, not all Hakluyt editors agreed that this was the best course and viewed the editorial discourse as merely facilitating entry into the text, rather than critically reflecting on its contents. In particular, despite his pivotal role in the Hakluyt's foundation, Cooley's only volume for the Society offered a relatively short three and a half page 'Preface'. Whilst he acknowledged that Francis Drake's voyage was 'one of the brightest ornaments' in Hakluyt's collections, the 'Preface' was 'not the place

¹³⁷ C. R. Drinkwater Bethune, 'Editor's Preface', in Bethune (ed.), *Observations of Sir Richard Hawkins Knight*, pp. vii-xvi, pp. xv-xvi.

¹³⁸ R. H. Major, 'Introduction', in Staunton (ed.), *History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China*, pp. i-lxxxiii, p. i.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Major, 'Introduction', in Major (ed.), *Early Voyages to Terra Australis*, p. cxviii.

for a critical examination' of the papers' intrinsic worth, internal inaccuracies, and comparative conflicts.¹⁴¹

Despite these contradictory comments, there were editors who set upon going beyond simply presenting the practical context and intellectual debates surrounding the publication, and laboured to authenticate the narratives they presented. Schomburgk stated how his 'chief object' was to prove the 'general correctness' of the main text and to exculpate it from 'ungenerous reproaches'.¹⁴² Clearly, the editorial intention was not to simply introduce the text, but to frame it as 'a most true and authentic narrative' and demonstrate its 'position among ancient historical records of travel'.¹⁴³ Major explicated that these texts demanded 'a peculiar kind of editorial care'.¹⁴⁴ He stated that he always ensured exact bibliographical descriptions were provided in order to collate and examine the scholarly debates surrounding the main text to redact doubt. The pragmatic positioning of Major's contribution sought to reposition narratives in readers' minds before they encountered them. Many editors adopted a plain style approach in which they expressed their sense of anxiety and humility in taking on the role of 'Hakluyt editor'.¹⁴⁵ Such modest strategies of self-representation were commonplace in scientific writing as they served to satisfy the expectations of their social position and demonstrate their credibility.¹⁴⁶ Others questioned their qualifications altogether; the editor of Antonio Galvano's sixteenth-century narrative offered 'an apology' for 'possessing only a slight knowledge of the Portuguese language'.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ William Desborough Cooley, 'Preface', in Cooley (ed.), *Drake His Voyage*, pp. v-viii, p. vii.

¹⁴² Robert H. Schomburgk, 'Editor's Preface', in Schomburgk, *Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana*, pp. vii-xi, p. ix.

¹⁴³ In particular, Major laboured to remove the 'tissue of fiction' and track the causes for 'misconceptions and to free the document, if possible, from the discredit under which it laboured'. See Major, 'Introduction', in Major (ed.), *Voyages of the Venetian Brothers*, p. ii.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. iii.

¹⁴⁵ R. H. Major, 'Introduction', in R. H. Major (ed. and trans.), *Notes upon Russia*, pp. i-cxlvii, p. iv.

¹⁴⁶ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print*, pp. 105-106.

¹⁴⁷ Bethune, 'Preface', in Bethune (ed.), *Discoveries of the World*, p. iv.

Whilst the introductions often emphasised the intellectual travails, extensive researches, and physical feats involved in editorial encounters, credibility was also established through scholarly citation as editors situated their work within wider textual networks. Editors presented conversations between different textual sources in order to position the credibility of their subjects and were clear to explicate the methodologies that were brought to bear in the planning, execution, and evaluation of their travels. Through these forms of textual triangulation, the editor's voice extended into the main historical narrative as footnotes, which offered definitions, translations, citational references, and occasionally subjective digressions. Badger directed the reader to his footnotes to find where he had availed himself 'of all the materials within reach, both ancient and modern, to corroborate, modify, or illustrate the author's statements'.¹⁴⁸ Whilst this enabled other texts to be used to mark credibility and to offer correctives to the narrative, textual triangulation did not always enable the editor to overcome the silences of the archive; a fact often relayed to the reader both to emphasise the rareness of the works, and to remove potential criticisms for an apparent lack of scholarly content. Badger lamented that despite having 'searched every available repository for information', there was 'scarcely any record ... except what he [author] tells us himself'. In this case, a 'dearth of all external aids' forced the editor to have recourse to the original narrative itself.¹⁴⁹ Despite these declarations of considerable time and effort, the success of the editors fulfilling their scholarly duty has been judged as 'variable'.¹⁵⁰ The deployment of many examples of relevant contemporary sources also, in some cases, had the opposite effect. Editors often failed to make clear from the outset precisely what sources were being used, and these became further obscured in lengthy introductions with inadequate bibliographical descriptions.

¹⁴⁸ Badger, 'Editor's Preface', in Badger, *History of the Imāms and Seyyids of Omān*, no page number.

¹⁴⁹ Badger, 'Introduction, by the Editor', in Badger, *Travels of Ludovico de Varthema*, p. xvii, xxii.

¹⁵⁰ Hair, 'From Past to Future', p. 28.

Despite the efforts taken by the editors, not all readers thought that these were necessary interventions. Historian and critic James Anthony Froude, for example, charged the Society with editorial offences, as he found that the editors did ‘nothing’ to assist his understanding of the stories they were supposed to explain.¹⁵¹ Rather, he saw ‘the long laboured appendices and introductions’ as positing a shift from an editorial to an authorial discourse that masked the primary voice of the traveller, instead of amplifying it.¹⁵² The Hakluyt Council took offence to such a ‘misrepresentation of our objects’ and positioned itself in support of the ‘painstaking care’ taken by its editors.¹⁵³ Major responded that the nature of the subjects the Society dealt with justified the ‘reasonableness, nay, even the necessity of such introductions’, and that it was a task that required ‘no little labour, and although it may necessarily involve a somewhat lengthy dissertation, certainly calls for no apology’.¹⁵⁴ Yet, reflecting on this contentious exchange at the Society’s centenary, President Edward Lynam conceded that Froude’s strictures on the early editor’s methods were not wholly ‘unjustified’. He observed that some of the introductions lacked ‘careful research’ and others contained ‘too much’:

Introductions and footnotes are designed to instruct and interest the reader ... the over-erudite or over-enthusiastic editor may need sometimes reminding that a true scholar never bores or bewilders his readers.¹⁵⁵

With the cardinal function of the editor’s openings being ‘to explain’, the lack of guidance from the Council as to how this paratext should be structured resulted in the work of the Hakluyt Society often being lost, confused, or contradictory. Yet, this was

¹⁵¹ Froude, ‘England’s Forgotten Worthies’, p. 38.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁵³ Lynam, ‘The Present and Future’, p. 183; ‘Report for 1852’ printed in, Staunton (ed.), *History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China*.

¹⁵⁴ Major, ‘Introduction’, in Major, *Early Voyages to Terra Australis*, p. cxviii.

¹⁵⁵ Lynam, ‘The Present and Future’, p. 183.

also a possible consequence of writing for the elusive reader of Hakluyt volumes. Despite the editors addressing the ‘reader’ directly, the identity of this implied readership was, and remains, unclear. With no full study of membership, a survey of the available subscription lists concluded that the audience was broad and ‘might be characterised – or caricatured – as either intrepid travellers or armchair readers in Piccadilly clubs’.¹⁵⁶ It is probable that the editors wrote for an informed reader, who they saw as holding interests in the same pursuits and forming part of the Society’s system of literary co-operation.

This initiates a discussion of how the Hakluyt volumes were framed as either scholarly works or popular literature, and whether the aim was readability or scholarship. By the close of the First Series the Society’s last President of the nineteenth century, Markham, thought it unnecessary for an editor to undertake elaborate researches, as ‘on his view the narrative was the thing’.¹⁵⁷ He felt that their task was simply to ease the reader into the text and many of his later offerings were noted to have been ‘basically a translation from an accessible printed text with a chatty introduction’.¹⁵⁸ However, one editor took a wholly divergent approach and produced ‘one of the most curious works’ issued by the Hakluyt Society.¹⁵⁹ Richard Burton undertook this work for the Society’s fifty-first volume, and he used his role as editor to exercise a demonstration in comparative observation. He took the reader as his companion to map the historical narrative onto the same São Paulo coastline three centuries later.¹⁶⁰ Although Burton’s practices as an explorer, reader, and writer are

¹⁵⁶ Hair, ‘From Past to Future’, p. 24.

¹⁵⁷ Foster, ‘Hakluyt Society: A Retrospect’, p. 156.

¹⁵⁸ Hair, ‘From Past to Future’, p. 26.

¹⁵⁹ ‘The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse in A.D. 1457–1555 among the Wild Tribes of Eastern Brazil’, *Athenaeum*, no. 2462, 2 January 1875, pp. 14–15, p. 14.

¹⁶⁰ Richard Francis Burton (ed.), *The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse, in A.D. 1547–1555, Among the Wild Tribes of Eastern Brazil; translated by Albert Tootal ... and annotated by Richard F. Burton* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 51, 1874).

discussed in greater detail within the next chapter, the focus of the following section is on him as an editor for the Hakluyt Society.

Re-mapping Routes: Richard Burton, travel, and translation

A famed Victorian polymath, Burton is renowned for his labours and talents as a soldier, explorer, ethnographer, poet, writer, and Orientalist, and his work for the Hakluyt reflected his own personal route to reading and interpretation.¹⁶¹ The volume had its genesis in Burton's personal alignment with the values of recovering documents and subsequently making them accessible to a wider readership. As an industrious translator and gifted linguistic, Burton continually expressed an intense desire to bring to light sources related to areas he visited and lived. This attitude was evident in his diplomatic posting to Santos, in the province of São Paulo, Brazil, which he held between 1864 and 1868. As Burton encountered his surroundings and worked to form a deeper knowledge about their histories, he was struck by 'a notable want of trustworthy materials written or oral' that he was able to access and read.¹⁶² Burton saw this as both a practical and an intellectual challenge to open up the stores of local information and historical narratives 'locked up from the world in the pigeon-holes of Brazilian literature'.¹⁶³ It was whilst undertaking these researches that Burton decided to set up the translation and publication of a text on sixteenth-century Brazil: *The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse*. Narrated in the first person, the fifty-three chapters of Hans Staden's text follow the two journeys of this gunner from Europe to Brazil in 1547 and 1550, his

¹⁶¹ On the many facets of Burton's personality, see Kennedy, *Highly Civilised Man*. Burton's reading practices are examined in Chapter 7.

¹⁶² R. F. Burton, 'Notice of *The Uruguay* [Burton]', in Frederick C. H. Garcia and Edward F. Stanton (eds), *The Uruguay (A Historical Romance of South America): The Sir Richard F. Burton Translation* (California: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 108-112, p. 112.

¹⁶³ Richard Francis Burton, *Explorations of the Highlands of Brazil, with a full account of the gold and diamond mines. Also, canoeing down 1500 miles of the great river São Francisco, from Sabará to the sea* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1869), p. 13.

capture by a group of Tupinambá warriors, and subsequent escape in 1555. Burton believed in the importance of the text beyond, what had been termed, its ‘savage’ arguments. He valued it as a narrative of cultural encounter between Europe and the Americas, which required ‘the especial notice of an editor’ to rescue the text from sinking into ‘oblivion’ for an English readership.¹⁶⁴

The translation of the German text was undertaken by Burton’s close friend, Albert Tootal. Whilst it is unclear how and exactly when the translation was started, Burton avidly encouraged its completion.¹⁶⁵ This collaboration was most likely for practical reasons, as the translation occurred at a time when Burton was concentrating on other literary endeavours, alongside his official diplomatic duties. This constraint on his time is apparent when he outlined his role as ‘editor’ to Tootal as being ‘confined to a few notes which however should be written on the spot’.¹⁶⁶ Yet Burton did not limit his role quite so drastically, and rather positioned himself to lead Tootal through the course of his work. Burton stressed the labour of translation as an effort of scholarship and declared that ‘there is an immensity of reading to be done before one can write about the Brazil’.¹⁶⁷ He believed that in order to form the most faithful presentation, the translator had to be immersed in the literary, historical, and cultural landscapes that formed the world from which the text had emerged. The translation itself had to retain the closest fidelity to the original possible and avoid ‘the imputation of “translator=traitor”’.¹⁶⁸ Such a mission extended into how he wanted to position the *Hans Stade* narrative and use it as a platform to fulfil his desire to make the ‘sensible

¹⁶⁴ R. F. Burton, ‘Introduction – The “Indians” of The Brazil: Notes on the author-travellers of the sixteenth-century. Hans Stade.’, in Burton (ed.), *Captivity of Hans Stade*, pp. lxi-xciv, p.xci. Purchas knew Hans Stade’s *Warbafflige Historia*, but did not include it in his collection as it relayed only the traveller’s ‘owne Tragedies, in his taking by the Savages, and often perils of being eaten by them’. See, Purchas, *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, p. 56.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Letter from Burton to Tootal’, 1 August, no year [c.1867], HEH, Burton Correspondence, RFB 324.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Letter from Burton to Tootal’, 10 February 1868, HEH, Burton Correspondence, RFB 324.

¹⁶⁸ Garcia and Stanton (eds), *Uruguay*, p. 44.

ethnological statement' on native Brazilians, which he had begun in his *The Uruguay*.¹⁶⁹ Tootal was instructed to preserve 'the chaste and simple style which best suits the subject; which accords with the character of the unlettered gunner, and which seems to vouch for the truth and the straightforwardness of the traveller'.¹⁷⁰

Despite the strong emphasis on the original narrative directly echoing the founding values of the Hakluyt Society, the decision to publish within its Series did not appear to align with Burton's objective as an editor. Burton confided in Tootal that he had doubts as to whether the Hakluyt was the most appropriate place to publish their work. His apprehension was discernible in the morbid metaphor: 'it will be like burying the book alive'.¹⁷¹ This serves to acutely signify Burton's fear of placing a work he believed contained so much vitality into a publishing series, which he felt may seal it off from wider audiences, and thus shroud the significance he was trying to dig out of the text. Yet finding a market for his translations was a continual source of contention for Burton, and when other opportunities did not materialise, he continued with the Hakluyt.¹⁷² Whilst the translation was finished in 1869, it was another five years until it was seen in print.¹⁷³ Burton attributed this long delay to the demands of his official duties at his Damascus post, after leaving Santos. It was not until Burton settled as HM Consul in Trieste in 1873 that he found the opportunity to fulfil his editorial duties.

However, in arriving at its publication, Burton chose not follow the path of earlier Hakluyt Society editors. With his pedagogical tendency and compulsion to

¹⁶⁹ Burton, 'Introduction – The "Indians" of Brazil', p. lxi.

¹⁷⁰ Burton, 'Preface: Section I', in Burton (ed.), *Captivity of Hans Stade*, pp. i-iii, p. ii.

¹⁷¹ 'Letter from Burton to Tootal', 10 February 1868, HEH, Burton Correspondence, RFB 324. Burton became a member of the Hakluyt Society in 1866.

¹⁷² Burton suggested to Tootal that they should approach his friend, the scholarly publisher, Nicholas Trübner in London. Whether Burton attempted to engage this publisher's interest is unknown. His wife noted how Burton struggled to find sponsors to fund his translations, see Isabel Burton, *The Life of Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1893), p. 455. Richard also wrote about his own frustrations in a satirical comment on the British publishing landscape, see Richard F. Burton, 'Translations', *Athenaeum*, no. 2313, 24 February 1872, pp. 241-42.

¹⁷³ The translation met with both Burton's and the Hakluyt's approval, see 'Letter from Burton to Tootal', 1 September 1869, HEH, Burton Correspondence, RFB 324.

explain, Burton produced two prefaces and an introduction for *Hans Staden*. On the surface, these critical appendices served to provide the necessary facts for understanding the text. His 'Introduction' presents the complex history and anthropology of the old inhabitants of the country and 'notes on the author-travellers of the sixteenth century', with Hans Staden's text only making a brief appearance in the last few pages.¹⁷⁴ Yet the discursive style of the extra-textual apparatus Burton compiled is eclectic. It slips in tone and purpose between being a travelogue, history, ethnology, and review of other sources; such rhetorical department can be identified as typically 'Burtonian'. As it has been commented in relation to his other works: 'Burton was never one for editing. He preferred throwing information at readers almost straight from his notes. And liberally sprinkled throughout were his opinions'.¹⁷⁵ These opinions were most apparent in his 'Preface', which was split into two sections. Whilst 'Section I' acknowledged the entreaties of others and the public and intellectual benefit presented by the material, its opening passage signalled his divergence from the route taken by other Hakluyt editors. Specifically, Burton chose not to attempt a biographical sketch of the author, or comprehensively attend to the history of the source and its publications, or even fully draw out its perplexities. Instead, Burton actually made the trip himself to the 'ruin opposite the Forte da Bertioga' and explored the 'sea-coast and the interior plateau', where Hans Staden had served as a gunner and been taken captive.¹⁷⁶

His energy was channelled into tracking the wild tribes who had once populated the mainland and islands, and of whom 'not a living specimen remains' but for the enormous kitchen middens, which still 'stud the coastline'.¹⁷⁷ He acknowledged that without a knowledge of this local history 'a stranger would pass [this site] without a

¹⁷⁴ Burton, 'Introduction – The "Indians" of The Brazil', pp. lxi-xciv.

¹⁷⁵ James L. Newman, *Paths without Glory: Richard Francis Burton in Africa* (Washington D.C.: Potomoc Books, 2010), p. 17.

¹⁷⁶ Burton, 'Preface: Section I', p. i.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

glance’, and he laboured to turn this ‘glance’ into a close observation by documenting how he came to ‘see’ and read the landscape.¹⁷⁸ Clearly, the purpose of his ‘Preface: Section II’ was not to frame the narrative, but to describe his own journey and set ‘the *mise-en-scene* before the reader’s eye’.¹⁷⁹ Of critical importance here, therefore, is how Burton employed the space of his prefatory sections to communicate how he made use of the historical text of *Hans Stade* to navigate his material experience of place. It should be noted that Burton did not appear as the ‘editor’ on the volume title page, and unusually for the Hakluyt, he was not even credited for providing the critical appendices of ‘explanatory notes’ and introductions as was the standard practice, but merely appears as having ‘annotated’ the translated text.

The division of the Preface into two sections physically denotes two different linguistic registers, as Burton shifts his authorial stance from ‘Hakluyt Society editor’, describing his encounters of both the text and the landscape, to ‘traveller-writer’, detailing his personal experiences of translation and travel. This has a significant effect on the framing of the book as it adds a further ‘threshold of interpretation’ for the reader to cross in order to get to the main body of the text. The inclusion of a second section of prefatory material suggests that a ‘more pertinent reading’ of the book can be attained by following Burton’s reading of the present physical landscape; he viewed his endeavours in the earlier man’s light, following the route and particular landmarks as they appeared in the text.¹⁸⁰ Over fifty-seven pages Burton guides the ‘reader over the hundred direct miles of coast between Santos and Ubatuba, the scene of Hans Staden’s travel and captivity’; a trip which he made himself between mid-November 1865 and August 1866.¹⁸¹ The prominent use of the present tense and first person narrative convention places the reader firmly alongside Burton enabling them to see across the

¹⁷⁸ Burton, ‘Preface: Section II’, in Burton (ed.), *Captivity of Hans Stade*, pp. iv-lviii, p. xviii.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

¹⁸⁰ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. lvii.

textual terrain he lays out in front of them. In this way, Burton was re-mapping the Santos coastline, rather than mapping anew. His aim was not to illustrate the coastline, but to posit the tenets of comparative observation and show what effect three centuries and a half had exercised on the shores and its inhabitants. Such a structure builds a critical bridge between Burton as a scholar, editing and presenting a historical narrative, and as a practical man, recounting his visit to the site in question. It underlines a shift in how to engage with the text, moving from a sensational tale of travel to viewing it as a historical source to be dealt with critically.

Such an attempt to draw a contemporary geography and to position the self within the narrative of a Hakluyt volume had only been attempted once before. This exceptional example was by fellow explorer Schomburgk, with his map to ‘illustrate Sir Walter Raleigh’s Journey up the Orinoco’. Without a map drawn by Raleigh that could be reproduced, Schomburgk traced his route on his own map to serve as the volume’s frontispiece. It was drawn ‘in great measure from personal observations made during eight years’ rambles through Guiana’, for which he had been awarded the RGS Gold Medal.¹⁸² In making Raleigh walk over *his* Guiana, Schomburgk has been observed as creating a shifting relationship between himself and his precursor. This, so-termed, ‘tautological ring of legitimisation’ saw Raleigh legitimise Schomburgk and Schomburgk exculpate and restore Raleigh.¹⁸³ Whilst Burton did not attempt to invoke Hans Staden’s authority in the same way, he did extend this rhetorical posture and actually placed himself within the text itself. Whereas other editors were careful to refer to themselves as ‘the editor’, Burton asserted his own subject position as the narrator and the observer.

¹⁸² Robert H. Schomburgk, ‘Editor’s Preface’, in Schomburgk (ed.), *Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana*, pp. vi-xi, p. xi.

¹⁸³ Burnett, *Masters of all they Surveyed*, p. 39.

Burton constructed his own visual landscape with extended vignettes that richly detailed the arrangement of the physical and botanical landscapes that he encountered as he left the extremity of Santo Amaro. Fellow explorer Verney Lovett Cameron commented that Burton was especially skilled at composing ‘verbal photographs’, which ‘though equalling [sic] photographs in minuteness and faithfulness, they far exceed photographs’.¹⁸⁴ Burton did not only artistically frame the coastline, but he also acted as an informative guide by signposting distinct place names, alongside the mode, direction, and duration of travel. This structuring around distinct landmarks and measurements adds clarity to Burton’s observations, as his writing gathered momentum to accurately reconstruct the geography for the reader. In documenting both his personal experience and retaining a dedication to fact, Burton established his authorial competence as a traveller-writer. In turn, this displayed his academic credibility by demonstrating appropriate method in the making of his observations. Whilst not taking formal measurements, Burton focused on comparative observation, detailing what he saw and directly positioning these ‘sights’ within a wider literary network of historical sources, from the ‘days when Fr. Gaspar wrote’ in the eighteenth century.¹⁸⁵ From these texts, he worked to see whether their observations were still viable, and visible in the landscape; such as the building of the Fortaleza de Bertioga, referred to by Staden only as the ‘Fort of Santo Amaro’, which was viewed to have been ‘evidently renewed upon the olden plan’.¹⁸⁶

Yet, whilst extending the rhetoric of the marvellous, alongside his own objective observations of the landscape, Burton did not deal with the issue of veracity in relation

¹⁸⁴ Verney Lovett Cameron, ‘Burton as I Knew Him’, *Fortnightly Review*, no. 288, 1 December 1890, pp. 879-880.

¹⁸⁵ Burton, ‘Preface: Section II’, p. xiii. Burton was referring to Fray Gaspar de Carvajal, a sixteenth-century Spanish Dominican missionary to the New World. For each place he visited, Burton would note the history of European encounter, with the dates and the interactions made with the local peoples and places.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

to the text itself. Despite *Hans Stade* being written under the title of ‘true history’, no assessment of ‘truth’ or the anxieties of representation surrounding this early modern text was made. Rather, the prefatory voice that Burton employed to speak to the reader sits on a narrative level above that of the author he is introducing, so much so that a review from the *Spectator* exclaimed that ‘there is too much of Mr Burton in the preface’, and that whilst his ‘wanderings are, perhaps, interesting in themselves ... they decidedly help us but little to understand those of Hans Staden’.¹⁸⁷ However, this was not the underlying purpose of Burton’s prefaces. By situating himself as a ‘guide’ in the present, Burton does not simply help the reader across the threshold into the historical text, rather, he draws them into his own journey. In this sense, Burton’s prefatory material is not a peripheral feature that is simply additive, but from the outset, it signals a departure from the sixteenth-century text.

Conclusions

The Hakluyt Society was founded as a reaction to the apparent failings of the RGS to establish and build a bookish infrastructure, and thereby support the advance of the study of geography and knowledge of past voyages and travels. In reviewing such discussions, this chapter has illustrated the significance of books beyond their role as reference material that became part of a national debate on spaces of reading.¹⁸⁸ Within the RGS, books were identified as a key instrument for both the scholar in the study and the traveller in the field. Yet, through the formative stages of the Society’s foundation, the chapter has identified a palpable tension between whether the Hakluyt Society volumes were to be informative and educational or provocative and critical

¹⁸⁷ ‘The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse, in 1547–1555, among the wild tribes of Eastern Brazil. Translated by Albert Tootal and annotated by R. F. Burton (London: printed for the Hakluyt Society), *Spectator*, 9 January 1875, p. 24.

¹⁸⁸ For an introduction, see Bernstein, ‘Reading Room Geographies of Late-Victorian London’.

sources of geographical knowledge. In considering these questions, the chapter took the ‘editor’ as its central focus in order to capture the intellectual, material, and spatial politics of encountering texts, and how they were discursively reframed by both individual editors and the Hakluyt Society.¹⁸⁹

The examination of the system of ‘literary co-operation’ operated by the Society has revealed an even wider geography of scholarly connection, with international links to scientific, literary, and historical institutions and individuals. In turn, this chapter has highlighted the role of travel within the preparation of Hakluyt volumes: texts as artefacts, which were excavated, dusted off, and re-presented as a ‘discovery’ ordered within a coherent collection. As the primary source materials often made long journeys to the hands of the editor, the process of editing was also cast as a long, wearying voyage to illustrate that the recovery of the textual trails of past travellers was no small feat and required the active participation, movement, and time of the sedentary scholar.¹⁹⁰

The materiality and paratextuality of the volumes themselves have provided a commentary on how the texts were presented, to show that these surrounding elements do not simply frame the text to guide the reader through a volume, but shed light on the pragmatic character of the Society. With the Hakluyt volumes being reprinted works from historical authors and the only technical guidance being to write an ‘explanatory introduction’, the editors were able to construct their own textual frame. Consequently, these introductory voices were not always in unison with each other, or the Society itself. Indeed, ‘deviation[s] from my proper course’ came to be commonplace and this posited a shift in material practice from editorial to authorial discourse.¹⁹¹ The masking of the authentic voice of the traveller, as was the dictate of Hakluyt himself, came to be

¹⁸⁹ Bridges and Hair (eds), *Compassing the Vaste Globe of the Earth*.

¹⁹⁰ See, Fuller, *Voyages in Print*, especially Chapter 4.

¹⁹¹ Corney, ‘Advertisement’, in Corney (ed.), *Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton*, p. ix.

the focus of contemporary criticism.¹⁹² The example of Burton as an ‘editor-explorer’ illustrates the mediation of this editorial identity as this was an instance in which the reprinted narrative of historical travel sat alongside a new travel account. The editor, in this case, became a travelling agent positioned at the centre of their narrative, showing how editors could reframe texts for the Hakluyt and harness their potential to mobilise the production of geographical knowledges, beyond simply promoting interesting travel stories.

Burton's concerted literary efforts to reconstruct these distant places on the page may appear incongruous to his presentation in geography's histories as an active explorer and prominent voice in nineteenth-century debates over best practice in the field. However, this elusive character was also a keen observer of the world through print. In examining how Burton read and handled his books, both in the field and in his cabinet, the following chapter reconsiders the materiality of travel and the geography of exploration in the mid to late nineteenth century.

¹⁹² Froude, ‘England’s Forgotten Worthies’, p. 36.

Chapter 6

On the Margins of Exploration: The books of Richard Francis Burton



Figure 6.1. 'Sir Richard Burton in His Study', by Albert Letchford, c.1890. Courtesy of Richmond Borough Art Collection, Orleans House Gallery.

In his 1860 *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, Burton quoted St. Augustine of Hippo: ‘The world is a great book, of which those who never leave home read but a page’.¹ Burton’s appropriation of this quotation presents the popular metaphor of the book of nature and the juxtaposition of spatial metaphors of how one comes to experience, know, and understand the world, through the internal process of reading the world on a page and the physical experiencing of place outside. This initiates a dialogue between textual authority and modern experience that allows us to enter the journeys Burton took, not just to experience physically new places, but to rethink and rewrite the category of geographical exploration: of how and where it took place through the books he read, collected, and kept in his personal library. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Burton was a keen observer of the world in print and he marked his routes with his favoured travelling companion, the pencil. Yet the figure of Burton sat in his study, hunched over a desk, is an unfamiliar pose and his relationship with his library has been marginal within biographical portraits, leaving the marks Burton made in his books as an underexplored textual terrain (Figure 6.1). To fill this critical lacuna, this chapter seeks to resituate Burton from a field explorer to a reader in his cabinet, and to consider how he embodied both of these practical identities and proceeded as a ‘bookish traveller’.² In turn, the spatial context of voyaging – and the place of the traveller and books within it – can be critically examined to give new insight into nineteenth-century geographical practice and its materiality which have, so far, been overlooked in histories of the nineteenth-century ‘culture of exploration’.³

Whilst ‘there is no Burton bibliography worthy of the name in existence’, his extraordinary character has attracted considerable attention from many different

¹ Richard Francis Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A Picture of Exploration*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), p. 838.

² Bleichmar, *Visible Empire*, p. 55.

³ Driver, *Geography Militant*; Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*; Kennedy (ed.), *Reinterpreting Exploration*.

audiences.⁴ These biographical portraits have painted Burton as an independent spirit operating outside the bounds of social convention, but he has recently been redrawn as very much a product of nineteenth-century Britain and its imperial encounter with the world. As biographer Mary Lovell elucidates, Burton was ‘a questioner, a polymath who searched with intellectual curiosity for explanations in multi-disciplines’.⁵ A great scholar who spoke over twenty-five languages, it is clear that Burton wanted to embody all things, in every intellectual circle he set his sights on. Yet, despite the testaments to his roving curiosity, the histories of Burton’s contributions to geography have been mostly focused on the Nile controversy and his clashes with travel partner John Hanning Speke.⁶ There has been little sustained attention on Burton’s participation in later debates concerning modes of knowing through reading, writing, and travelling.⁷

Although Burton is at the centre of this chapter, this is not a biography. Instead, his books are harnessed as a lens through which to understand how he worked in different spaces as an explorer and a scholar, both out in the field and within the private space of his cabinet. Like most of his activities, Burton completely immersed himself in reading in order to obtain theoretical and historical knowledges that he could combine with his own experiential knowledge. It is the reading objects – books and papers – that help to reconstruct the material, mental, and cultural worlds Burton inhabited, and to retrace the journeys that he, as a reader, took through them.⁸

⁴ Norman M. Penzer, *An Annotated Bibliography of Sir Richard Francis Burton* K. C. M. G. (Mansfield: Maurizio Martino Publisher, 1923), p. 21. See key biographies: Fawn M. Brodie, *The Devil Drives: A Life of Sir Richard Burton* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967); Mary S. Lovell, *A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard and Isabel Burton* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998); Jon R. Godsall, *The Tangled Web: A Life of Sir Richard Burton* (Leicester: Troubador, 2008); Kennedy, *Highly Civilised Man*; Newman, *Paths without Glory*.

⁵ Lovell, *A Rage to Live*, p. xvi.

⁶ W. B. Carnochan, *Sad Story of Burton, Speke, and the Nile* (Stanford: Stanford General Books, 2006); Jeal, *Explorers of the Nile*.

⁷ Burton’s role in these discussions has begun to be addressed, see Kennedy, *Highly Civilised Man*; *The Last Blank Spaces*.

⁸ For use of ‘thing theory’ in biography and writing subjects’ lives through material culture, see Deborah Lutz, *The Brontë Cabinet: Three Lives in Nine Objects* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015).

The Burton Library today provides a composite picture of an inquisitive mind that was not confined by chronological period, geographical location, or language.⁹ Burton had a compulsion for obtaining books and, over his lifetime, he assembled a vast corpus of material. Yet, whilst such an endowment continues to live as a material manifestation of Burton and his seemingly infinite curiosities, it has only survived in part. The contents of his library have been severely affected by the disasters that have befallen it, both during and after Burton's life.¹⁰ Despite Burton treating the loss of almost his entire collection in 1861 with indifference, exclaiming 'well, it is a great bore; but I dare say that the world will be none the worse for some of the manuscripts having been burnt', the surviving texts are significant for locating an understudied facet of Burton's personality and working practices.¹¹ The 'tattered tomes' of his library today consist of 2,700 books and pamphlets, one hundred maps, several hundred letters, manuscripts of Burton's published works, and research notes and documents (Figure 6.2).¹² However, merely knowing the contents of his library does not reveal much about what Burton did with his books. With almost every non-fiction book he read bearing some mark of use, it is shown that books were Burton's 'tools' that he used 'not with the curious zeal of the collector but with the unimpassioned care which the skilled workman bestows on the selection of the implements which his skill directs'.¹³ Through

⁹ The research for this chapter was supported by an Arts and Humanities Research Council Research Fellowship at the Huntington Library (January–April 2014) to work with the Burton Collections, as part of the AHRC International Placement Scheme.

¹⁰ For a brief history, see Alan Jutzi, 'Burton and his Library', in Alan Jutzi (ed.), *In Search of Richard Burton: Papers from a Huntington Library Symposium* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1993), pp. 85-106.

¹¹ W. H. Wilkins (ed.), *The Romance of Isabel Lady Burton: The Story of Her Life, Told in Part by Herself and in Part by W. H. Wilkins*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1897), p. 179.

¹² Jutzi, 'Burton and his Library', p. 86 and p. 92. The first catalogue of the contents of the Burton Library was undertaken by the Librarian at the Royal Anthropological Institute, where the Burton Library was stored between 1955 and 1986. See, B. J. Kirkpatrick (ed.), *A Catalogue of the Library of Sir Richard Burton, K.C.M.G. Held by the Royal Anthropological Institute* (London: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1978).

¹³ Herbert Jones, 'Sir Richard Burton, K.C.M.G. (1821–1890)', in Bernard Quaritch (ed.), *Contributions towards a Dictionary of English Book-Collectors, as also of some foreign collectors whose libraries were incorporated in English collections or whose books are chiefly met with in England* (London: B. Quaritch Ltd., 1892–1921), pp. 1-10, p. 1.

these textual trails, this chapter seeks to retrace the synthesis and combining of the internal and external sites of Burton's experience of place.¹⁴



Figure 6.2. The Burton Library today at the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

¹⁴ Roger Stoddard, *Marks in Books, Illustrated and Explained* (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Library, Harvard University, 1985), p. 1.

Critically, this chapter draws on work on the history of the book that is concerned with the history of reading, and specifically the personal, embodied, and spatially situated nature of reading.¹⁵ These studies show that reading is not an abstract, immaterial act, but that it is ‘an intertextual process governed by an active reader’.¹⁶ The materiality of texts has received attention both in terms of their physical form and the rare and ephemeral traces that the act of reading has left behind.¹⁷ As a layer of the ‘archaeology of reading practices’, marginalia is a product of the humanist scholarly tradition, and sits as a visual and material articulation of the reading experience and of the interaction between reader and text.¹⁸ The existence of such marks reforms the page as a site of dialogue that can be recovered. Informed by these scholarly insights, this chapter examines the place of books in Burton’s life and travels. The first section, in providing an overview of how Burton used and handled his books, recovers his different modes of reading, collecting, and storing textual material. Through entering the labyrinthine mental space of reading, attention can be paid to the psychology of reading: how Burton maintained communications with his books, and the form these took, both discursively and materially.¹⁹

Books have been called ‘a silent partner’ in the traveller’s apprehension of the natural world, and research in histories of science has given the role of text, reading, and writing a critical voice.²⁰ This has led the book in the field to be viewed as a ‘site of preservation’, acting as a container for what is found and a revealing space of

¹⁵ Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1994); Bill Bell, ‘Bound for Australia: Shipboard Reading in the Nineteenth Century’, in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds), *Journeys through the Market: Travel, Travellers and the Book Trade* (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 1999), pp. 119–140; Stephen Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695–1870* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Ogborn, *Indian Ink*.

¹⁶ Robert Scholes, *Protocols of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. x.

¹⁷ Jackson, *Marginalia*; Sherman, *Used Books*.

¹⁸ Chartier, *The Order of Books*, p. 22.

¹⁹ Jacques Bonnet, *Phantoms on the Bookshelves*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Maclehose Press, Quercus: London, 2010). On the ‘communication model’ of reading, see Marcel Proust, *On Reading Ruskin*, trans. and ed. Jean Autret, William Burford, and Phillip J. Wolfe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

²⁰ Safier, “‘Everyday that I travel ... is a page that I turn’”, p. 126.

negotiating scientific practice.²¹ The main body of this chapter travels with Burton and his books in order to survey the materiality of his exploratory activities and his sites of study. Setting off with his expedition into East Africa (1856–1859), the first element of this discussion is situated within the critical debates on the labours of the geographer and geographical science as the RGS was actively renegotiating its disciplinary prescriptions, and its legitimacy as an institutional agent. The chapter then moves to view Burton in his study, reconstructing the microgeographies of these sites of textual encounter as his career moved away from formal exploration and into consular service. From within these internal spaces, the routes Burton took through his books are drawn out in the final section. Crucially, this chapter seeks to provide more than an examination of the situated practice of putting pen to paper, but elicits a broader interpretation of books as instruments of social and scientific practice, and of how Burton did geography in their margins.

‘A True Bibliophile’: How Burton read and handled his books

The formative years of Burton’s life set in motion how he would come to know, understand, and write about the places he visited throughout his lifetime, employing a combined phenomenology of the bodily experience of being in place and working through books on and in those places. Being socialised into a peripatetic style of life from his birth in 1821, Burton lived across Europe, studying at the University of Oxford before joining the Bombay Infantry in 1841. From an early stage, he showed himself to be driven, and he channelled his inner tensions into a restless search for knowledge, taking small excursions and seeking out libraries and book collectors.²² This

²¹ Anne Secord, ‘Pressed into Service: Specimens, Space, and Seeing in Botanical Practice’, p. 302.

²² Burton mentions visiting four libraries in India, see Richard Francis Burton, *Goa, and the Blue Mountains; or, Six Months of Sick Leave* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), pp. 41-44.

compulsive nature should not be immediately judged as eccentric or anachronistic as it has been shown that ‘there were thousands like him in the service of the British Empire’.²³ The exceptionality of Burton came not only through his genius, but his notorious refusal to conceal his finds or to compromise his scholarship to adhere to conventional codes of morality and sociability.

In order to satisfy his vast interests, Burton began to build his own private library to act as a personal reference collection. He actively worked to procure books and other materials, and quickly developed an international network of contacts and suppliers.²⁴ Burton acquired a large proportion of his Arabic and Oriental texts and translations from the London firm of Mr Bernard Quaritch, which regularly gave Burton advice on his literary requirements. Burton was keen to cast his eyes over curious and elusive material, as Quaritch himself recalled: ‘Burton was the first customer I ever had who asked for books upon the Sudan. This fact impressed itself in my memory because the name was then a shadowy one, unfamiliar to most people in England, as well as to myself’.²⁵ Burton also relied on local merchants and keenly browsed bookshops in the places that he visited with an ‘exhaustive thoroughness’.²⁶ Friends, associates, and publishers further supported his collection by sending books to him, especially later in his life as his health forced him to become increasingly sedentary.

Despite being labelled as a ‘true bibliophile’ by James Casada, Burton was not a ‘book-collector’ in the conventional sense of the term, as he was not driven by a romantic desire to collect every book for its own sake, or to adhere to a perceived fashion.²⁷ Burton had little interest in the outward appearance, monetary value, or rarity of books, and took an arguably more enlightened approach, being said to have been

²³ Morris, ‘Introduction’, p. vii.

²⁴ Jutzi, ‘Burton and his Library’, pp. 91-93.

²⁵ Bernard Quaritch, ‘Appendix to Sir Richard Burton K.C.M.G (1821–1890)’, in Quaritch (ed.), *Contributions towards a Dictionary of English Book-Collectors*, p. 10.

²⁶ Jutzi, ‘Burton and his Library’, p. 92.

²⁷ Casada, ‘Burton: A Biobibliographical Study’, p. 19.

interested in the ‘contents only’, as he digested and probed books he considered useful for imparting new facts and ideas.²⁸ In describing how Burton spent his time, his wife, Isabel revealed how the reading and handling of textual materials were at the core of his daily activities:

He never passed a day without reading up something in one of his twenty-nine languages ... He then read a good deal, took notes, and cut any useful and interesting paragraphs from about ten English and four local papers ... he certainly never read hurriedly, passing anything over. He wrote for a certain time in the day ... He kept himself up in all the passing events of the day, wrote his journal, copied anything that struck him, and at night he always ‘cooled his head’ with a novel.²⁹

Isabel’s description disclosed the different aspects of how Burton used his books: he read by cross-referencing, editing, copying, and annotating, and he handled texts by cutting paragraphs and moving between different print media. From this depiction, it is clear that Burton’s books were not simply objects to be stored on a shelf, but were well thumbed, used, and handled on a daily basis. Accordingly, books were physically prominent in Burton’s busy workspace in Trieste (Figure 6.3), where he lived from 1873 until his death in 1890. The presence of textual matter signifies that this room was a place of knowledge production and functioned as a private space of learning, and as a site of inspiring and constructing knowledge. This scene suggests actions that went beyond gestures of collection and display, as the books in piles on the desk, in boxes on

²⁸ Jones, ‘Sir Richard Burton, K.C.M.G. (1821–1890)’, p. 1. For more on book collecting and use of books, see John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, *Cultures of Collecting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); William Clark, ‘On the Bureaucratic Plots of the Research Library’, in Frasca-Spada and Jardine (eds), *Books and Sciences in History*, pp. 190–206; Leah Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁹ I. Burton, *Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton*, vol. 2, p. 260.

the floor, and on shelves lining the walls present overlapping modes of engagement, as Burton considered how to access, store, and retrieve information.



Figure 6.3. 'The Corner of Sir Richard Burton's Study (Trieste, Italy)', by Albert Letchford, c.1890. Courtesy of Richmond Borough Art Collection, Orleans House Gallery.

As Burton 'took notes', he left material evidence that he read the majority of his books. From a survey of his surviving library, Burton began regularly making notes when he was in India during the mid-1840s. This marks a critical watershed, as it appears that he read almost every book after that point with a pen or pencil in hand, marking in his own distinctive handwriting which was often 'so small as to be almost invisible' as he progressed through the pages.³⁰ Whilst Burton made many different

³⁰ Ibid., p. 268. The only other handwriting identified in Burton's books is that of his wife, who occasionally signed the title page of books. In books authored by her husband, Isabel often made editorial

kinds of notes, distinctive patterns can be identified that enable a discussion of the meta-practices of his approach.

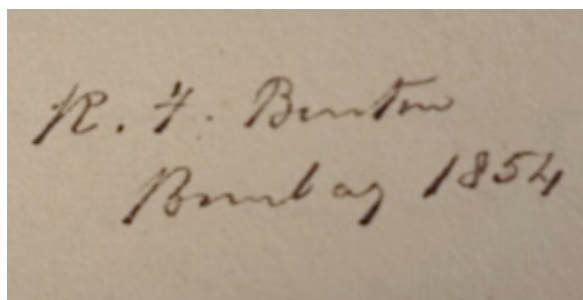


Figure 6.4. 'R. F. Burton, Bombay 1854'.

Burton's signature on title page of Georges Cuvier, *The Animal Kingdom: Arranged after its organisation, forming a natural history of animals, and an introduction to comparative anatomy* (London: Wm. S. Orr and Co, 1849), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 273.

Ownership marks were his commonest form of annotation, and it was usual for Burton to sign the title page of a book in black ink, occasionally accompanied by the date and place of its acquisition (Figure 6.4). Once he had established possession, Burton began the process of customising his books. He would often signal his general assessment of a text within the front matter by marking topics in the contents as 'read', 'useful', or 'useless'. Within the main text, Burton developed his own individual system of signs that he consistently employed as a method of highlighting key pieces of information. These 'interlinear glosses' demonstrate how Burton approached and assimilated the texts he read, as they operate at the most literal level to mediate and absorb what is on the page.³¹ He underlined key words or phrases as a means of gleaning 'factual' information, such as historical, biographical, bibliographical, or linguistic references. Through the use of parentheses or a line running down the margin,

notes for future editions, and she also pasted lists of people to send copies to on the inside front cover or flyleaf.

³¹ Jackson, *Marginalia*, p. 42.

Burton directed his attention to paragraphs of interest and footnotes introducing obscure sources and local knowledge. He would also signal his approval, disapproval, or reminders for important points through the use of exclamation and question marks, crosses, or 'N.B'. These notes were mostly made in pencil, as Burton transitioned from asserting his ownership in pen to his 'rough' workings in pencil. His choice of marking instrument is therefore significant when narrating a story of use as he often read books more than once, and these repeated acts of reading are present in the layers of ink and pencil inscriptions.³²

With these glosses showing how Burton followed the structure of a writer's narrative, they also demonstrate how he separated himself from the text. Burton would often directly communicate with the words on the page to reveal his reaction to a passage. He developed a distinct set of short references for signifying these opinions in the margin; these ranged from affirmative notes such as 'good' and 'true', to derogatory remarks labelling statements 'rot', 'dribble', or 'complete falsehood'.³³ This systematic marking of texts as a means of forming judgment was seen by some as the essence of intelligent reading practice. David Pryde asserted that 'all great scholars have been great note takers' and that without notes, one could not be an 'intelligent reader'.³⁴ In some cases, Burton gave a running commentary in the margins that demonstrates not only his close reading of the text, but also the hermeneutic function such notes held for him.

As marginal notes are also a spatial category, Burton engaged with the pages of his books in different ways. Aside from underlining, he rarely trespassed into the text itself and almost all of his immediate marks and comments were made in the side margins, with the gaps between sections and chapters being used for extended notes

³² In books Burton found particularly useful, it is not uncommon to find marks from three or four different writing instruments.

³³ These notes are also identified in Jutzi, 'Burton and his Library', p. 86.

³⁴ David Pryde, *The Highways of Literature; or, What to Read and How to Read* (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmon and Co., 1882), p. 29.

and drawings. In his most significantly annotated books the pages that featured higher levels of intervention were the opening board and flyleaves. Within these blank spaces Burton edited and formed his own personal paratext to guide his future reading. His two favoured practices were forming his own ‘reader’s index’ of subjects with corresponding page numbers and affixing clippings of related printed ephemera. These acts have been viewed as the reader withdrawing from the main narrative, as they move from instantaneously writing on the page being read, to pausing, and reforming their own text in a different part of a book.³⁵ Burton often distanced himself from the immediate text and extended the borders of narratives through his own reader-authored compositions, which he compiled from material collected from other sources related to the main text and then pasted onto the boards of his books.

Burton’s copy of his own *Lake Regions of Central Africa* (vol. 1, 1860) acted as a container for authorial reflection and future revisions, holding personal letters alongside printed maps and article clippings from various publications detailing meetings held at the Ethnological Society and RGS.³⁶ Similarly, Burton’s *The Nile Basin: Part I* (1864) was filled with reviews, numerous excerpts of topical articles from periodicals such as the *Athenaeum*, and notably a letter by Cooley titled ‘The Nyanza mystery’ (Figures 6.5 and 6.6).³⁷ Whilst inserting additional information was not a unique reading practice, the

³⁵ Jackson, *Marginalia*, p. 42.

³⁶ Richard Francis Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A Picture of Exploration*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 10. Contains personal letters; a clipping on a meeting of Ethnological Society pasted onto the inside of front cover; clipping of a letter to the editor of the *Times* by Roderick I. Murchison on the source of the Nile pasted onto the inside back cover; further article clippings from various publications, maps, and publishers’ advertisements which have been moved to a separate envelope, but as they are related content, it is possible that at one time they were all held within the same entity. Notable contents include, a map of Lake Victoria dated Dec. 1875; clipping, ‘Mr Stanley’s Mission: Solution of the Problem of the Tanganyika’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 6 March 1877; a publisher’s advertisement for a new edition of ‘Stanford’s Library Map of Africa’; and *Proceedings of RGS* (1863) with articles on the Nile by Speke and Grant.

³⁷ Richard Francis Burton, *The Nile Basin: Part I. Showing Tanganyika to be Ptolemy’s Western Lake Reservoir. A Memoir Read before the Royal Geographical Society, November 14, 1864. With Prefatory Remarks* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1864), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 20. Contains numerous pasted in clippings, including: a fragment of a review from *The Reader*, 10 December 1864; clipping of a letter to the editor on Burton’s Nile paper from *Athenaeum*, 17 December 1864; clipping of a letter from Burton titled ‘The Nile Mystery’

micro-collections Burton curated within the covers of his books indicate how Burton was a compulsive researcher. As his close friend F. Grenfell Baker observed, ‘if he himself were about to write on any subject he would collect every single detail bearing on it’.³⁸ The alterations and modifications to his books were for his own intellectual development as the notes and related research remained permanently attached to the texts themselves and acted as aids for his reading of the book at hand. As such, he displayed an acute level of critical attention, personal involvement, and self-assertion as a reader.

to *Athenaeum*, 24 December 1864; clipping titled ‘Fatal accident to Captain Speke, the African traveller’; clipping on the death of Speke; clipping titled ‘The Sources of the Nile’ from the *Morning Post*; clipping of a letter by W. D. Cooley, ‘The Nyanza mystery’, dated 31 December 1864; a review from *The London Review*, 14 January 1865; review from *John Bull*, 14 January 1865; clipping with a review, annotated by Burton; review from *Morning Star*; review from *Standard*, 26 December 1864; letter to the editor on Burton and the source of the Nile from *Standard*, 12 January 1865.

³⁸ F. Grenfell Baker, ‘Preface’, in Penzer, ‘An Annotated Bibliography of Sir Richard Francis Burton’, pp. vii-xi, p. xi.

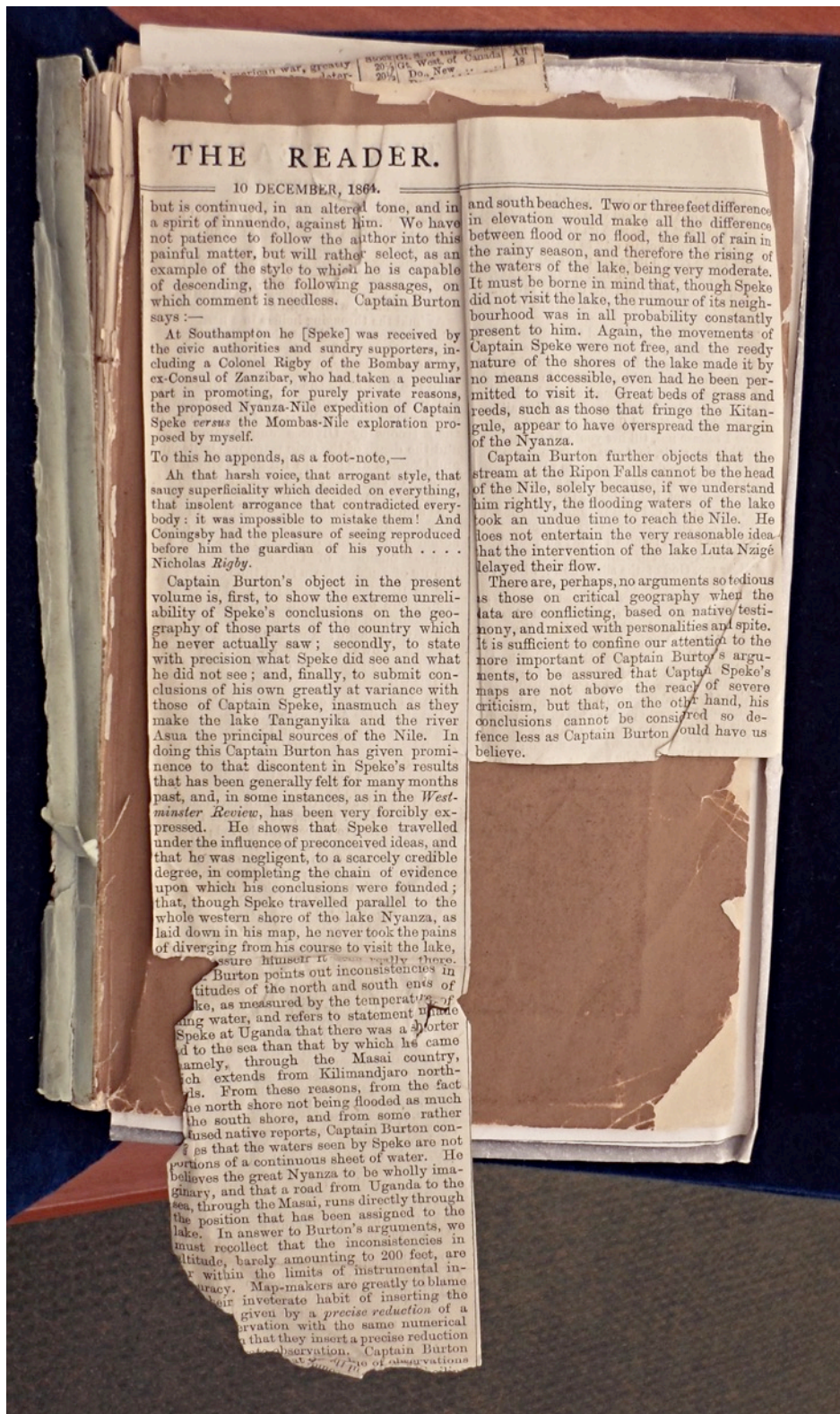


Figure 6.5. A Burton book microcollection: clippings pasted to the two sides of the opening flyleaf of Burton, *The Nile Basin: Part I* (1864), HEH, RFB 20.

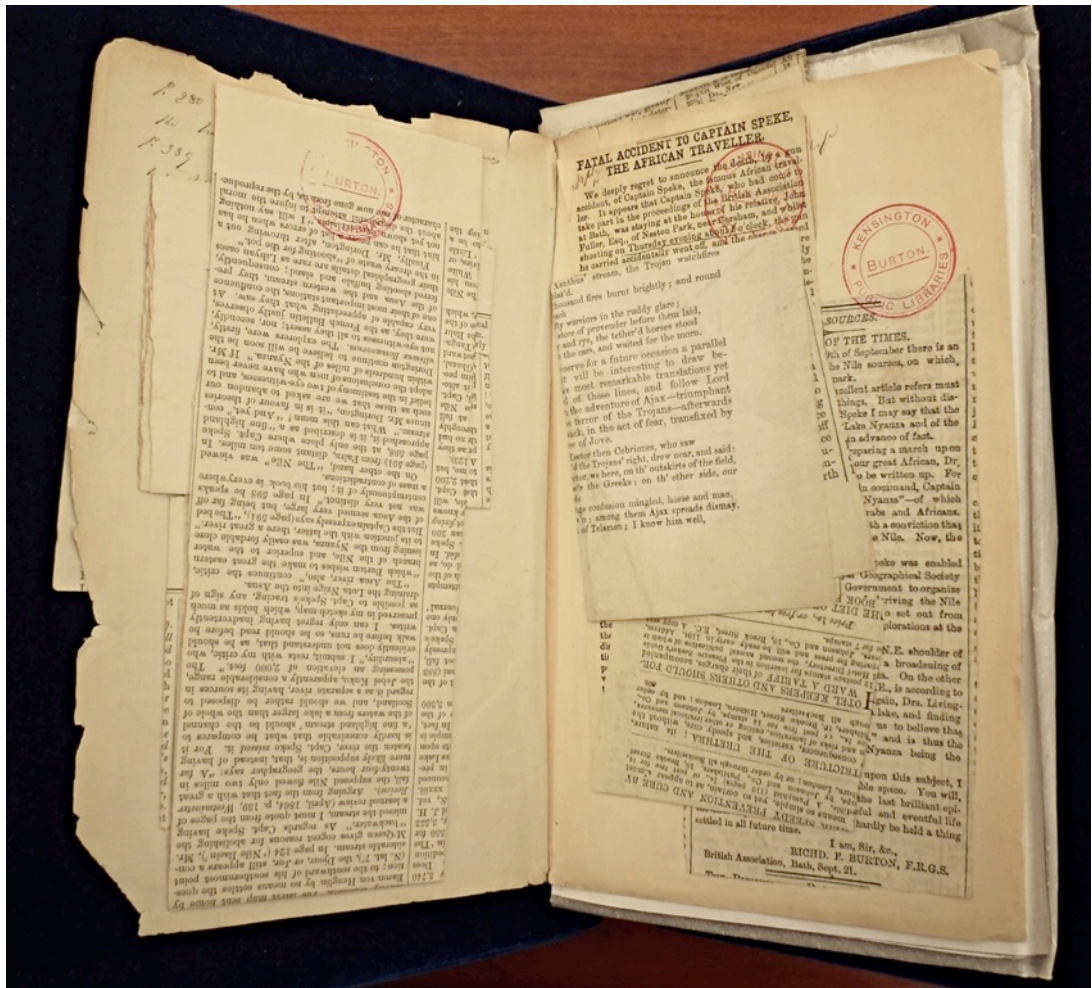


Figure 6.6. A Burton book microcollection: clippings pasted to the two sides of the opening flyleaf of Burton, *The Nile Basin: Part I* (1864), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 20.

Touring the annotated book from front to back cover has shown how Burton's reading followed the conventional format of the book itself, yet he also had instances of dismantling and reassembling texts in completely new forms. In his library today exists forty-four 'pamphlets bound by Burton', which range from general topics to specific interests: linguistics, the sword, religion, and geographical researches, with tomes on Africa, America, Asia, and Europe.³⁹ Burton wrote these new 'books' with his scissors, with each 'pamphlet book' containing material he gathered, read, annotated, extracted, rearranged, and then rebound. These latter tasks could have been undertaken by Isabel

³⁹ 'Pamphlets bound by Burton' is the broad subject heading given to these works by Kirkpatrick (ed.), *A Catalogue of the Library*, pp. 22-23. These items are stored: HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 217-261.

acting on Burton's instructions, as he once remarked that 'we divide the work. I take all the hard and scientific part, and make her do all the rest'.⁴⁰ The newly assembled texts varied in size, and held full articles, book chapters, and small snippets, which he presented without a contents page and in no discernibly systematic order. These idiosyncratic scrapbooking practices signal Burton's shifting position in relation to his books: he moved from reader to collator to editor as he entered, modified and altered the texts to construct his own 'edition'. Yet, by stripping works from their original bindings and removing their paratextual apparatus, such as title and contents pages, Burton challenged the integrity of the printed book.⁴¹ These radically customised copies exhibit his interest in the intellectual content of books only and not in their physical value. The 'pamphlet books' were his research files and they enabled him to manage his interests and access the debates with ease. For Burton, this was not just a practical move to hold pieces of information in one place, but in rebuilding the material architecture of these texts he constructed his own private intellectual nexus.

From these examples, it is clear that the reading of books is not a uniquely abstract operation of intellect, but it is inscribed in space as books move and transform, and as the body of the reader handles and renegotiates the materiality of books themselves. For Burton, in particular, his engagements with books were clear moments of 'text based spatial interaction'.⁴² Whilst these negotiations occurred on the page, they did not represent bounded spaces of textual intervention and interaction. Rather, Burton's markings were part of an iterative and reiterative process that spoke to contextual pluralism, and thus his reading can be conceptualised as a mobile practice

⁴⁰ Alfred Bates Richards, 'The World. Celebrity at Home: Captain Richard F. Burton at Trieste', in Alfred Bates Richards, Andrew Wilson and Clair Baddeley, *A Sketch of the Career of Richard F. Burton, Collected from Men of Eminence; from Sir Richard and Lady Burton's own works; from the press; from personal knowledge, and various other reliable sources* (London: Waterlow & Sons Limited, London Wall, 1886), pp. 30-47, p. 36. Many of the clippings are marked with their provenance and date in her handwriting. Mary S. Lovell notes that Isabel 'filled several scrapbooks with reviews on his *Lake Regions of Central Africa*', in Lovell, *Rage to Live*, p. 343.

⁴¹ Material issues such as this are discussed in Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴² Hones, 'Text as it happens', p. 1301.

The objective of the 1856 East African Expedition was to determine the location of the great lake or lakes that unsubstantiated reports had placed in the East African highlands.⁴⁴ Motivated by the demands of the RGS, the expedition was expected to conform to their disciplinary designs. With Burton taking command, he and John Hanning Speke were instructed to penetrate inland from Kilwa, and travel to ‘the reputed Lake of Nyassa’. From there, they were to proceed northward towards the mysterious ‘Mountains of the Moon’ containing the probable source of the ‘Bahr el Abiad’ [White Nile], as it was then marked on their maps (Figure 6.7).⁴⁵ Through expressions of topographical possibility, the instructions cultivated a discourse of conditionality and hypothesis that was drawn from the speculations of others. The expedition was designed to test the theoretical geography that had been presented and published by critical geographers, formed from the contested observations of other travellers. RGS President Murchison declared that the reading of these reports was a necessity in order to ‘arrive at a sound conclusion’:

[F]or he ... must study the writings of Cooley and MacQueen, and all the Portuguese authorities, and then collate them with the practical conclusions of Dr Livingstone, who, having travelled over eleven thousand miles of African ground and having wandered so long among the sources of the Congo and the

⁴⁴ The main motivation came after the reports of missionaries Ludwig Krapf, Johann Rebmann, and James Erhardt who travelled in East Africa, were received. See James Erhardt, ‘Reports respecting Central Africa, as collected in Mambara and on the East Coast, with a new Map of the Country’, *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 1 (1855–1856), pp. 8-10. Subsequent discussion in David Livingstone, ‘Letter from Dr Livingstone, with a Sketch Map’, *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 1 (1855–1856), pp. 92-93, p. 93.

⁴⁵ ‘RGS Expeditionary Committee Instructions’, 1 October 1856, reprinted in Richard Francis Burton, ‘The Lake Regions’, pp. 4-6. The cartographic products of this expedition and the politics of representation have been discussed elsewhere, see Wisnicki, ‘Indigenous Geography, Arab-Nyamwezi Caravans and the East African Expedition’.

Zambesi, is certainly the most valuable witness we can call, when such matters are under discussion.⁴⁶

This directive advocated that expeditions employ a critical methodology of direct observation underpinned by reading which required the traveller to draw on books in preparation. Travellers have often recorded not only having read before departing, but that they travelled with ‘book in hand’, in order to ‘test when travelling the degree of correspondence between written testimony and the evidence of one’s own eyes’.⁴⁷ Specifically, Burton interpreted his role as providing ‘the solid basis of accurate data’ to uphold or undermine these theories.⁴⁸ The instructions for the expedition itself ordered the party to obtain locational data, identify potential commercial exports, and gather intelligence on indigenous populations.⁴⁹ The statements of the Expeditionary Committee alongside the declaration from the President pick up on the wider context surrounding the labours of the geographer and geographical science as the RGS was, at that time, renegotiating its scientific procedures.

Whilst the Hakluyt Society was working to procure and publish historical narratives of travel, prominent Fellows of the RGS, such as Galton and Jackson, sought to produce more specialist guides to contemporary scientific travel that detailed disciplinary practice and prescriptions for intellectual conduct and bodily regulation in the field.⁵⁰ In imparting specific and rigorous instruction on modes of observation and

⁴⁶ Roderick Impey Murchison, ‘Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London’, *JRGS*, 27 (1857), pp. xciv-cxcviii, p. clxx. These different accounts and the critical questions they raised for the Expedition were further outlined in Roderick Impey Murchison, ‘Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London’, *JRGS*, 29 (1859), pp. cii-ccxxiv, pp. clxxix-clxxxvi.

⁴⁷ Keighren, Withers and Bell, *Travels into Print*, p. 79.

⁴⁸ Burton, ‘The Lake Regions’, p. 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Julian R. Jackson, *What to Observe; or, The Traveller’s Remembrancer* (London: James Madden, 1841); Francis Galton, *The Art of Travel; or, Shifts and Contrivances available in Wild Countries* (London: John Murray, Five Editions: 1855, 1856, 1860, 1872). The first ‘official’ RGS publication on ‘field’ methodologies came from a subcommittee report: Henry Raper and Robert Fitzroy (eds), ‘Hints to Travellers; containing Report of Sub-Committee of the Royal Geographical Society, consisting of Capt. R. Fitzroy, R.N., and Henry Raper,

description, there was a clear push to standardise the methodology of exploratory travel.⁵¹ This upheld an early RGS objective to support the development of geography, through a traveller's manual of practice that was to contain 'a clear and concise enumeration of the objects to which a Geographer's attention should be directed' and statements of 'the readiest means by which the desired information in each branch may be obtained'.⁵² This was an attempt to not only monitor movement in the physical field, but also to exert authority over a diverse field of knowledge. Galton, who rose to the role of RGS Honorary Secretary in 1857, was a principal force behind this regulation. He was appointed a member of the RGS's Committee on Expeditions and it was in that forum that he approved Burton's East African Expedition and aided in drafting its letters of instruction.⁵³ Drawing on his own experiences in Africa from 1850 to 1852, Galton claimed that it 'would be of infinite service to young travellers if different lists of instruments, books and stationery [sic], were drawn up; each complete in itself, down to the minutest detail'.⁵⁴

Whilst having the practical aim of ensuring that travel was easier and safer, these codifications of practice also had the epistemological objective of turning travellers into effective instruments, who could be relied upon as credible observers and measurement takers, and thus give greater legitimacy to exploration as a scientific enterprise. It was through an alliance with the RGS and an acceptance of its scientific requirements that the 'clever and adventurous travellers' of the expedition could be transformed into

Esq., R.N.; also 2. Papers by Rear-Admiral W. H. Smyth; 3. Rear Admiral F. W. Beechey; 4. Lieut.-Col. W. H. Sykes; 5. Francis Galton, Esq.', *JRGS*, 24 (1854), pp. 328-358. *Hints to Travellers* then appeared in book form that went through seven editions (1865–1901).

⁵¹ Withers, 'Science, Scientific Instruments, and Questions of Method'; Driver, 'Scientific Exploration and the Construction of Geographical Knowledge'.

⁵² 'Front Matter', *JRGS*, 2 (1832), pp. i-viii, p. vii.

⁵³ On Galton, see Ruth Schwartz Cowan, 'Galton, Sir Francis (1822–1911)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition, October 2005 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33315?docPos=1>, accessed 13 April 2014]; Karl Pearson, *The Life, Letters and Labours of Francis Galton*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914-1930); Nicholas Wright Gillham, *A Life of Sir Francis Galton: From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁵⁴ Francis Galton, 'Letter addressed by Francis Galton, Esq., to the Secretary', in Raper and Fitzroy (eds), 'Hints to Travellers', pp. 345-353, p. 345.

‘explorers’.⁵⁵ Burton stated that the Expeditionary Committee made it clear ‘what is expected from the African traveller in this portion of the nineteenth century’.⁵⁶ This almost three-year expedition has been viewed as marking an important shift in the object of Burton’s inquiries as traveller, away from his past experiences of infiltrating the languages and cultures of the then unknown societies.⁵⁷ His move from the human to the natural world brought new methods and materials of investigation: from the role-playing impersonator to the professional, scientific observer.

Expeditions were furnished with prescribed ‘outfits’ of scientific instruments and materials, designed to ‘suit the various requirements of men engaged in expeditions of different modes of locomotion and who visit different countries and climates’.⁵⁸ Designed by the RGS, the ‘outfit’ of the 1856 expedition featured six books detailing the ‘various methods’ that Burton was expected to follow in order to ‘fix with satisfaction the great features of the survey’.⁵⁹ Of these, half were practical reference guides and the other half provided moral advice about comportment and manners, practical information regarding preparation, equipment and in-the-field safety, and methodological strictures on observation, writing and reliance on devices. Yet, from written notices given by Burton, he insisted on packing above and beyond this recommended amount.

⁵⁵ Murchison, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1857), p. clxx.

⁵⁶ Burton, ‘The Lake Regions’, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Kennedy, *Highly Civilised Man*, see chapter on ‘The Explorer’, pp. 93-130.

⁵⁸ Galton, *Art of Travel* (5th edn, London: John Murray, 1872), p. 9.

⁵⁹ F. W. Beechey, ‘Memorandum on Instruments and Observations for the Eastern African Expedition, under Captain Richard Burton’, 1 October 1856, reprinted in Burton, ‘The Lake Regions’, pp. 7-8, p. 7.

Texts recommended by the RGS Expeditionary Committee:⁶⁰

- Nautical Almanac, 1856, 1857, 1858
- Thomson's *Lunar Tables*
- Galton's *Art of Travel*
- 'Admiralty Manual'
- Tables of Logarithms
- 'Hints to Travellers' by the RGS

Total: 6 texts (excluding multiple copies)

Texts recommended by Francis Galton in *Art of Travel*:⁶¹

- Nautical Almanac for current and future years
- Three or four small 6d. or 1s. almanacs of any kind
- Henry Raper, *The Practice of Navigation and Nautical Astronomy* (London: R. B. Bate, 1840)
- Tables of Logarithms of Society of Useful Knowledge
- Tables for boiling-point thermometers
- Celestial Maps (uncoloured), pasted on canvas
- The 'best' available maps of the country you are visiting

Total: 7 texts (excluding multiple copies)

⁶⁰ This list has been compiled from Beechey, 'Memorandum on Instruments', p. 7.

⁶¹ This list has been compiled from the items that appeared listed under the title 'books' in Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn), pp. 242-243.

Texts that formed the ‘equipment of the expedition’:⁶²

- John William Norrie, *A Complete Epitome of Practical Navigation* (London: Printed for the author, 1852)
- Thomas Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (London: John Murray, 1819)
- Thompson’s ‘Lunar Tables’
- Gordon’s ‘Time Tables’
- Francis Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn, London: John Murray, 1856)
- Basil Jackson, *A Treatise on Military Surveying* (London: W. H. Allen, 1853)
- Julian R. Jackson, *What to Observe; or, The Traveller’s Remembrancer* (2nd edn, London: Madden & Malcolm, 1845)
- J. F. W. Herschel (ed.), *A Manual of Scientific Enquiry, Prepared for the Use of Officers in Her Majesty’s Navy, and Travellers in General* (2nd edn, London: John Murray, 1851)
- Georges Cuvier, *Animal Kingdom* (London: Wm. S. Orr and Co., 1849).
- James Cowles Prichard, *The Natural History of Man* (3rd edn, London: Hippolyte Bailliere, 1848)

⁶² The books that comprised Burton’s travelling library have been identified from a variety of sources, as detailed by Burton: seventeen books are listed in the ‘Equipment of the Expedition’ sent from Burton to Galton on 2 August 1857, reprinted in Richard Francis Burton and John Hanning Speke, ‘A Coasting Voyage from Mombasa to the Pangani River; Visit to Sultan Kimwere; And Progress of the Expedition into the Interior’, *JRGS*, 28 (1858), pp. 188-226, pp. 224-226. Burton confirmed that his ‘outfit’ contained seventeen books in Burton, *Lake Regions of Central Africa*, vol. 1, p. 155. These two lists were the same, albeit ‘Cooley’s ‘Route to Unyamesi Lake’ was changed to ‘Cooley’s ‘Geography of Nyassi’. In addition to these ‘official lists’, Burton made later references to this expedition in which further books can be identified as having been taken on this trip: ‘rough proofs of his [James MacQueen] paper, which travelled with me into Central Africa’, in Richard Francis Burton, *Zanzibar; City, Island, and Coast*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872), p. 63; Shakespeare and Euclid, in Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol. 2, p. 388; ‘I travelled with Monteiro and Gamitto’s ‘O Muata Cazembe’ in my hands’, in Richard F. Burton, ‘Appendix II: Being a Rejoinder to the “Memoir on *The Lake Regions of East Africa*. Reviewed, in Reply to Captain Burton’s letter in the *Athenaeum*, No. 1899” by W. D. Cooley’, in Richard F. Burton as *Supplementary Papers to the Mwátá Cazembe (Journal of Dr de Lacerda) by the translator Richard F. Burton* (Trieste: 1873), pp. xxix-xl, p. xxxvii.

- Johannes L. Krapf, *Outline of the elements of the Kisuábeli language* (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1850)
- Johannes L. Krapf, *Vocabulary of six East African languages: Kisuábeli, Kiníka, Kikámba, Kipokómo, Kihíáu, Kigálla* (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1850)
- Thomas Keith, *An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Plane and Spherical Trigonometry* (7th edn, corrected by Samuel Maynard, London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1839)
- A. B. Becher, *Tables of Mast-Head Angles for Five Feet Intervals from 30 to 280 Feet and Varying Distances From Cable's Length to Four Miles with their Application to Nautical Surveying* (London: J. D. Potter, 1854)
- William Desborough Cooley, 'Geography of N'yassi', *JRGS*, 15 (1846), pp. 185-235
- George Buist, *Manual of Physical Research adapted for India* (Bombay: J. Macfarlane, 1852)
- Rough proofs of James MacQueen's paper, later published: James MacQueen, 'Notes on the Geography of Central Africa, from the Researches of Livingston [sic], Monteiro, Graça, and Others', *JRGS*, 26 (1856), pp. 109-130
- J. M. C. Monteiro and A. C. P. Gamitto, *O Muata Cazembe e os povos Maraves, Chévas, Muizás, Muembas, Lundas e outros da Africa austral: Diario da Expedição Portuguesa Comandada pelo Major Monteiro e Dirigida àquelle Imperador Nos Anos de 1831 e 1832. Redigido Pelo Major A. C. P. Gamito. Com um Mappa do País Observado entre Tete e Lunda* (Lisboa: Imprensa nacional, 1854)
- Charles William Isenberg, *Grammar of the Ambaric Language* (London: Printed for the Church Missionary Society, 1842)
- Shakespeare

- Euclid

Total: 21 individual texts

Despite the push for standardisation, this list was marked by Burton's personal preferences and his intellectual affinities are apparent. He used the RGS recommendations as a guide, and accompanied utilitarian guides and scientific reference works with language texts, contemporary geographical works, and literary tomes. Clearly, there was a balance involved between being able to proceed accompanied by a weighty encumbrance of boxes of books, and ensuring scientific standards were upheld with an ample supply of reference material.⁶³ Whilst this clearly went against the practical advice given by Galton that the weight of 'books to read' on an expedition should be 'equal to six volumes the ordinary size of novels, and maps', Burton was undeterred and viewed himself as having 'scanty literary belongings' on this trip.⁶⁴

The expedition itself travelled on an ancient caravan route and was formed of a party of eighty people, alongside donkeys and packsaddles to carry and transport. Burton stated that his books were carried within three leather portmanteaus, a box like an 'Indian petarah', and a leather bag.⁶⁵ Burton did not consider the portability of equipment to be an issue, and this became a subject of satirical representations of the relations between Burton and his expeditionary party (Figure 6.8). Burton asserted that his party could shoulder heavy burdens, imperiously commenting that 'a lightly laden man not only becomes lazy, he also makes his fellows discontented'.⁶⁶ Burton even scribbled an idea within one book for a travel desk, featuring a 'tray' and 'folding stand'

⁶³ Galton noted how, in a subsequent expedition, Speke 'started on his great journey amply equipped with log-books and calculation-books ... found them too great an incumbrance [sic], and was compelled to abandon them', in Galton, *Art of Travel* (5th edn, 1872), p. 31.

⁶⁴ Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn, London: John Murray, 1856), p. 233; Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol. 1, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Burton and Speke, 'A Coasting Voyage from Mombasa to the Pangini River', pp. 224-225.

⁶⁶ Burton, *Lake Regions of Central Africa*, vol. 1, p. 145.

that could be 'slung between' two men.⁶⁷ This highlights how the wider network of imperial mobility facilitated the physical movement of his books in the field.



Captain Bubble, and his attendant, Squeak, set out to discover the Source of the Nile.

Figure 6.8. 'Captain Bubble, and his attendant, Squeak', Cartoonist's impression, 1872 (pasted in one of Isabel Burton's scrapbooks). Courtesy of Burtoniana.org.

With the rigours of travel and practicalities of space ever-present issues, each book may not have been a constant presence throughout the journey. The equipment of the expedition itself was fragile and a large proportion of scientific and navigational

⁶⁷ Francis Galton, *The Art of Travel; or Shifts and Contrivances available in Wild Countries* (2nd edn, London: John Murray, 1856), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 381, p. iv.

instruments were lost, stolen, or broken. Yet the books were relatively sturdy and, of those identified as travelling with Burton, a third remain in his library today.⁶⁸ Whilst lists and citations do not necessarily guarantee that portable libraries were consulted, Burton stated that he read and handled his books ‘night after night ... again and again’.⁶⁹ From his handwritten comments on the surviving books, it is apparent that he read not only when preparing for his expedition but during his travels, and later when writing his account of the expedition, *Lake Regions of Central Africa*. The concentration and detail of the notes he made within these books indicate how he engaged with each book differently. Most notes were marked in the opening pages or within the contents pages, which would make them easily accessible on the move.

The first layer of marginalia present in each book shows how Burton used these books as objects of knowledge. This process of learning is indicated by impulsive underlining and lines in the margins to draw attention to specific words, points, and sections both on the contents pages and liberally sprinkled within the main text to guide his subsequent readings. His markings also noted down specific facts drawn from the text, which he also reproduced neatly in the front pages of the corresponding book. As in Cuvier’s and Prichard’s books, Burton repeated notations of anthropological terms

⁶⁸ The surviving texts from his ‘travelling library’ are all held in HEH, Rare Books Collection: Cooley, ‘Geography of N’yassi’ [it remains unclear as to whether he took the full journal volume or a copy of the paper, as he did in the case of James MacQueen], RFB 206; Georges Cuvier, *The Animal Kingdom*, BL 273; Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn), BL 381; J. F. W. Herschel (ed.), *A Manual of Scientific Enquiry, prepared for the Use of Officers in Her Majesty’s Navy, and Travellers in General* (2nd edn, London: John Murray, 1851), RFB 1360; Julian R. Jackson, *What to Observe; or, The Traveller’s Remembrancer* (2nd edn, London: Madden & Malcolm, 1845), RFB 426; Johannes L. Krapf, *Outline of the Elements of the Kisuábeli language* (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1850), RFB 484; *Vocabulary of Six East African languages: Kisuábeli, Kinika, Kikámba, Kipokómo, Kibiáú, Kigálla* (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1850), RFB 485; James Cowles Prichard, *The Natural History of Man: Comprising Inquiries into the Modifying Influence of Physical and Moral Agencies on the Different Tribes of the Human Family* (3rd edn, London: Hippolyte Bailliere, 1848), RFB 294; José Maria Corrêa Monteiro and Antonio Candido Pedroso Gamitto, *O Muata Cazembe e os povos Maraves, Chévas, Muizás, Muembas, Lundas e outros da Africa austral: Diario da Expedição Portuguesa Comandada pelo Major Monteiro e Dirigida àquelle Imperador Nos Anos de 1831 e 1832. Redigido Pelo Major A. C. P. Gamito. Com um Mappa do País Observado entre Tete e Lunda* (Lisboa: Imprensa nacional, 1854), RFB 1575. Burton also replaced his Norie volume with a later edition, John William Norrie, *A Complete Epitome of Practical Navigation: Containing All Necessary Instruction for Keeping a Ship’s Reckoning at Sea* (17th edn, London: Printed for the author, 1860).

⁶⁹ Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol. 2, p. 388.

and ‘divisions’ he deemed significant: ‘family’; ‘race’; ‘nation’; ‘tribe’; and ‘clan’.⁷⁰ The Prichard volume was also used for language practice as he worked to ‘break the neck of a language’ in its margins.⁷¹ His copious lists of ‘vowels’ and ‘consonants’, supported by a page of notes on the ‘standard alphabet’ had been neatly transcribed in pen from another source, showing how he transferred critical linguistic material in preparation, to be used as a source of reference to support his researches in the field (Figure 6.9).⁷² Yet, it was upon the pages of Jackson’s *What to Observe* and Galton’s *Art of Travel* that Burton engaged in a critical dialogue with the text.⁷³ These points of transaction detail how he mediated his role as an explorer on a RGS expedition, both in terms of what one needed to know to be prepared, and how to conduct oneself in the field.

⁷⁰ Cuvier, *Animal Kingdom*, HEH, RFB 273, Preface; Prichard, *The Natural History of Man*, HEH, RFB 294, flyleaf. These terms were also noted down in pencil on the first page of the ‘Contents’ in Jackson, *What to Observe*, HEH, RFB 426.

⁷¹ Jutzi, ‘Burton and his Library’, pp. 100-101.

⁷² These notes were drawn from C. R. Lepsius, *Standard Alphabet for Reducing Unwritten Languages and Foreign Graphic Systems to a Uniform Orthography in European Letters. Recommended for adoption by the Church Missionary Society* (London: Seeleys, 1855).

⁷³ Jackson, *What to Observe*, HEH, RFB 426; Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn), HEH, RFB 381.

Standard Alphabet

In reducing various languages & foreign alphabets to a uniform orthography in European letters by D^r R. Lepsius. London 1855

Language the best direct the most simple & best impression of the whole national mind.

Latinian series of Indo-European tongues, more connected than Arabic, Syriac.

Fifty essential differences of sound in Asiatic tongues, English 32 letters.

Require definite system found in Nature of phonetic organization.

British & foreign with Lat. 150 tongues, 70 Asia 17 Polynesian & American, 13 African, rest Europe. 247 languages with 23. 140 translations in foreign Asiatic characters.

Opposit phonetic alphabetic systems meet in Hindustani: this is key to Lepsius.

Dr. Jones orthographic rule, "a language shall never use the same letter for different sounds, nor different letters for the same sound." Hieroglyphic use of certain characteristic signs. This may perfectly sound & well-founded.

Jones vowel system has been followed, to Arabic since 1834 by work of Sir Chas. Travels. Consonant system same states.

Confusion of "Distinction de l'Egypte" in 1813 aimed at simplification of symbols on arbitrary character for another.

Best starting point of universal linguistic alphabet Dr. Jones broad phonetic accuracy & linguistic accuracy.

Apparent sufficient of a. to what sounds, an endless variety within assignable limits. Consonant system of phonology, vowel.

Great practical difficulty of every attempt at union in Republic of letters.

Historic-phonetic class (for linguistic scholars) at the Berlin Academy.

Travels in respect to Hieroglyphic Jones orthography: report account of want of phonetic basis & fully described with Prof. M. Muller rejected by reason of tables shall would preclude ordinary use of tables, render it impossible to write the letters & not to be used.

Lepsius 34 proposals, phonetic-phonological systems.

From Arabic

add untranscribed	a	o	o	o	o
i between a & o	e	e	e	e	e
	i	i	i	i	i

These complete system also letters

a	o	o	o
e	e	e	e
e	e	e	e
e	e	e	e
e	e	e	e

long vowels 7 classes

1. Punctate	2. Guttural	3. Palatal	4. Labial
5. Lingual (hard)	6. Dental	7. Labial	

words never changeable element then long vowels.

edit

Figure 6.9. Burton's 'Standard Alphabet' notes transcribed from Lepsius, *Standard Alphabet* (1855) into Prichard, *The Natural History of Man* (1855), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 294, blank page opposite p. 1 and p. 1.

In *What to Observe*, Jackson stated that his purpose was to ‘point out to the uninitiated Traveller what he should observe, and to remind the one who is well informed of many objects which, but for a Remembrancer, might escape him’.⁷⁴ Burton used this text in line with this objective, and sought to initiate himself as a scientific traveller by underlining notable terms and drawing out specific diagrams in the margins to more clearly illustrate the words of the text.⁷⁵ He also indicated how he approached the topics of the book through the dual focus of geography as a physical and human science, by dividing the contents of Jackson’s book into categories of ‘political’ and ‘physical’ geography (Figure 6.10). However, he also departed from Jackson’s ideal, by recording his immediate impressions of the text, its contents, and the efficacy of these for preparing the explorer. His reviews were given in the book’s contents pages and, as he progressed through the pages, Burton marked topics as ‘read’, ‘read all’, ‘useless’, or ‘shirks a difficulty’.⁷⁶ For topics that he labelled ‘useless’, such as ‘finance’, he would direct himself to other works he considered more relevant and noted to himself, for example, to ‘read Adam Smith and Chambers’.⁷⁷ He took these personal suggestions further and made, what could be termed, editorial interventions for those ‘difficult’ topics that he found wanting in Jackson’s current treatment of them. These appeared on the first page of the ‘Preface’ where Burton made a list of six items he ‘wanted’; these ranged from such theoretical topics as ‘Malthus Pol. Economy’, to topical publications

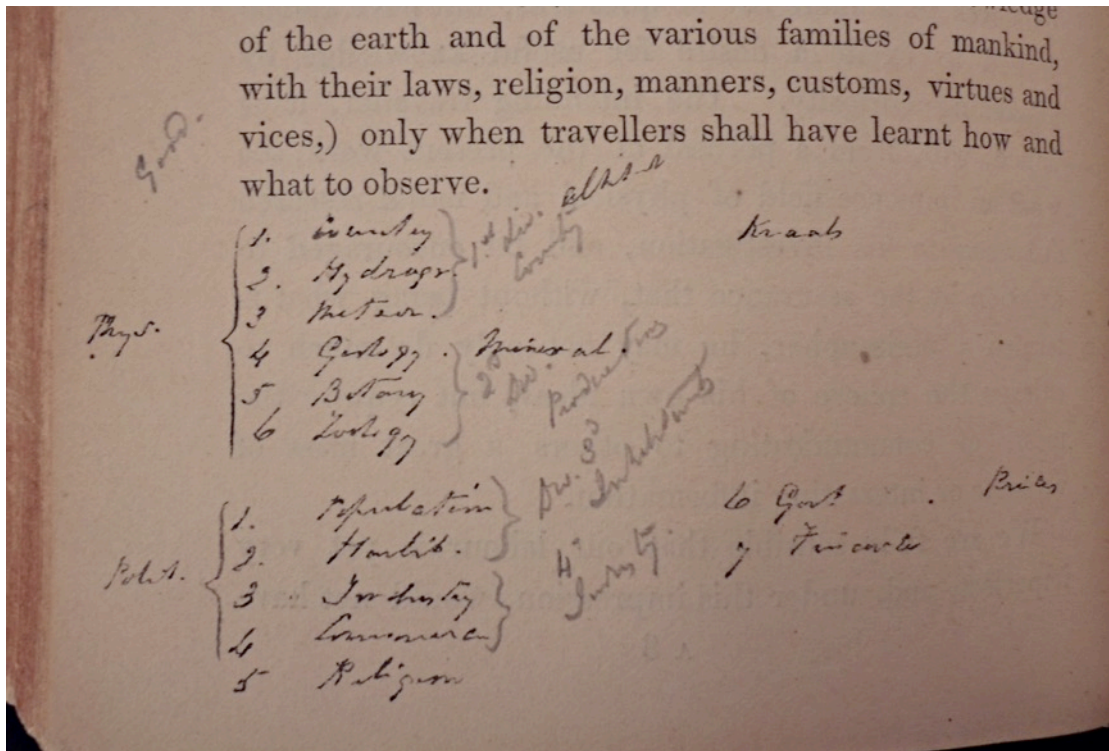
⁷⁴ Jackson, *What to Observe* (2nd edn), p. iii.

⁷⁵ Pencil sketches appear in the margins of Jackson, *What to Observe* (2nd edn), HEH, RFB 426, p. 5; 9; 27; 81.

⁷⁶ Ibid. In the ‘Contents’, Burton marked as ‘read all’: ‘instruments and operations’. He marked as ‘read’: ‘Of a Country considered in itself; ‘Meterology of the Climate of a Country; ‘Productions of a Country; ‘Geological and Mineralogical Production of a Country; ‘Vegetable Production; ‘Animal Productions, or Zoology of a Country; ‘Agricultural Industry; ‘Manufacturing Industry; ‘Commerce; and ‘On the Mode of Collecting, Preserving, and Packing Animals, Plants, and Minerals’. He marked as ‘useless’: ‘on science and literature; ‘Habitations, Cities and Towns; ‘foreign relations; and ‘particular institutions and establishments’. He commented: ‘Always shirks a difficulty – p. 9 omits Botany’ on p. iii.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 345. The texts are: Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776); Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia, or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Science*, 2 vols (London, 1728).

such as the 'Report of the Committee of Physics of the Royal Society', to the literary of 'Ossian' and 'Montesquieu'.⁷⁸



Physical	1. Country 2. Hydrogr. 3. Meteor.		1st Div. Country				
					4. Geology 5. Botany 6. Zoology		2nd Div. Productivity – mineral
	Political	1. Population 2. Habit.		Div. 3rd Inhabitants			
						3. Industry 4. Commerce 5. Religion	

Figure 6.10. How Burton divided 'Physical and Political' Geography, in Jackson, *What to Observe* (2nd edn, 1845), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 426, p. vi.

⁷⁸ Listed at the top of the first page of the 'Preface' in Jackson, *What to Observe* (2nd edn), HEH, RFB 426.

Critically, it was the second edition copy of the Galton's *Art of Travel* that Burton kept by his side throughout the expedition and it sits as material evidence of not just his reading, but of how he worked through this manual. The extremely worn, tattered, and used copy was one of constant interaction: an open and working document. At the turn of every page he left trails of marginalia that exist in layers of different inks and pencils to suggest that they were developed over time as notes have been added, crossed out, or overlapped as new experiences and thoughts came to correspond with or contradict Galton's text. This work offered practical advice 'to all who may have to "rough it"' and it is one of the only editions in Burton's surviving library that is duplicated, as he retained his annotated copy and obtained a later edition that was unmarked.⁷⁹ He constructed his own 'reader's index' of key terms and points of interest, with corresponding page numbers on the flyleaves and first pages of the book (Figure 6.11).

⁷⁹ Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn), p. iii. Burton's second copy of the text: Galton, *Art of Travel* (3rd edn, London: John Murray, 1860), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 382. Burton also had a second copy of Jackson, *What to Observe: or, The Traveller's Remembrancer* (3rd edn, revised and edited by Norton Shaw, London: Houlston & Wright, 1861), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 427. Both feature minimal marginal intervention. For Burton to have additional copies was exceptional; as Isabel stated: 'he would never keep two of anything. If he had two things of a sort he gave one away', in I. Burton, *Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton*, vol. 2, p. 264.

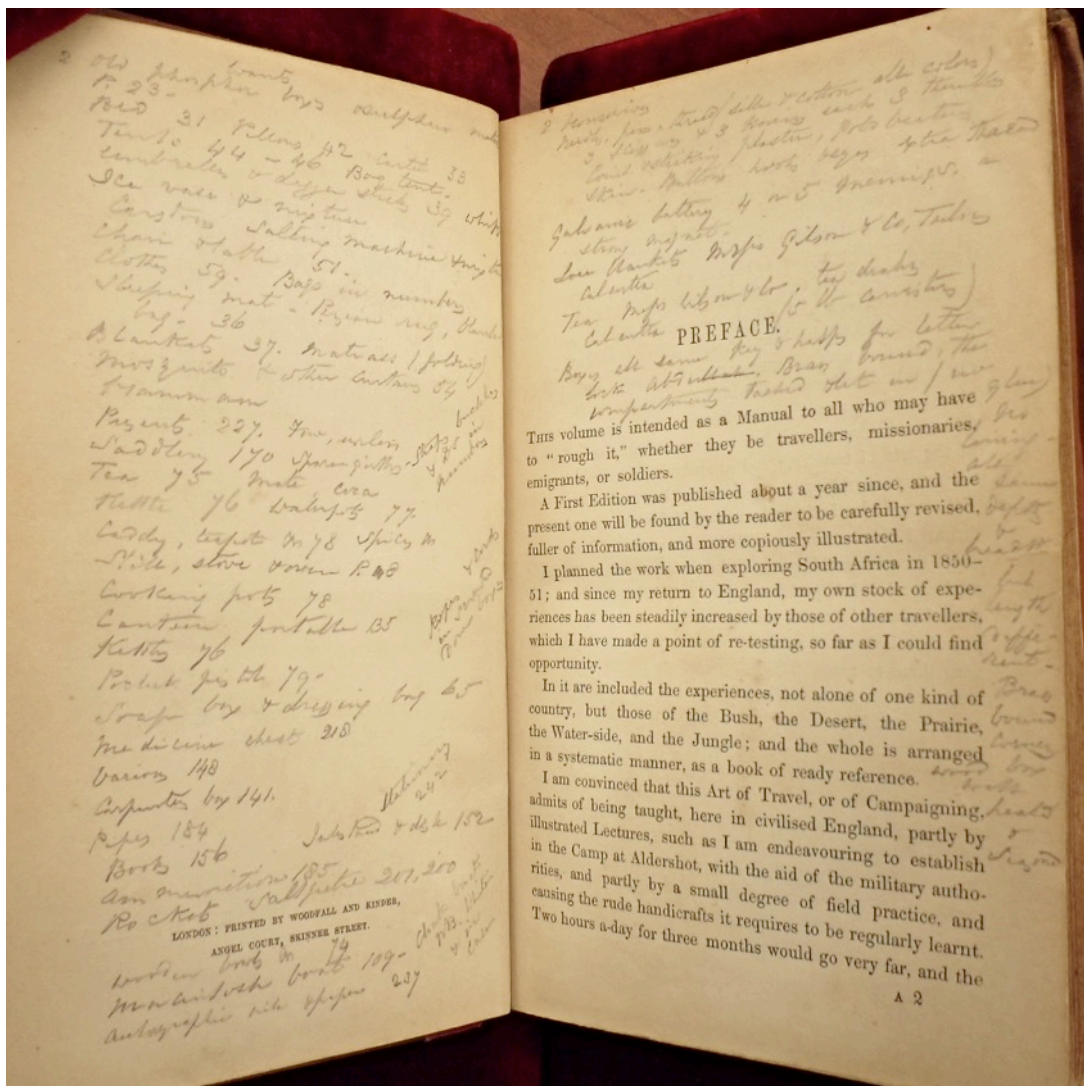


Figure 6.11. Burton's reader's index for Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 381, preface.

Burton went deeper than simply reading to assimilate information, and he read *Art of Travel* critically in order to assess the utility of the information given. As in *What to Observe*, Burton intervened to suggest extra features that he desired to be added as 'a long appendix'.⁸⁰ Specifically, his comments in the 'List of Instruments' section illustrate

⁸⁰ On the flyleaf of his copy of Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn), Burton wrote: 'this excellent book requires a long appendix viz.

1. Geology
2. Botany, synopsis
3. Cuvier's Lists
4. Phrenology (for anatomy)
5. Rol. Geogr. Soc's Questions

how he modified the advice based on his own experience in Africa.⁸¹ With the instruments on his expedition being notoriously unreliable, he used both Galton's and Jackson's books to comment on the amount of apparatus to bring and to make notes on their use. These alterations were made directly in the text itself, with instruments such as 'A Sextant' being crossed out and replaced with '3 sextants. All same size', and reminders were made that pocket sextants were 'of little use' and also to ensure that the sextant's reading-off lens was 'as powerful as possible'.⁸² It is not clear whether these were passed on to Galton as suggestions or were just for Burton himself.⁸³ Perhaps tellingly, subsequent editions of *Art of Travel* did not adjust the instrument lists in accordance with his modifications, and they did not feature any of the suggested items on his 'appendix'.

Whilst these alterations followed the lines of the text itself, Burton came to redress the official 'outfit' of his expedition in the blank space at the end of the 'Writing Materials' section.⁸⁴ He used these pages to compile a long list of other books (Figures 6.12 and 6.13). This presents a distinctly different set of literary materials to what he detailed as having been carried on his expedition, which could give an insight into the 'other miscellaneous works' that appeared at the end of his booklist.⁸⁵ This diverse mix

-
6. Questions Ethnological Soc.
 7. Specimens of language. Vocabulary desired.
 8. Surveying without instruments...
 9. Particular trigonometry
 10. Forms of stationary, diary, field book
 11. Thermometer & Barometer & Disk & Gauge
 12. Stuffing birds'

⁸¹ Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn), pp. 239-243.

⁸² Further amendments to the 'List of Instruments' given in Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn) HEH, RFB 381, pp. 239-243: 'Artificial Horizon' – folding glass screen was 'not necessary'; a bottle of 'soda-water' could be used instead of a 'bottle full of mercury'; metal plate was 'good' to rest it on but 'gen. rest on its box', p. 240. 'Watch' – black steel hands, 'no they rust', p. 240. 'Thermometers' – changed 2 boiling thermometers to 4; changed 2 or 3 common thermometers to 4; a pot to boil them in was 'not necessary', p. 241. 'Lantern' – take 'a spare oil part. Also use candles', p. 241. 'Additional Instruments' – changed a pedometer to 3 or 4, p. 242. 'Stationary' – wrote 'True' that the traveller needed a board to write on and that for the ruled paper 'Letts largest', p. 242.

⁸³ Galton, 'Letter addressed by Francis Galton, Esq., to the Secretary', p. 345.

⁸⁴ Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn), pp. 154-156.

⁸⁵ Burton and Speke, 'A Coasting Voyage from Mombasa to the Pangani River', p. 226; Burton, *Lake Regions of Central Africa*, vol. 1, p. 155.

of works provides a unique insight into what extra personal materials Burton liked to read or have at hand on his trips. Yet, whether these were books he listed to take, or thought of as useful when he was there is unknown.

The jotted notes represent a huge breadth of works, including Turkish, Syriac, and Sanskrit language texts, literary works, books of games, and politics and economics volumes. Burton used the pages as sites of active engagement and employed them as a jotter for his ideas as they came to him. Formed from layers of different inks and pencils in unordered columns, the hectic structure presents minimal details and indicates clearly that it was drafted over time and was wholly personal and knowable to only him. Despite this, Burton appears to haphazardly group authors together, which in some instances presents a significant arrangement. The early modern poets, Dante Alighieri, Torquato Tasso, and Ludovico Ariosto are placed together, close to Luís de Camões – all of which came to be works of great importance to Burton. He later went on to translate these works, some more fully than others, and thus it could signify a list of books he wished to work on and believed needed development for intellectually advancing his exploratory experiences. Whilst it is unlikely that these additional authors' works were carried on the expedition, they present a strong intervention beyond the text itself into mediating the material Burton believed an explorer should consult on their travels. Through the simple act of producing a list, Burton constructed a phenomenological link between the active space of the field he was experiencing and the voice of ancient authority he had encountered at home.

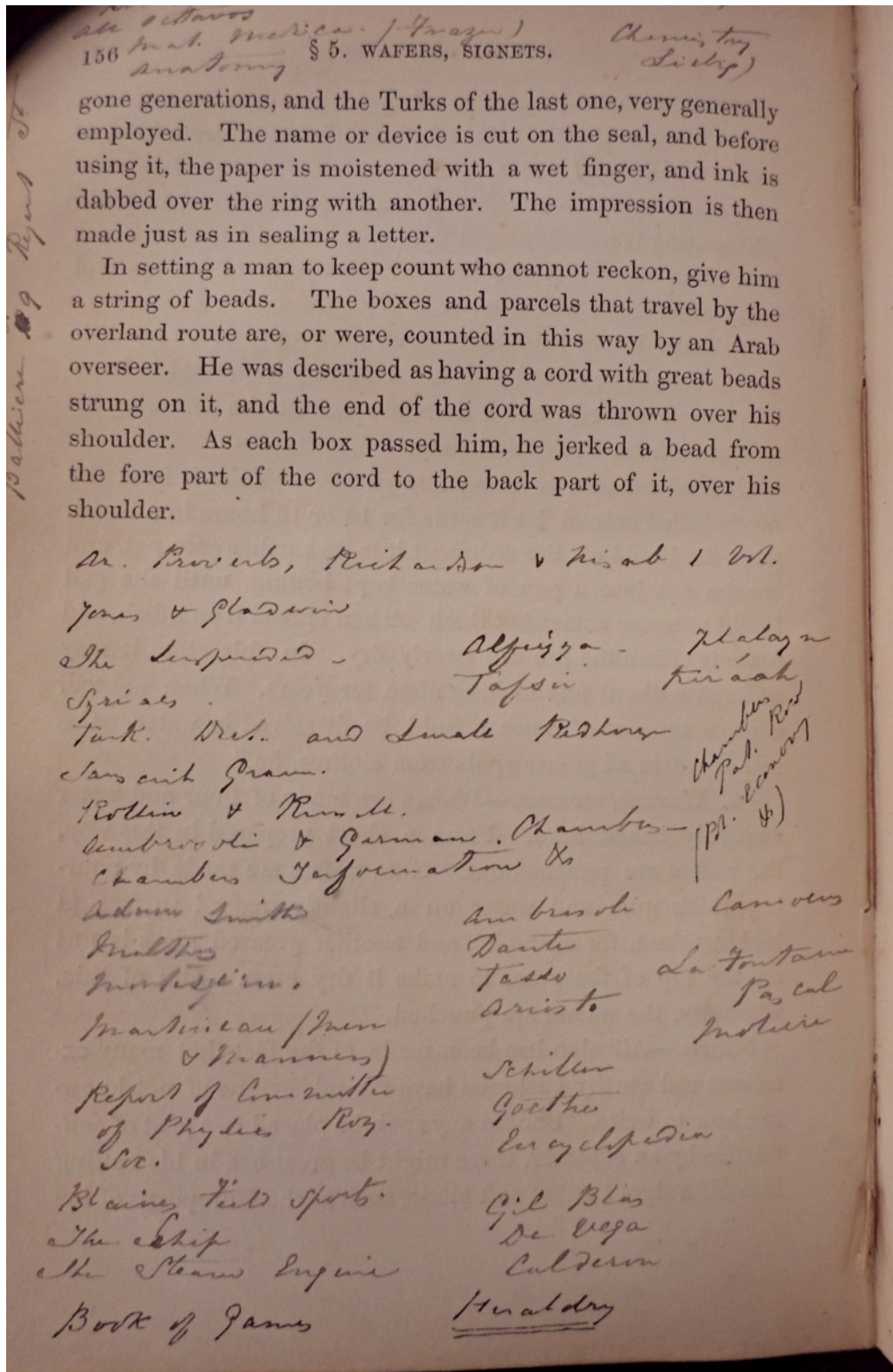


Figure 6.12. Burton's additional book list, in Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 381, p. 156.

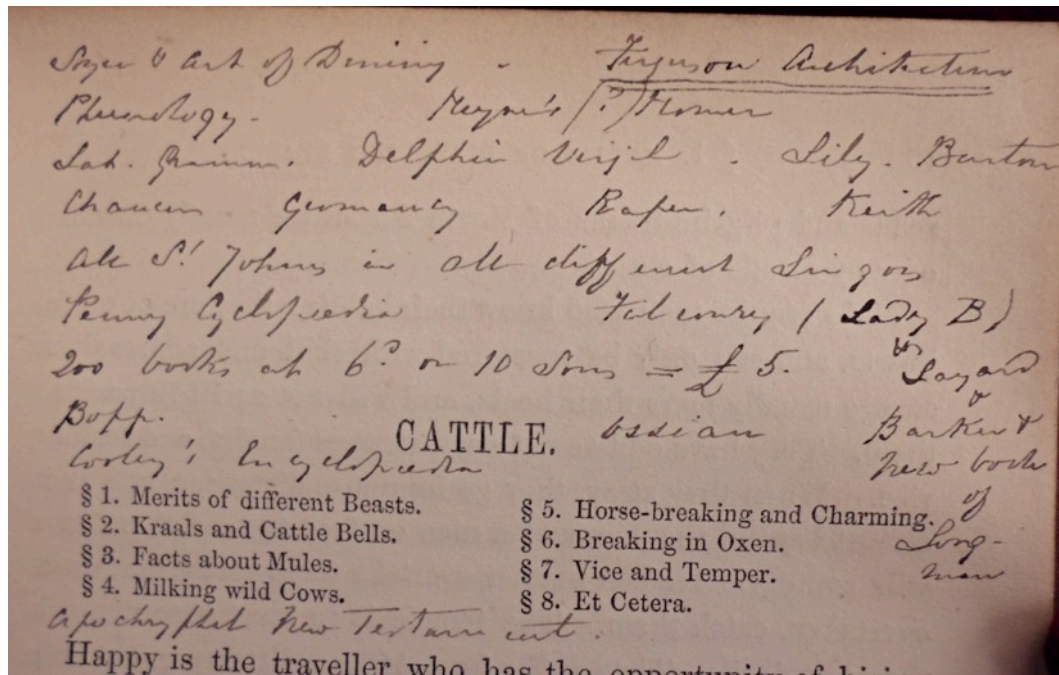


Figure 6.13. Burton's additional book list, in Galton, *Art of Travel* (2nd edn), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 381, p. 157.

The mobile library allowed Burton to bring his everyday observations into direct contact with the range of theories on the geography of the region that he had read. He drew on key contemporary geographical texts in preparation for his trip and, of these, he named the works of Bowdich, Cooley, and MacQueen as having accompanied him.⁸⁶ How exactly Burton used such texts in the field, and hence how ocular and textual evidence were combined, is hard to say due to the loss of the volumes taken. However, a similar work by Cooley that has survived can be used to indicate Burton's responses to his encounters with place and page at different moments. His annotations within Cooley's *Inner Africa Laid Open* denote discrete layers of reading, which appear to have

⁸⁶ Thomas Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (London: John Murray, 1819); Cooley, 'Geography of N'yassi'; rough draft of James MacQueen, 'Notes on the Geography of Central Africa, from the Researches of Livingston [sic], Monteiro, Graça, and Others', *JRGS*, 26 (1856), pp. 109-130.

occurred before he travelled, upon his return, and years later as the critical discussions continued.⁸⁷

Whilst his first pencilled responses to the text appeared to glean navigational information and linguistic detail, in some instances Burton also challenged Cooley's sources by placing 'rot' next to significant testimonies that claimed to have seen river outlets with their 'own eyes'.⁸⁸ Burton took these conjectures into the field with him and such expressions of disagreement could have been his identification of these points as unfounded claims to examine further in the field. The expedition provided direct evidence that the hypothetical geography of the region drawn by Cooley was confused. Whilst Cooley reached the conclusion that there was only one lake from his synthetic survey, Burton stated that there were at least four waters.⁸⁹ Consequently, Burton's subsequent readings of this book served to further strip away its credibility. His increasing criticisms were given in pen and recorded signs of his re-questioning (?) and exclaiming (!) at particular statements as he revisited the text. These more probing notes also marked a shift from Burton merely commenting on the speculations presented towards him directly critiquing on Cooley's approach. Burton clearly outlined that certain points needed to be treated with suspicion and some dismissed entirely, with remarks such as 'N.B. clearly a lie!' boldly printed in the margins (Figure 6.14). This sense of Burton becoming increasingly frustrated with what he had read led him to

⁸⁷ William Desborough Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open: In an Attempt to Trace the Chief Lines of Communication Across that Continent South of the Equator: with the Routes to the Muropue and the Cazembe, Moenemozi and Lake Nyassa; the journeys of the Rev. Dr Krapf and the Rev. J. Rebmann on the eastern coast, and the discoveries of Messrs. Oswell* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1852), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 1544. It is clear he returned to the text over a decade later (c.1873) as he wrote 'Cooley, Ocean High. June 1873' in the margin of page 4, in reference to the article, William Desborough Cooley, 'African Geography' (June 1873), in Clements R. Markham (ed.) *Ocean Highways: The Geographical Review* (London: N. Trübner and Co., 1874), pp. 125-126.

⁸⁸ Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, HEH, RFB 1544, p. 56. 'Rot' also appeared on pages 60, 64, 72, 74, 105, and 145.

⁸⁹ Burton, 'The Lake Regions', pp. 217-259.

directly challenge Cooley to ‘produce a single correct statement which he has made about the Lake Regions of Central Africa’.⁹⁰

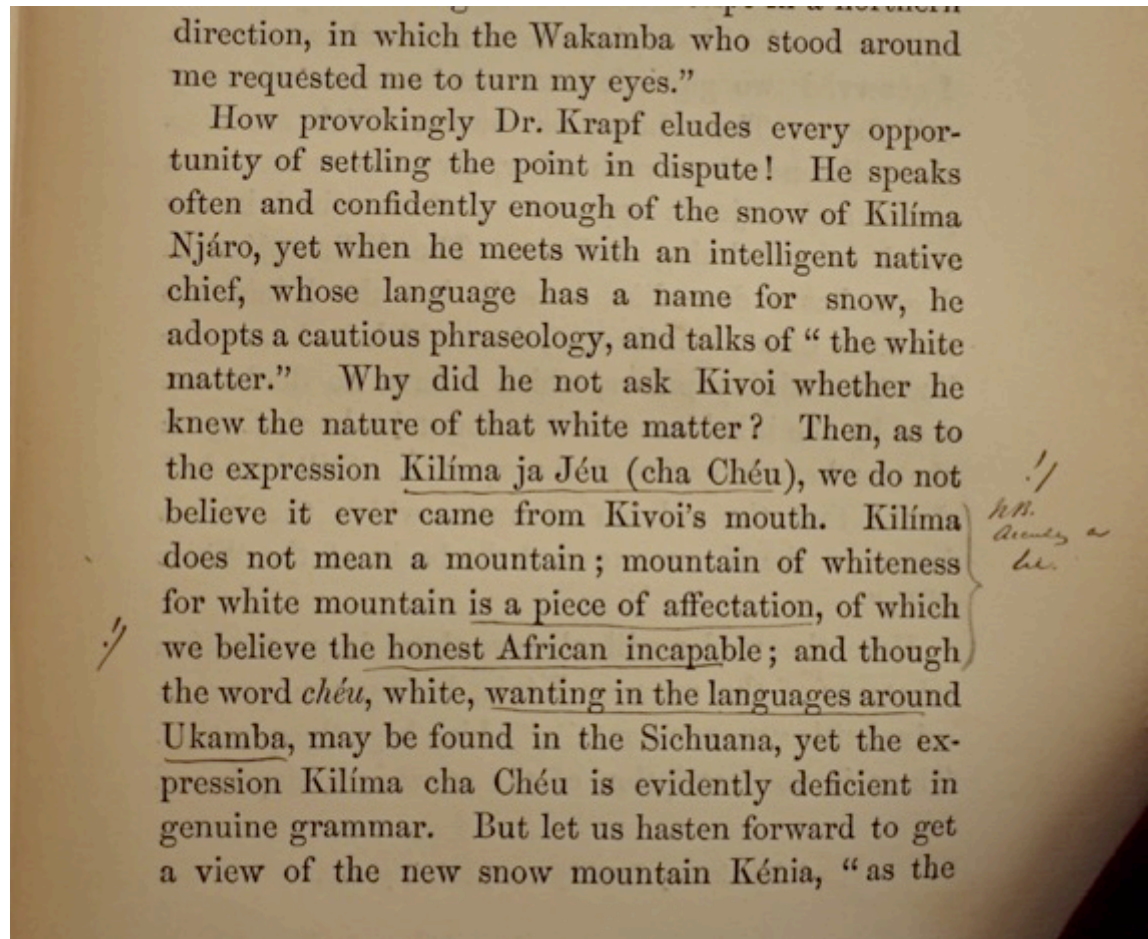


Figure 6.14. ‘! – NB. Clearly a lie – !’
Burton’s comment in Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open* (1852), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 1544, p. 107.

Burton’s travelling library was not just a tool to resolve contentions, but its contents became objects of contention themselves. Burton and Speke held dramatically different views of the role of the explorer and the epistemological standards they were obliged to meet.⁹¹ Speke echoed the dictate of the RGS that his role was to collect information through direct observation, whereas Burton believed in the need to

⁹⁰ Richard F. Burton, ‘Captain Burton and Mr Cooley’ (September 1873), in Markham (ed.), *Ocean Highways*, pp. 258-259, p. 259.

⁹¹ For more critical discussion on this relationship see Kennedy, *Highly Civilised Man*, pp. 106-116.

infiltrate customs, cultures, and languages. As fellow explorer James Augustus Grant explicated:

The two travellers had no sympathies, their natures entirely differed. Speke observed and mapped and collected specimens of natural history. He was the geographer and sportsman of the expedition. Burton knew little of these matters. He excelled in his own line, made copious notes by day and by night of all he saw and heard; he had the gift of languages; while surrounded by natives he amused them, won their confidence, and so obtained those stores of information which have been since transferred to something like eighty volumes. He travelled with three heavy cases of books for consultation. These included a work of the Upper Nile, which would have been of important service to Speke – had he ever seen it!⁹²

Grant draws a clear distinction between Speke as the field scientist and Burton as an interpreter, note-taker, and reader. These different roles led Speke to make several complaints about Burton's relaxed attitude to developing his observation skills and upholding the standards of scientific exploration, as required by the RGS.⁹³ However, Burton believed that these criticisms came from Speke's own hatred of 'book-learning and writing'.⁹⁴ In detailing their work, Burton seemingly upheld the image drawn by Grant and he characterised himself as the intellectual and Speke as the practical man. Acknowledging the 'value of these labours', he noted how Speke would sit for hours 'practising lunars and timing chronometers', but that they would also 'read together' and

⁹² J. A. Grant, 'Burton and Speke', *The Times*, 28 October 1890, p. 11.

⁹³ Speke stated to Christopher Rigby that Burton 'never learnt observing', see 'Letter from Speke to Rigby', 20 [no month] 1860, NLS, MS 17910, ff. 96-97.

⁹⁴ Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol. 2, p. 373.

Speke would practice writing a diary which he would pass to Burton for correction.⁹⁵ It was on their return in 1859 that the spotlight fell upon these labours in the field.

Despite being elected to Fellowship with thirteen supporting signatures and receiving the highest honour of the Founder's Medal in May of that year, Burton soon fell out of favour at the RGS.⁹⁶ The relationship between Burton and Speke rapidly deteriorated as their different accounts of the expedition circulated and it was clear for all to see, hear, and read.⁹⁷ Their fundamentally different views on the nature of exploration were exacerbated by their discordant claims to have discovered the source of the Nile: Speke claiming it was in Victoria Nyanza and Burton asserting that it lay in Lake Tanganyika. With the RGS choosing to sponsor Speke in a return expedition to Zanzibar with James Augustus Grant in 1860, Burton soon became a loud and vociferous critic of the politics and methods of doing geography, as put forward by the Society. He expressed concerns over the obligations being imposed on the explorer, and how they were stripping away the bold independence of action that had characterised the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century expeditions.⁹⁸ Burton railed against what he saw as the unidirectional efforts made by stay-at-home geographers who directed the movement of exploration and appropriated the evidence collected, without undertaking the physical research themselves, nor recognising the explorer as a learned contemporary. He vehemently objected to this emerging division of labour, which he viewed as intellectual arrogance born of resentment, with the explorer providing the

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 388-389.

⁹⁶ 'Copy of Certificate of Candidate for Election, from Registers and Council Minute Books: Richard Francis Burton', 1859, RGS-IBG, RGS Fellowship Certificates (1830-1988); 'Presentation of the Royal Awards', *JRGS*, 29 (1859), pp. xcv-ci, p. xcv.

⁹⁷ John Hanning Speke, *What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1864); Burton, *Lake Regions of Central Africa*. See also, Carnochan, *Sad Story of Burton, Speke, and the Nile*.

⁹⁸ Kennedy, *Highly Civilised Man*, p. 100.

scientific community with the ‘exact geographical data’ that eluded them.⁹⁹ As he strongly stated in his published account of the expedition:

We are told somewhat peremptorily that it is our duty to gather actualities, not inferences – to see and not to think; in fact, to confine ourselves to transmitting the rough material collected by us, that it may be worked into shape by the professionally learned at home. But why may not the observer be allowed a voice concerning his own observations, if at least his mind be sane and his stock of collateral knowledge be respectable?¹⁰⁰

Delving into his geographical praxis, it is apparent that Burton believed that his experiences in the field provided a credible foundation upon which he could examine geographical evidence, enabling him to build his own comparative observations between what he saw and what he read. His material interventions into his books enacted and animated the complex spatiality and temporality of the expedition and served to link the two sites of study: home and field. Burton’s library was mobile and extended across and through these different physical, intellectual, and material spaces thereby complicating the culture of active exploration, in which home institutions were trying to encourage a regulated method of observation and collection, in a distinct field out there.

After the fall-out of the East African Expedition, Burton would never again visit the Nile Basin. As he entered the next stage of his career in consular service, he moved away from the formal field of institutional regulation and disciplined scientific exploration. After his first posting in Fernando Po from 1861 to 1864, Burton was sent

⁹⁹ Burton, ‘The Lake Regions’, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Burton, *Lake Regions of Central Africa*, vol. 1, p. vii.

to Santos in Brazil.¹⁰¹ Yet whilst he spent this period of his life as an official stationed in one place, he managed to retain a sense of movement through short trips and, as his books unsurprisingly followed him, he was able to encounter new places through reading.

Building Burton's 'Den': The study as a site of textual encounter

Despite his resentment towards his altered personal and professional circumstances, Burton entertained his inquisitive nature by continuing to engage in the pursuit of geographical knowledge and seeking to master languages and dialects. Burton used his consular posts 'as launching pads for exploratory probes' into neighbouring hinterlands and boasted that he had come to 'know every stick and stone for a hundred miles round, and all the pre-historic remains of the countryside'.¹⁰² In order to expunge any sense of dull monotony that came with maintaining sedentary links to his official consulate duties, Burton and his new wife set up homes that would suit his 'wild-cat proclivities'.¹⁰³ He explained the significance of forming a domestic space that, through its geographical position and architectural qualities, felt as if 'we were always ready for an expedition'. Yet, he also strikingly juxtaposed the active life outside with the repose and quiet of the inside, it being 'a comfortable place to come back to'.¹⁰⁴ Such a comment is indicative of the complex relationship Burton held between internal domestic spaces and external sites of potentially infinite exploration.

The buildings in which they lived in São Paulo and Damascus were not spoken of with affected attachment and were not regarded as stable dwellings, but rather

¹⁰¹ Burton remained in consular service for the rest of his life, taking up later postings in Damascus (1869–1871) and Trieste, Italy (1873–1890).

¹⁰² Kennedy, *Highly Civilised Man*, p. 119; Richards, 'Captain Richard F. Burton at Trieste', p. 37.

¹⁰³ Wilkins (ed.), *Romance of Isabel Lady Burton*, vol. 2, p. 375.

¹⁰⁴ Richards, 'Captain Richard F. Burton at Trieste', p. 35.

transitory places, in which they had ‘pitched their tent’.¹⁰⁵ It was his final posting to Trieste in 1873 that came to have more permanence and Isabel labelled it their ‘restful harbour’.¹⁰⁶ Whilst the move to this small commercial consulate precipitated a demotion in Burton’s status and salary, the duties were light and he was able to ‘find, if not repose, at least leisure’.¹⁰⁷ The Burtons’ residence soon became a famed social landmark, described as a ‘Mecca to which many a literary pilgrim and social, scientific, and political celebrity turned his steps when travelling by way of Trieste’.¹⁰⁸ With time to devote to travel and his literary labours, Burton explored the land of the Midian, conducted an expedition in West Africa, and completed his translation of the *Arabian Nights*, alongside preparing for further translations and historical works. This concentration on scholarly labour accentuates the interior space of Burton’s house as a space of significance. His home acted as a ‘theatre of composition’; it was not an empty space, but one animated by the material objects that framed his intellectual labour.¹⁰⁹

With material props collected from all over the world decorating the walls and floors, Burton’s varied life experiences, cultural encounters, and scholarly achievements were showcased and celebrated in the public spaces of the drawing rooms. Yet as the visitor moved away from the public and into the private spaces of the house, the rooms became simpler and barer. The clutter of the main rooms was juxtaposed against the ‘Spartan simplicity’ of the bedrooms which only contained ‘little iron bedsteads covered with bearskins’, flanked by reading-tables which held the books that travelled with the Burtons ‘on all their wanderings’; namely, the Bible, Shakespeare, Euclid, and the *Breviary*.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Wilkins (ed.), *Romance of Isabel Lady Burton*, vol. 1, p. 256; vol. 2, p. 376.

¹⁰⁶ Wilkins (ed.), *Romance of Isabel Lady Burton*, vol. 2, p. 540.

¹⁰⁷ Jones, ‘Sir Richard Burton’, p. 3. The Burtons spent their first six months in Trieste at the Hotel de Ville.

¹⁰⁸ Wilkins (ed.), *Romance of Isabel Lady Burton*, vol. 2, p. 604.

¹⁰⁹ Fuss, *Sense of an Interior*, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Richards, ‘Captain Richard F. Burton at Trieste’, pp. 33-34.

Despite a clear distinction in the contents of the public and private spaces of the house, the spatial division between working and living space was blurred. Bookshelves lined the entire house to make Burton's books and collected objects a presence in every room. These shelves held a library that was estimated at containing 'six thousand or more volumes in every Western language, as well as in Arabic, Persian and Hindustani' and 'every odd corner is piled with weapons, guns, pistols, boar-spears, swords of every shape and make, foils and masks, chronometers, barometers, and all kinds of scientific instruments'.¹¹¹ Evidently, Burton fetishised the objects that he had carried on his expeditions, with each item having a practical use, as well as an aesthetic one (Figure 6.15). Such an outward display of his practical identity as residing in his home also signified that it was inseparable from his private identification of self.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 34.



Figure 6.15. 'The Corner of Richard Burton's Study', by Albert Letchford, c.1890. Courtesy of Richmond Borough Art Collection, Orleans House Gallery.

Following their later move to the *Palazzo Gossleth*, Burton made his own self-contained apartment within it, formed of the largest rooms to comprise a bedroom, dressing room, breakfasting area, and work room.¹¹² With his deteriorating health and lagging expeditionary career, he spent a large amount of his time within these rooms during the 1880s until his death in 1890. Bernd Steigler stated that such a 'living space is not just the space of the inhabitant – it is his world', and these rooms became his 'den',

¹¹² Lovell, *Rage to Live*, p. 675.

where he lived, worked, and received guests.¹¹³ Dr Frederick Grenfell Baker and artist Albert Letchford committed the rooms to historical record, and, from their collection, ‘Burton in his Study’ captured the intimate living and working world of Burton (Figure 6.16).¹¹⁴



Figure 6.16. ‘Burton in his Study’, photograph taken by Dr Grenfell Baker, c.1887–1890. Courtesy of Richmond Borough Art Collection, Orleans House Gallery.

This private realm is emphasised by the frame sealing this site off from any external spaces and the acknowledgement of no reality beyond the four walls, the room is presented as a self-sufficient study space. In turn, this establishes a zone of privacy

¹¹³ Steigler, *Travelling in Place*, p. 116; I. Burton, *Life of Richard F. Burton*, vol. 2, p. 263.

¹¹⁴ Isabel commissioned artist Albert Letchford to produce a series of paintings of their home at Trieste. These included, the views from the windows, and nine of their favourite rooms. Letchford did not paint from life, but from photographs taken earlier by Dr Grenfell Baker, who had served as Burton’s medical attendant during the last three years of his life. The photographs and paintings are held at Richmond Borough Art Collection, Orleans House Gallery.

and embraces the romantic topos of solitude. The position assumed by Burton reading at his desk establishes a zone of privacy that speaks to the ‘silent reading’ of J. Paul Hunter’s ‘closet culture’, which ‘involved habits of privacy and solitude’.¹¹⁵ Burton’s gaze is obscured, but his lowered head suggests that he was engrossed in his actions and moving forward, ahead of the viewer. Whilst the title records Burton working ‘in’ his study, the arrangement captures a moment of contemplation and suspended animation; there is a sense of action and life, which suggests that he could be mentally journeying into a different place entirely beyond the frame of ‘his study’. The sense that the viewer is peering into a private scene lends the photograph credibility and suggests that it was not posed, but captured Burton as he was in that moment.

The piles of books and papers signal this room as a site of textual encounter and present the layers of potential discoveries in the process of being made; a ‘virtual paleontology’ of journeys he has taken, or is yet to take.¹¹⁶ Burton worked for a certain time each day in this room, and, according to his wife, he organised his work across a series of tables. He had a separate one for each book he was working on, which formed physically distinct, separate islands of ideas within his study: ‘Dick likes a separate table for every book, and when he is tired of one he goes to another’.¹¹⁷ These ‘rough deal tables’, of which there were about eleven, were specially made for Burton and the bookshelves were arranged so each table topic had a separate shelf.¹¹⁸ Whilst these descriptions suggest Burton took an ordered approach towards organising his study, his work would often sprawl beyond the physical boundary of its specified table and

¹¹⁵ J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1990), p. 157. See also, J. Paul Hunter, ‘The World as Stage and Closet’, in Shirley Strum Kenny (ed.), *British Theatre and the Other Arts, 1660–1800* (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1984), pp. 271–287.

¹¹⁶ Steigler, *Travelling in Place*, p. 34. For more on the relationship between architecture and science, see Sophie Forgan, ‘The Architecture of Display: Museums, Universities and Objects in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *History of Science*, 32 (1994), pp. 139–162; Sophie Forgan and Graeme Gooday, ‘Constructing South Kensington: The Buildings and Politics of T. H. Huxley’s Working Environment’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 29 (1996), pp. 442–448.

¹¹⁷ Richards, ‘Captain Richard F. Burton at Trieste’, p. 34.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.

extended onto every available surface, from the tables to the chairs to the dressers. This was more than a material metaphor for the expansion of his ideas as it reveals the varying spatial scales and modes of his engagement with reading and writing. Specifically, moving from examining the entire room to a single desk in more detail reveals how books formed a distinct spatial pattern around where Burton sat. From Baker's photograph, it can be observed that his back table edge was lined by a select number of books that had been placed as a core reference collection central to the table's topic (Figure 6.17). The books stacked at the edges of the table were possibly ones waiting to be read and admitted into this central table library. These select books framed the central workspace of his desk, where Burton had laid open the principal texts that he was in the process of reading. The liminal positioning of the books placed at his feet and on the chair next to him suggests that they were not crucially significant, but rather a fleeting reference. Burton was extremely particular about this mode of organisation and his wife remarked that 'he would not have his books and papers touched, and preferred dust and cobwebs to their being moved'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ I. Burton, *Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton*, vol. 2, p. 263.



Figure 6.17. Burton working at one of his tables, detail from photograph taken by Baker, c.1887–1890.

Whilst Burton was intent that his writing materials remain static, the room itself was a place of bodily movement. He journeyed from the bookshelf to the different desks as he reorganised his physical position and renegotiated his intellectual thoughts. Beyond the frame, Burton was not secluded, and he was able to walk between rooms freely, giving him the potential to escape and work elsewhere.¹²⁰ The windows were hugely important to Burton, as they engaged his senses and provided a critical bridge between the architectural interior of the room and the psychological interior of his mind. Burton worked only by natural light, and would rarely have the shutters closed in

¹²⁰ Richards, 'Captain Richard F. Burton at Trieste', p. 35.

order that he might see ‘daylight as soon as possible, and the last of the twilight’.¹²¹ With the senses being said to ‘breach the boundary between literal and figurative space’, the window could further serve as an optical instrument for Burton, that visually framed the images and narratives he encountered and ventured through, just as they are narratively represented on the page.¹²²

Such personal idiosyncrasies and workspace specifications were not unique to Burton, and he was also not the only scholar and man of science who suffered from physical ailments that affected the ability to move easily beyond their study. Since returning from his *Beagle* voyage, naturalist Charles Darwin was chronically ill and this led him to develop a reclusive nature. From 1842, Down House in Kent became the ‘nucleus of his existence for the rest of his life’ and the study therein was specifically designed to be an interior retreat, both literally and figuratively.¹²³ It acted as both a site of experiment and composition, and a place of rest and renewal. Darwin worked from a modified ‘office chair’ – a cushioned armchair he fitted with casters – that enabled him to move with ease between his writing desk and his rotating dissection table (Figures 6.18 and 6.19). Whilst the study spaces of Burton and Darwin were organised in similar ways, with demarcated sites for experimenting, reading, and writing, there were clear differences in their decorative style and the mode of inhabitation. With Burton walking between his tables and Darwin wheeling his chair to move around his room, these comparative illustrations demonstrate the multifaceted bodily inhabitations of space. Such an observation suggests that these personal rooms were an extension of their subjects. Darwin designed his study to be a comfortable place that maintained a sense of domesticity and met his health requirements. In contrast, Burton had a clear aversion to such domestic arrangements that carried significations of a settled bourgeois life.

¹²¹ I. Burton, *Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton*, vol. 2, p. 263.

¹²² Fuss, *Sense of an Interior*, p. 6.

¹²³ Aldemaro Romero and Kristen Noble, ‘Charles Darwin’s Bubble: The Evolution of Down House’, *Polymath: An Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences Journal*, 2 (2012), pp. 14-29, p. 16.



Figure 6.18. Interior of Charles Darwin's Study, Down House, Kent, photograph taken 1932. Courtesy of Wellcome Library, London.



Figure 6.19. Charles Darwin's Chair, photograph taken 1932. Courtesy of Wellcome Library, London.

Despite Burton's claim that he desired a 'comfortable place to come back to', the practical layout across tables suggests that Burton did not acclimatise himself to the nineteenth-century 'culture of comfort', in which the furnished interior and books were a form of comfortable escapism.¹²⁴ He did not conform to the embodiment of a gentleman of leisure who never roused from the repose of their study. Rather, Burton preferred to work from hard wooden writing chairs in old clothes.¹²⁵ His rooms had a distinct lack of comfortable flourishes, and Isabel lamented how she would busy herself in an attempt to make 'his room extremely comfortable; but the moment I put anything pretty in it, it used to be put in the passage'. The only overtly personal touches were a map of Africa hung over his bed, alongside an Arabic proverb which read 'All things pass'.¹²⁶ The significant physical positioning provides an oneiric quality to these objects, and suggests that Burton was still mentally journeying to Africa and working to overcome the tragic death of Speke.

Whilst the study was a room of private creation where personal pursuits were conducted in a sealed space, it was not isolated and did not exist in such a clear-cut spatial and epistemic dialectic. By injecting activity into these static representations, it becomes apparent that Burton's days were also broken up by episodes of social interaction and movement as a spur to his creativity and sanity. Isabel stated that they kept to a quotidian routine as closely as they could:

We rose at 3 or 4 a.m. in summer, and at 5 a.m. in winter. He read, wrote, and studied all day out of consular hours, and took occasional trips for his health ...

¹²⁴ Richards, 'Captain Richard F. Burton at Trieste', p. 35.

¹²⁵ I. Burton, *Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton*, vol. 2, p. 263.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

We took our daily exercise in the shape of an hour's swimming in the sea, or fencing at the school, according to the weather.¹²⁷

Physical activity and socialisation were everyday practices Burton used to renew his interests, and, as his wife explained, they also prevented him from getting 'fat and sofa bound'.¹²⁸ In particular, walking to initiate productivity and to provide inspiration was a sentiment shared by other literary and scientific writers.¹²⁹ Darwin approached his days systematically like Burton and he also broke up periods of work with games of billiards and backgammon, and took walks accompanied by his dog Polly along a small strip of land he used as a 'thinking pad'.¹³⁰ Yet, whilst Darwin declared himself to be 'fixed on the spot', it was Burton's custom to vary his life by many journeys and excursions.¹³¹ Burton experienced what John Wylie has called a 'folding' and 'unfolding' of self and landscape, in which he was part of, whilst simultaneously registering, the world.¹³² Such a profound involvement with the place in which he was situated imparted a sense of intimacy, familiarity, and symbiosis with the local geography.

Although Burton did not hold books to be a substitute for the field, he did not view reading as marking the end of travelling as an experience in geographical space. Whilst it has been shown that the act of reading had a unique spatiality and form of practice for Burton, how he approached marking the pages of his books was also spatially specific and materially significant, and demonstrates how he observed the world in print from his study chair.

¹²⁷ Wilkins (ed.), *Romance of Isabel Lady Burton*, vol. 2, p. 540-541.

¹²⁸ 'Letter from Isabel Burton to Lord Houghton', 3 December 1876, cited in Lovell, *Rage to Live*, p. 591.

¹²⁹ Keighren and Withers, 'Travels into Print'; Saunders, 'The Practice of the Text'; 'The Spatial Event of Writing'. See also, Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust* (New York: Penguin, 2001).

¹³⁰ Romero and Noble, 'Charles Darwin's Bubble', p. 17.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹³² John Wylie, 'A Single Day's Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30 (2005), pp. 234-247; 'Depths and Folds: On Landscape and the Gazing Subject', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 24 (2006), pp. 519-535.

Travelling through Text: Burton and his reader's maps

The presence of books on African exploration in the Burton Library indicates that whilst he never undertook another expedition to East Africa he remained interested in the RGS and its explorers, and the debates surrounding the source of the Nile.¹³³ His marginal notes communicated his responses to the narratives and his 'tearing to shreds nonsensical observations and overblown conclusions'.¹³⁴ Burton was not just a critical and, in many ways, bitter reader of these published works, but he also actively procured texts from various sources which he collated into an 'Africa' scrapbook. Its contents were mostly focused on the significant period of 1864–1868 and featured the words of critical geographical commentators Findlay, Cooley, and Beke, alongside various entries from antiquary William Sandys Wright Vaux.¹³⁵ With many of these pieces of text featuring annotations and underlining, this research was crucial for subsequent publications in which Burton collated and commented on the different views from historical and contemporary accounts on African geography.¹³⁶ Significantly, despite the scrapbook being bound in the late 1860s, Burton continued to gather and insert clippings of text up to 1887.¹³⁷ Whilst disclosing his sustained critical interest in the act of African exploration, it was his return to a particular text that had accompanied him on his own East African Expedition that reveals not just how Burton engaged in comparative observation, but how he saw reading as an aid to travel. This was the 1798 *Diary of Don Francisco de Lacerda* by one of the 'foremost in the heroic band' of African

¹³³ Key antagonists and explorers represented in the Burton Library Collections, HEH: Krapf, Cooley, Beke, Grant, Baker, Livingstone, Cameron, Stanley, and Speke.

¹³⁴ Jutzi, 'Burton and his Library', p. 102. For key examples of these comments, see pp. 102-103.

¹³⁵ [Africa], (S.l.: s.n., 1858–1868), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 238.

¹³⁶ Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol. 1; Richard Francis Burton, 'On Lake Tanganyika, Ptolemy's Western Lake-Reservoir of the Nile', *JRGS*, 35 (1865), pp. 1-15.

¹³⁷ Additional sources inserted into [Africa], HEH, RFB 238: 'Der Congo-Staat und das Freihandelsgebiet' [folded map dated 1885], laid in at front; Clipping on 'Baron Schwerin and the Congo', 17 July 1887 pasted on free endpaper at beginning; Portrait of Leopold II, King of the Belgians laid in at front; and clipping titled 'On Some Mediaeval Maps of Africa by Arabian geographers' pasted on Hogg, 'On Some Old Maps of Africa', p. 1.

travellers. His reading and translation of this text spanned his many movements from the field to the study.¹³⁸

Burton originally translated the *Diary* for his 'own use', yet he viewed the work as essential reading for 'every African explorer' as it taught them what to expect, through the eyes of 'not only a scientific traveller, but also a sympathetic, zealous, and hard-working man'.¹³⁹ As early as 1863, Burton indicated his intention to publish a translation of the text in order to also serve a wider public interest 'excited by the recent letters of Dr Livingstone concerning the country of the Cazembe and neighbouring regions of Central Africa'.¹⁴⁰ Despite this work being rejected by the Hakluyt Society in 1871, the topical nature of the translation led it to be finally accepted for publication by the RGS in 1873, as part of a compilation of 'narratives of Portuguese journeys into those little-known parts of the African interior'.¹⁴¹ Burton had also begun arranging the translation of the journey into Central Africa by the Hungarian traveller Ladislaus Magyar, which was still inaccessible to English readers at that time, in order to complete this series.¹⁴² However, the RGS refused to include the two accompanying appendices penned by Burton, which were deemed too controversial and critical. Indeed, the two-year delay in its publication proved to be a critically significant interval and furnished

¹³⁸ Burton stated that he had begun annotating Monteiro and Gamitto's 'O Muata Cazembe' for translation whilst on his East African Expedition, aided by two Portuguese servants. Richard Francis Burton, *The Lands of the Cazembe. Lacerda's Journey to Cazembe in 1798. Translated and Annotated by Captain R. F. Burton. F. R. G. S.* Also journey of the Pombeiros P. J. Baptista and Amaro Jose, across Africa from Angola to Tette on the Zambeze, translated by B. A. Beadle; and a Resume of the Journey of M. M. Monteiro and Gamitto. By Dr C. T. Beke (London: John Murray, 1873), p. xxxviii. The *Diary* was published whilst Burton was in Trieste.

¹³⁹ Burton, *Lands of the Cazembe*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴⁰ Burton requested a loan of Lacerda's book from the RGS, 'Letter from Burton to RGS', 26 September 1862, RGS-IBG, Correspondence Block 5/113; Burton, *Lands of the Cazembe*, p. iii.

¹⁴¹ Hakluyt Society Council Minutes, 20 November 1871, BL, Mss Eur F594. The translation of Lacerda appeared alongside two others: B. A. Beadle (trans.), *Journey of P. J. Baptista and Amaro Jose across Africa from Angola to Tette on the Zambeze*; Charles Tilstone Beke, *A Resume of the Journey of MM. Monteiro and Gamitto* (London: Printed for the Royal Geographical Society, John Murray, 1873).

¹⁴² 'The Lands of Cazembe', November 1873, in Markham (ed.), *Ocean Highways*, pp. 330-332, p. 332. This translation remains unpublished, see Richard Burton, 'Ladislaus Magyar translation', HEH, MS RFB 91 (1) – 91 (4); Box 17, MS RFB 91 (5) – 92 (2); Box 18, MS RFB 93 (1) – 93 (4).

Burton with time to pen these additional sections as a reflection on the use and value of such sources.

Plainly reeling at his rejection by the Hakluyt Society and the critical reviews of his own geographical labours in Africa, these appendices were not simply a scathing attack of his contemporaries, but concentrated on their lack of understanding modern and historical narratives.¹⁴³ Unwilling to accept that his work should appear in ‘mutilated form’, Burton ‘struck off ... a few copies of the rejected matter’ from his home in Trieste.¹⁴⁴ Within these *Supplementary Papers*, Burton disclosed that whilst taking advantage of an opportune moment to bring this book to print, he also harboured an intellectual imperative. Awaiting Livingstone’s observations, Burton put forward this ‘principal authority’ not only to increase knowledge of the African interior, but also to advance and promote a methodology of critical, comparative observation.¹⁴⁵ As demonstrated in Chapter 3, Lacerda was often referenced in the ‘pages of our best comparative geographers’ such as MacQueen, Beke, and Cooley, and Burton decided it was time to excavate the primary narrative from where their and his own citations had been mined.¹⁴⁶ Whilst Burton made a clear distinction between the ‘theorist’ and ‘practical man’, he claimed that both had lost their way when it came to using written sources, particularly Portuguese texts: “The fact is that our geographers have run into the contrary extremes ... these, like Dr Livingstone, neglect or despise them; those, like Mr Cooley, copy them with servility, but without understanding them’.¹⁴⁷

Cooley did not accept Burton’s charges and claimed instead that Burton had made assumptions with ‘presumptuous levity’. Since the East Africa Expedition directly

¹⁴³ Two appendices in Burton, *Supplementary Papers to the Mwátá Cazembe*: Richard F. Burton, ‘Appendix I: Notes on *How I Found Livingstone in Central Africa: Travels, Adventures and Discoveries*, by Henry M. Stanley’, pp. xvi-xxviii; ‘Appendix II: Being a Rejoinder to the “Memoir on *The Lake Regions of East Africa*”’.

¹⁴⁴ Burton, *Supplementary Papers to the Mwátá Cazembe*, ‘A word to the reader’.

¹⁴⁵ Burton, *Lands of the Cazembe*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ Burton, ‘Appendix II: Being a Rejoinder to the “Memoir on *The Lake Regions of East Africa*”’, p. xxix.

¹⁴⁷ Burton, *Supplementary Papers to the Mwátá Cazembe*, p. xxiii.

challenged Cooley's speculative geography, censorious words had been rapidly exchanged between the two men, accompanied by long and punctilious analyses of their sources.¹⁴⁸ The focus of these discussions was a slight empirical error made in Burton's *Lake Regions of Central Africa* that came from an apparent misunderstanding of Lacerda's movements, which led Cooley to claim this as an example of Burton being 'totally ignorant'.¹⁴⁹ Yet the core of this debate was a disagreement on their modes of reading. Cooley unjustly declared that Burton 'did not go to the trouble of research' and instead provided 'shamefully defective' information.¹⁵⁰ Burton admitted that Cooley 'knows not only what other men do read, but also what they do not read, although fancy may have freaked them into holding that they have read'.¹⁵¹ Although Burton admitted the small inaccuracy in his work, he also stated that Cooley's 'usual uncandid hypercriticism' merely perpetuated old and, what were proved to be, obsolete arguments.¹⁵² Burton advocated that these texts be approached not with reverence or sympathy, but with a 'critical eye', in order to avoid them merely being consigned 'to the library shelf labelled palaeo-geography', as he had done with Cooley's works.¹⁵³

Whilst access to historical narratives of travel had been opened up by the Hakluyt Society and the 'use' of such sources was encouraged and emphasised by figures central to the RGS and Hakluyt in Murchison and Markham, Burton took umbrage with their critical framing and presentation. Despite Murchison declaring that Hakluyt publications 'frequently record discoveries or assert important truths', Burton

¹⁴⁸ Two critical texts in this debate: Cooley, *Memoir on Lake Regions of East Africa* and Burton, 'Appendix II: Being a Rejoinder to the "Memoir on *The Lake Regions of East Africa*".

¹⁴⁹ William Desborough Cooley, 'Cooley and Captain Burton', November 1873, in Markham (ed.), *Ocean Highways*, pp. 341-343, p. 343. Cooley identified an error made in Burton in *Lake Regions of Central Africa*, see Cooley, 'African Geography', p. 125. This error was Burton's statement that Dr Lacerda spent nine months in the Cazembe country when he, in fact, never reached the capital and died at a distance of two days' journey from it, just as he entered the country.

¹⁵⁰ Cooley, 'African Geography', p. 126.

¹⁵¹ Burton, 'Appendix II: Being a Rejoinder to the "Memoir on *The Lake Regions of East Africa*"', p. xxxi.

¹⁵² Burton, 'Captain Burton and Mr Cooley', November 1874, in Markham (ed.), *Ocean Highways*, pp. 432-434, p. 432.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

felt that these texts should be emphatically framed as notable sources for the ‘scientific student of comparative geography’.¹⁵⁴ Such works, whether journals of modern travellers or historical accounts of voyages, were to be approached with an ‘exact, searching and rigorous criticism’ in order to attain the ‘rare gifts’ of scientific comparative geography held by Rennell, D’Anville, Conrad Malte-Brun, and Adrien Balbi.¹⁵⁵ Significantly, these comments stood in contrast to those made by the Hakluyt President, Markham. He claimed that valuable knowledge could be acquired from the Hakluyt Society’s works with minimal editorial intervention as, through their romantic presentations of the ‘heroic deeds of explorers’, the original texts were an ‘important education’ in themselves.¹⁵⁶ Rather than confining these historical narratives solely to travel literature, Burton declared that these documents were not ‘obsolete’, but served as useful ‘road-posts by which progress may be measured; and owning their utility so far and no farther, we turn from them to newer and truer matter’. This was not a means to dismantle ‘theoretical fabrics’ altogether, but to reform them.¹⁵⁷ Burton showed this, not just through how he edited his own volume for the Hakluyt Society, but also in how he read the books themselves.

Burton’s Library houses fifty-five volumes of the Hakluyt’s First Series and he read nearly all of them.¹⁵⁸ Through his citations, it can be seen that Burton drew on these readings in his own travel publications.¹⁵⁹ From his active engagement with these volumes, it is apparent that Burton saw their potential for mobilising the production of

¹⁵⁴ Murchison, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1857), p. clxxxix; Burton, ‘Appendix II: Being a Rejoinder to the “Memoir on *The Lake Regions of East Africa*”’, p. xxxi.

¹⁵⁵ Burton, ‘Appendix II: Being a Rejoinder to the “Memoir on *The Lake Regions of East Africa*”’, p. xxxi.

¹⁵⁶ Clements R. Markham, ‘The Jubilee of the Hakluyt Society’, *The Geographical Journal*, 9 (1897), pp. 169-178, p. 177.

¹⁵⁷ Burton, ‘Appendix II: Being a Rejoinder to the “Memoir on *The Lake Regions of East Africa*”’, p. xxxi.

¹⁵⁸ Hakluyt Society First Series volumes in Burton’s Library: 22; 32-51; 53-57; 59-78; 82-83; 86; 88-89; 90-94, HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 385-423.

¹⁵⁹ Burton draws on Hakluyt vol. 44 as a source on the history of Omani races and vol. 42 to date a fifteenth-century expedition, in Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol. 1, p. 279 and p. 277. Burton cites Hakluyt vol. 43 as a historical record of Icelandic travel, in Richard F. Burton, *Ultima Thule; or, a Summer in Iceland*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London: William P. Nimmo, 1875), p. 244. Burton notes Hakluyt vol. 41 for detail on heraldry, and links to his own Hakluyt vol. 51 for a comparison to South America, in Burton, *Ultima Thule*, vol. 2, p. 21; p. 77.

valuable geographies, beyond simply their promotion of travel stories. Across his collection, he sought to translate, explain, or expand the words of the text. Whilst these sites of encounter operated at the most literal level to mediate and absorb what he read, Burton went further than simply making marks on the page. He inscribed his own handwritten indices on the front flyleaf and paste-down of the books, in both pen and pencil.¹⁶⁰ Ranging from humble lists of page numbers to long, scribbled lists of subject headings with corresponding page numbers, they detail how Burton surveyed and remade the textual landscape laid out by the editors. These personalised lists feature in twelve of his most heavily annotated volumes and they spread across the First Series, first occurring in volume 32 and continuing up to volume 76. Burton put the Hakluyt volumes to work and formed them as his own guidebooks to find key pieces of biographical and bibliographical information. His interests were piqued by social and cultural norms, practical advice, linguistic phrases, and weaponry. Burton's marking up of *The Voyage of François Pyrard* is a typical example of how Burton's indices worked and how he inscribed his control over the contents (Figure 6.20).¹⁶¹ Positioned on the opening board and flyleaf, it is graphologically neat, structured and ordered. Yet these notes were not always so clear, and his index to *Commentaries of Great Afonso Dalboquerque* features a list that showcases the active thought process of Burton (Figure 6.21).¹⁶² It encroaches into the printed text, and as such can be seen as a material manifestation of Burton reforming what he is reading.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Handwritten indices feature in Hakluyt Society First Series, vols. 32; 33; 35; 41; 42; 53; 55; 62; 66; 70; 74; and 76, HEH, RFB. There is also evidence that Burton selectively read papers from the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, vol. 1 (1831) – vol. 30 (1860), but his readerly interventions were limited mostly to underlining and linguistic notes, see HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 206.

¹⁶¹ Albert Gray (ed. and trans.), *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, Java, and the Cape of Good Hope, translated into English from the third French edition of 1619*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 76, 1887), HEH, RFB 416.

¹⁶² Walter de Gray Birch (ed.), *Commentaries of Great Afonso Dalboquerque, Second Viceroy of India; translated from the Portuguese edition of 1774*, 4 vols, vol. 3 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 62, 1880), HEH, RFB 403.

¹⁶³ Specifically, this list is titled 'errors' and Burton marks out spelling mistakes, translation errors and geographical mislocations.

These indices operated differently to those Burton constructed in the instruction manuals he travelled with in Africa, which had acted as a means of information management – what has been termed a ‘search engine’.¹⁶⁴ Within select Hakluyt volumes Burton constructed his own unique paratextual arrangement that sat as a reader’s map to navigate his way through the pages. Despite the editor of *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema* declaring his intention to lead ‘the reader over the route pursued halting here and there to illustrate the traveller’s journey’, Burton did not allow himself to be led passively through the narrative.¹⁶⁵ Rather, he decided to enact the spatiality of the text and animate the movements of the traveller outside of his role as reader. Burton’s pencil scribbled list on the volume’s flyleaf documents how he traced the journey of the author from when he ‘left Cannanore for Europe Dec 6 1507 (pxx) [sic]’ to ‘India Dec 6 1507’ (Figure 6.23).¹⁶⁶ Under the title, ‘few dates, p. 59; Varthema’, Burton travelled through the text, noting the places di Varthema went, the dates, and sometimes the duration. He recorded the page number from the editor’s ‘Introduction’ and he then linked it to the corresponding pages in the main body of the text. This spatialised conversation mapped out hidden vistas, alternative stories, and contrary politics that he had discovered within the text for himself as reader. As Burton worked through the volumes, he added another layer of editing to the existing editorial infrastructure, not just as a supplement to the text, but to indicate how he used it as a critical source. It serves as a demonstration of how the textual world can be turned inside out: how books are able to act as both a ‘historical mirror’ to corroborate observations, and as a ‘fictive guide’ to a past world that needs to be reconciled with the empirical present.¹⁶⁷ The *di Varthema*

¹⁶⁴ Sherman, *Used Books*, p. 127.

¹⁶⁵ George Percy Badger, ‘Introduction’, in Badger (ed.) *Travels of Ludovico di Varthema*, pp. xvii–cxiii, p. xxiv

¹⁶⁶ George Percy Badger, *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia deserta and Arabia felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508, translated from the original Italian edition of 1510, with a preface by John Winter Jones* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, First Series, no. 32, 1863), HEH, RFB 386.

¹⁶⁷ Safier, “Everyday that I travel ... is a page that I turn”, p. 127.

index proved to be critically significant for Burton, as he used this work whilst preparing his third edition of *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah*.¹⁶⁸

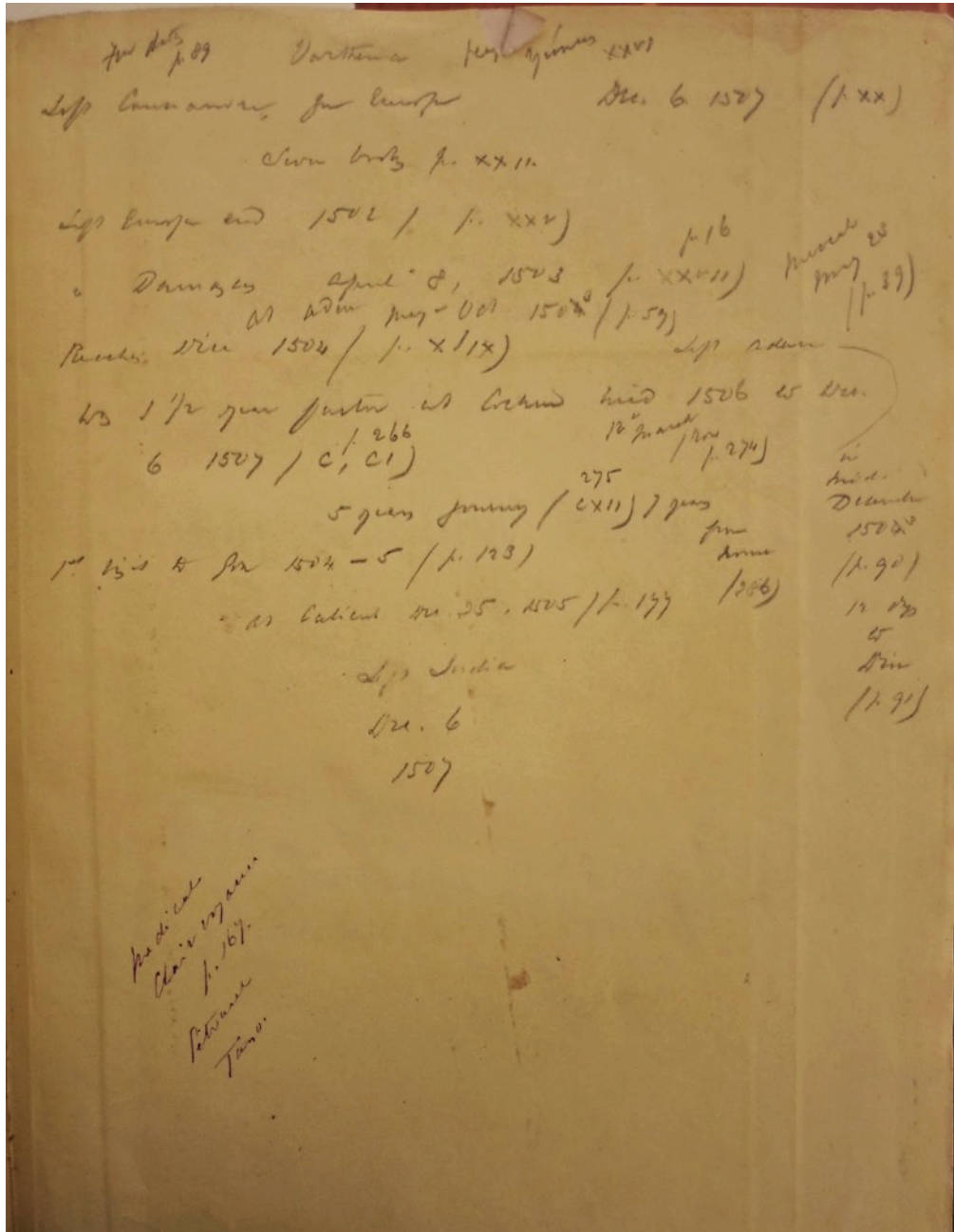


Figure 6.22. Burton's reader's map on front flyleaf of Badger (ed.), *Travels of Ludovico di Varthema* (1863), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 386.

¹⁶⁸ Richard Francis Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah* (3rd edn, Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1874), p. xii.

Despite Cooley accusing Burton of having only a 'superficial' acquaintance with the textual sources he used and cited, Burton's reader's maps present the close working relationship he had with these published works.¹⁶⁹ These navigational tools for key textual landmarks and features, and their geographical positioning in the books reveal how Burton saw and made the page as place. The index as a map was translocal as it seeped into the book's contents to connect to an authorial space beyond the self and make a new geography happen within the text that could be travelled by the reader. As Burton's lifestyle changed and his expeditions became fewer, these textual materials enabled him to explore without moving, and thus maintain a voice in scientific networks.

Conclusions

This chapter has travelled with Burton and his books out in the field on his East African Expedition for the RGS, and into his study in Trieste. In doing so, it has stopped to explore the textual landscapes he surveyed and then remade in order to observe how he worked and understood his identity as a geographical practitioner in the nineteenth century. Burton's personal library documents his compulsive reading and critiquing, allowing for an examination of his constant and active dialogues with what he read. In engaging with the material traces and marginal marks left by his acts of reading, this chapter identifies books as Burton's tools; he used them not only as sources of knowledge, but for actively constructing meaning from what he read and observed. With this power to enter, renegotiate, and reorder the text, Burton produced navigational tools for key textual landmarks and features, and their geographical positioning in the books actually goes further to open up how Burton saw and made the page as place.

¹⁶⁹ Cooley, 'African Geography', p. 125.

Significantly, Burton's books did not just gather dust on a shelf; rather, they followed his travels. In unpacking his 'traveller's library', compiled for his East African Expedition, it shows that Burton carried over six times the RGS recommended amount of texts with him. Whilst over time much bibliographical evidence has been destroyed, the surviving books in Burton's library and the citations made in his publications make it clear that Burton read before, during and after this expedition to connect, compare, and contradict written accounts with his first-hand experiences. Specifically, he used his mobile library to engage in comparative observation between the immediate scene he directly observed and the words of the speculative geographer Cooley in front of him, leading Burton to disregard his 'one lake' theory as fiction.

With methods of geographical exploration becoming increasingly prescriptive at this time, expeditions were required to travel in accordance with the more systematic approaches enumerated by their sponsoring institution.¹⁷⁰ Yet, in recovering Burton's reading of travel manuals, such as Francis Galton's *Art of Travel* and Julian Jackson's *What to Observe*, this chapter demonstrates how he mediated the role of the RGS explorer with his own experiences and requirements in the field. The contrast between the official outfit of books and his pencil scribbled suggestions provides a unique insight into the workings of the then nascent discipline of geography and the tensions felt in defining its role as an active 'science' of travel in the nineteenth century, as Burton worked to construct what he believed to be the materials necessary for exploration.

Whilst Burton did not view reading books as a substitute for observation in the field, he did use his books as a mode of travel and as a means to extend geographical space. The texts he encountered within his study were locally situated, but they were also mobile as the relations between words and spaces opened up a space of experimental creativity enabling the reader to create global connections. Through the

¹⁷⁰ Driver, 'Editorial: Fieldwork in Geography'.

reconstruction of a sense of the materiality and physicality of the interior of the Burtons' homes at Trieste, this chapter shows how Burton developed his own cabinet culture. He meticulously organised his own private space in which to conduct his work, yet this also extended beyond the walls of his study. Burton claimed to feel more at home in the landscape outside than within the islands of ideas he built inside, as the constant stimulation of physical activity kept him psychologically stable.

Despite Burton developing his geographical practice by physically moving between the inside and outside, these two spaces were not reconciled in wider debates in geography concerning accuracy, disciplined methodology, and credibility, within which Burton was a loud and critical voice. It is to these vocal debates held at the meetings of the RGS that the next chapter now turns.

Chapter 7

The Defeat of Armchair Geography? Discovering the Lakes of Central and East Africa

By the early 1850s, the maps of Central and East Africa were not ‘blank’, but a messy palimpsest in which the ‘want of precise topographical notices ... heaped hypothesis upon hypothesis’.¹ These speculative maps attempted to distinguish the complex and interwoven drainage basins of the Nile, the Zambezi and the Congo. As the century progressed, the RGS played a central role in significant ventures of discovery, and it was strongly anticipated that this hydrological puzzle would soon be solved. Yet, despite the RGS declaring itself to be an arbiter of accuracy and precision, there was still not one accepted ‘method’ for formulating ‘credible’ geographical descriptions, and the Society often acted as a point of convergence for the many textual and physical routes that were taken by geographers in the production and presentation their work. These differing methodological directions collided in 1860 when Burton directly questioned how speculations alone could lead the scientific community to a credible destination, snarling: ‘what could the actual traveller who judged only by his eyes know, compared with the critical comparative geographer who brought his mind to bear on the subject?’² The juxtaposition of cerebral postulating and direct observation marked the beginning of a period of heated debates that raged at the RGS over different forms of geographical ‘discovery’. Such discussions can be cast as a battle of wills between the labours of ‘armchair’ and ‘field’ geography that reveal concerns over ‘correct’ methods, the quality and credibility of sources, and institutional authority.

¹ Burton, ‘The Lake Regions’, p. 21.

² Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 1, p. xxiii.

The Nile ‘controversy’ reached a high point as it entered the 1860s, and any potentially relevant piece of hydrological or geographical information was scrutinised thoroughly and debated energetically.³ The flurry of expeditionary activity was seen as giving ‘keen interest’ to the RGS’s evening meetings, of which their ‘African Nights’ drew ‘perhaps the most enthusiastic audiences’.⁴ These events were often crowded, with Fellows clamouring to see the latest returned explorer and hear of their adventurous exploits and survival. As exploration advanced into the African interior and the audiences of the RGS’s Meetings were presented with increasing empirical evidence directly captured from the field, it became evident that many of the speculations advanced from the armchair were incorrect.⁵

Despite the heightened public intrigue and scientific attention, this period in the RGS’s history was also marred by conflicts between geographers and explorers, the isolation of certain members, and, in one tragic case, the death of John Hanning Speke. The eventual discrediting of Cooley’s ‘one lake’ theory in the 1870s saw Livingstone finally defeat his ‘easy chair’ rival, and he triumphantly announced the collapse of the critical geographer’s credibility and expertise: ‘one would not like to resemble ... the testy, old, arm-chair, untravelled, would-be geographer’.⁶ Cooley’s inflexible insistence on the accuracy of his ideas has led Dane Kennedy to claim that this was the root of ‘his marginalisation within the geographical fraternity’.⁷ Whilst this undeniably saw him retreat from the debating halls of the RGS, this did not precipitate an eclipse of armchair geography as a set of practices. This chapter seeks to recover the fate of

³ Dritsas, ‘Expeditionary Science’.

⁴ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 87.

⁵ Field exploration progressed quickly in the mid-nineteenth century, and notable ‘discoveries’ include: Burton and Speke sighting Lake Tanganyika in 1858; the rediscovery of Lake Nyasa by Livingstone in 1859; Speke observed Lake Victoria Nyanza – the true source of the White Nile – in 1861; Samuel Baker reached the Lake Albert Nyanza in 1864; Livingstone discovered Lakes Mweru and Bangweulu in 1867 and 1868; Stanley connected the Lualaba with the Congo, not the Nile as was Livingstone’s view, and he traced the entire course of this river, from Nyangwe to the Atlantic in 1877.

⁶ David Livingstone, cited in William Desborough Cooley, *Dr Livingstone and the Royal Geographical Society* (Printed for the author: Sold by Dulau & Co., 1874), p. 55.

⁷ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, p. 51.

armchair geography in the face of the field, and argues that it did not take its last breath with the social demise of Cooley.

The search for the source of the Nile is often drawn on to ‘highlight an important moment in the history of geography as a science’.⁸ Whilst it has been previously used to place the sedentary geographer, who worked in a field of text and testimony, in opposition to explorers who travelled to the field and used instruments and direct observation, this discussion does not centre on these arguments between armchair geographers and field explorers, so binarily defined. Rather, attention is given to the critical exchanges between authors of geographical knowledge. Such an approach is necessary as the past chapters within this thesis have complicated our received view of the ‘explorer’ as wholly physically and practically distinct and separate from the cabinet – they could also be ‘bookish’ travellers. In so doing, the debates held over the credibility of different forms of geographical discovery are examined to reveal the located nature of the varying technical and spatial practices of discovering the Central African watershed, and how credible knowledge came to be negotiated across and between these spaces. As Lawrence Dritisas has shown, these practices ‘linked the spaces of expedition, archive, discussion, and publication’ and offer a significant example of the ‘here and everywhere’ nature of geographical discovery.⁹

In determining the fate of armchair geography within the 1850s and 1860s, this chapter identifies and presents a series of key cartographic controversies. The central location of the RGS is outlined first, illuminating how it operated as a site of presentation and discussion, as well as conflict and controversy. Whilst the external view of this institution was promoted as a proponent of regulated method, it was not a calculated, unified body, but one internally composed of disparate individuals, of which, the critical geographers and armchair authorities were a significant part. The remainder

⁸ Dritisas, ‘Expeditionary Science’, p. 255.

⁹ *Ibid.*

of the chapter is focused on three sets of exchanges that occurred in response to contrasting maps of Central and East Africa. The first is the disapproving response towards Cooley's 1853 'Map of Africa', not from the RGS as an institution, but from the wider community of critical geographers. As the chapter highlights, this marked a significant point in the career of Cooley, as he was slowly stripped of his credibility for failing to collaborate with his contemporary speculators and their research. The second exchange is between Cooley and the Zambesi Expedition team, where Cooley's theoretical Lake 'Nyassi' failed to stand up against the observations made in the field. The final part of this chapter seeks to complicate this fated story of the 'defeat' of armchair geography by illustrating how the critical geographer could serve as a useful ally in other geographers' attempts to negate and nullify an opponent's knowledge claim, in favour of their own. This is shown through the reconstitution of Burton's own social network at the RGS and his collaborations with 'armchair' geographers MacQueen, Beke, and Findlay. These examples give credence to the argument of this chapter, that 'discovery' was a dialogue between methods, occurring across and between different spaces, and using different social and epistemic processes to negotiate scientific credibility and relevance; rather than the binary opposition between the 'field' and the 'armchair'.

The 'Nile Question' and the RGS's Search for a Credible Source

By the mid-nineteenth century, under the Presidency of Murchison, the RGS was actively promoting African exploration and came to be directly associated with such adventurous journeys in the public imagination. Through monthly meetings, known as its 'African Nights', the most recent reports were read and specimens exhibited from explorers in the 'field'. These displays were dominated by attempts to answer the 'Nile

question' and discover its elusive source. These meetings offered glimpses into discoveries in progress and they also saw the unveiling of the final results of expeditions against the theatrical backdrop of a large map dominated by white space.¹⁰ The use of maps to supplement written accounts was an effective visual indicator of the progress of European knowledge and the increasing extent of encounter. Murchison favoured the comparative display of maps to explicitly show that advances were being made, as a description of his actions in the Society's *Proceedings* attests: "There *was* our knowledge (pointing to the old map) a year ago – there *is* our knowledge now (pointing to the new map)".¹¹ This notion of progress was clearly signified with maps commonly appearing under the title 'new map', providing the basis for further discussions, researches, and speculations.

Although the vast area of Central Africa was declared a 'terra incognita' to European eyes, it was not wholly a geographical blank.¹² The intervening space between the pencil and the sheet of paper was animated by European maps of the area that were first drawn by Greek and Roman travellers in an attempt to locate the sources of the Nile. On the authority of Portuguese inquirers, sixteenth-century authors De Barros and Pigafetta speculated further on the presence of a 'great sea' in the interior of Africa.¹³ These accounts added a layer of contention to the cartographic representation of Africa as doubt was thrown on the revered work of Ptolemy by discarding his fictitious 'Mountains of the Moon' and repositioning the two lakes, said to be at the head of the Nile.¹⁴ These divergent depictions were viewed as the 'origin' of the modern

¹⁰ Mill, *Record of the RGS*, p. 87.

¹¹ Roderick Murchison, cited in Richard Francis Burton and John Hanning Speke, 'Explorations in Eastern Africa', *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 3 (1858–1859), pp. 348–358, p. 352. Whilst the maps Murchison was referring to are not explicitly identified, it appears that the comparison was between Livingstone's 1855 'Sketch Map of Africa' and a map drawn by Speke from the East African Expedition.

¹² Burton, 'The Lake Regions', p. 3.

¹³ Richard Henry Major, 'On the Map of Africa Published in Pigafetta's "Kingdom of Congo", in 1591', *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 6 (1866–1867), pp. 246–251.

¹⁴ Francisc Relañó, 'Against Ptolemy: The Significance of the Lopes-Pigafetta Map', *Imago Mundi*, 47 (1995), pp. 49–66.

misconceptions regarding the Central African lakes, as the lakes were ‘blended, then separated, according to the theories or the information of the geographer’.¹⁵ Such confusion was voiced at the RGS Meeting of 23 June 1856. The central display was a map drawn from the most recent measurements taken in the field by explorer Livingstone (Figure 7.1). Francis Galton called the audience to look outside the frame of this ‘new’ map and ‘glance at three maps which were hung in different parts of the room in which they were assembled’:

[T]wo of them represented the respective opinions of Mr Cooley and Mr Macqueen, two of our best informed African geographers; the third was the compilation of Mr Erhardt, from most abundant native testimony; and yet these three maps were as utterly dissimilar and discordant in all their physical features as it was well possible to imagine.¹⁶

This action drew attention to the differing representations that were circulating at the time of the African interior. Each of these maps had been presented at the RGS and subsequently hung on the wall as marking a critical ‘advance’ or ‘discovery’ in geographical knowledge (Figures 7.2, 7.3, 7.4).¹⁷ Crucially, for the purposes of this discussion, they also sat as symbols of how differing methodological directions converged in the space of the RGS meeting room. Murchison asserted the central role that these comparative discussions played, ensuring that the ‘rapid strides’ being made from many different arenas ‘to dispel our ignorance of Central Africa’ were credible and accurate.¹⁸

¹⁵ Burton, ‘The Lake Regions’, p. 231.

¹⁶ Francis Galton, cited in Livingstone, ‘Letter from Dr Livingston [sic], with a Sketch Map’, p. 93.

¹⁷ Cooley, ‘Geography of N’yassi’; MacQueen, ‘Notes on the Geography of Central Africa’; Erhardt, ‘Reports respecting Central Africa’.

¹⁸ Murchison, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1853), p. xciii.

Following the showing of Erhardt's so-titled 'new Map of the Country' at a General Meeting in 1855, MacQueen directly questioned its conclusions.¹⁹ With his speculations on the course and termination of the River Niger being proved correct by the Lander Brothers on their expedition in 1830, MacQueen was able to establish his 'expertise' as a geographer of Africa, and after his election to RGS Fellowship in 1845, he quickly established himself as a critical respondent on African matters.²⁰ Whilst this large freshwater lake, identified as the 'Sea of Uniamesi', filled a geographical blank in Central Africa, MacQueen contended that there were actually two discrete lakes, and not a single large one.²¹ Drawing on his own readings of the explorations undertaken by Livingstone and the Portuguese travellers Major Monteiro and Captain Gamitto, MacQueen 'offered a sober reassessment' of this 'fantastical' missionary map and of Cooley's 'one lake' theory.²² Erhardt responded by affirming the value of his evidence, which was based on the testimonies of 'a vast number of persons, and from independent sources', and by asserting his own linguistic skills, which would enable him to translate their words onto the map.²³ However, these indigenous testimonies had been vastly misunderstood and led to four distinct lakes being shown as one.²⁴ In an informal encounter, Speke recalled the moment he was confronted by this large diagram hanging in one of the rooms at the RGS, stating that the depicted lake was 'of such portentous size and such unseemly shape ... that everybody who looked at it

¹⁹ The map was displayed at the RGS on 26 November 1855, see Erhardt, 'Reports respecting Central Africa'. The map had first appeared in the *Das Calver Missionblatt*, 19 (October, 1855), pp. 77-83. MacQueen challenged this map at the next RGS meeting on 10 December 1855, see James MacQueen, 'Notes on the Geography of Central Africa from the Researches of Livingstone, Monteiro, Garcia, and Other Authorities', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 1 (1855-1856), pp. 12-13.

²⁰ Lambert, "'Taken Captive by the Mystery of the Great River'".

²¹ MacQueen, 'Notes on the Geography of Central Africa', *JRGS*.

²² Wisnicki, 'Charting the Frontier', p. 114.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 12. MacQueen later published a final version of his paper read at this meeting with an alternative map of the same area, see MacQueen, 'Notes on the Geography of Central Africa', *JRGS*.

²⁴ These were the Tanganyika (Uniamesi); Victoria (Ukerewe); Rukwa (Nianja, Mkuba); and Nyasa (Nianja, Ndogo).

incredulously laughed and shook his head'.²⁵

These debates were revisited a few months later when Cooley presented the results of his attempts to rectify the 1843 travel account of Joachim Rodriguez Graça, alongside the reading of Livingstone's latest report and accompanying sketch map from the Lunda Country. They disagreed 'widely'.²⁶ MacQueen led the discussion of these conflicting accounts and stressed that the issue was the mass of discordant information in circulation.²⁷ Whilst this referred to the physical movement of information between surveyor in the field and the metropolitan sites of reception and calculation, MacQueen also recognised that it was a rhetorical movement, in which the critical work of these sedentary practitioners should be framed as an elementary stage in the process of exploration. He admitted that it was difficult to reconcile the many different, and often uncertain, observations as it demanded the constant comparison and rectification of accounts to arrive at sound results. Indeed, this was not a simple linear movement of information; geographical accounts did not necessarily start in the study, progress into the field and, end in the metropolitan centres of science, but it was a complex process that involved multiple movements within and between these spaces.²⁸

²⁵ Speke, *What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, p. 145. The Missionary Map also came to be popularly known as the 'slug map'.

²⁶ Papers read at the meeting of 23 June 1856: William Desborough Cooley, 'Journey of Joachim Rodriguez Graça'; 'Letter from Dr Livingston [sic], with a Sketch Map'.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

²⁸ MacQueen cited in, 'Letter from Dr Livingston [sic]', p. 93.



Figure 7.1. John Arrowsmith, 'Map to illustrate Dr Livingstone's route across Africa, constructed from his astronomical observations, bearings, estimated distances and sketches' (detail). From David Livingstone, *JRGS*, 27 (1857), pp. 349-387, between pp. 348-349. Courtesy of The University Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Clearly, the route to producing an authoritative text was not straightforward and, in preparing maps to be read as ‘truthful’ objects, geographers and travellers had to make many informed decisions about the approach they took, and the quality and relative value of each source drawn upon. The geographers of the RGS had to practically demonstrate their aptitude and competence within a context of emerging shared sets of ‘scientific protocols and practices’ that could withstand rational scrutiny.²⁹ These claims to knowledge were assessed through an evaluation of their claimant’s social conduct within the limits of institutionally defined behaviour, which had to be upheld in order to make any labour worthy of consideration.³⁰

Whilst critical geographers compared these results with the knowledge they had formed in the cabinet, it was the members who populated the higher echelons of the RGS that decided on the ‘appropriateness’ of observations. Through positions on the Council and various regulatory committees, these armchair authorities, that included Galton, Findlay and Arrowsmith, retained seats of power in the metropolitan institution. These so-termed ‘guardians of geography’ scrutinised the methods of observation and measurement when examining dispatches sent to and from the field; in their discussions at the return of expeditions; and whilst reviewing submissions for the Society’s *Journal*.³¹ In each of these critical arenas, the claims of explorers were weighed not only against the evidence provided, but also the survey methods undertaken to obtain it.

Galton, in particular, carved a niche for himself in managing expedition preparation and in ensuring that the standards he had set were being upheld. He asserted this regulatory power in a letter he wrote to Grant on the Society’s second expedition into East Africa: ‘I should earnestly recommend your not burning your fingers with meteorological theorisings ... what you can do, is state accurately what you

²⁹ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, p. 4.

³⁰ Francis Galton and Sub-Committee on ‘Hints to Travellers’, ‘Sub-Committee Report on ‘Hints to Travellers’, 1853, RGS-IBG, JMS/21/20.

³¹ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, p. 45.

saw, leaving it to stay-at-home men of science to collate the data of very many travellers, in order to form a theory'.³² This was an explicit outline of the division of labour that Burton had openly disputed upon his return from Africa.³³ Galton claimed that acceptable knowledge claims could only be made through the collation of measurements with a broader range of information, understood and collected by 'ablest heads among men of science'; such as himself.³⁴ Whilst in many ways such arguments defended the privileged position of the armchair authority, they also did not permit sweeping conclusions beyond the narrow route observed by an explorer.

The Society professed that it was not just the end product of fieldwork or textwork that needed to withstand critical scrutiny, but the line of the route taken also had to be accurately documented.³⁵ These systems of ordered procedures were designed to be an exercise in collective action, as the detailed enumeration of measurements and observations would afford points for comparison and verification. Yet, this also led to explorers stressing the serious scientific approach taken on their expedition by describing the circumstances of how information and cartographic assertions were produced. As noted in Chapter 6, Burton compiled detailed lists of his equipment and described how his work was undertaken in the field, commenting that he wrote in his 'tent and under the tree with the objects which they describe in sight'.³⁶ Despite these affirmations providing powerful evidence of direct observation, they did not unequivocally transform explorers' sightings into geographical fact, and this often led to the manipulation of evidence. The four maps published out of the 1856–1859 East African Expedition have been shown to embody this uncertainty over different sources and instruments. Through the 'selective and strategic use of information', Burton and

³² 'Letter from Galton to Grant', 24 November 1864, NLS, MS 17909, f.93.

³³ Burton, *Lake Regions of Central Africa*.

³⁴ 'Letter from Galton to Grant', NLS, MS 17909, f.93.

³⁵ Earl de Gray, 'Address to the RGS of London', *JRGS*, 30 (1860), pp. c-cxcii, p. clxiv.

³⁶ Burton, 'The Lake Regions', p. 19.

Speke's maps were consciously rewritten to obfuscate the role of Arab-African informants as a critical source in order to make these cartographic statements appear more scientific.³⁷

Critical geographers did not simply attend meetings to corroborate the different forms of evidence, but they also held their labours up to the same stringent scientific standards. In reviewing papers for publication in the RGS's *Journal*, Cooley affirmed that 'meagre and obscure information or theoretical crudities' were unacceptable.³⁸ The review style papers often offered by these geographers advanced a comparative approach and were seen as 'original' in the sense that they offered 'a summary of information' by the travellers cited by the author, whilst embracing the author's own views and opinions on the nature of that information.³⁹ However, attention was often drawn to epistemic issues surrounding the ability of the 'untraveller' geographer to offer 'new' information and to not simply advance theories based on sources that had already received attention by the Society or elsewhere. Despite copious references to both ancient and contemporary 'authorities' to demonstrate the methodological rigour of their synthetic approach, this often led field explorers to dispute the value of their work, and distinctions were drawn between, what Livingstone termed, 'discovery' in the field and 'survey' from the 'easy-chair'.⁴⁰

In reviewing a manuscript submission from MacQueen on 'African Geography' for the *Journal*, Frederick Ayrton declined it for publication as it did not meet the criteria of being an 'original paper' that offered 'new geographical facts'. Yet, referencing the interest that his recent work on African geography had attracted, he recommended that

³⁷ Wisnicki, 'Charting the Frontier', p. 128; 'Cartographical Quandaries: The Limits of Knowledge Production in Burton's and Speke's Search for the Source of the Nile', *History in Africa*, 35 (2008), pp. 455-479.

³⁸ William Desborough Cooley, 'Referee Report: James MacQueen, "Notes on the Geography of Africa"', 1845, RGS-IBG, JMS/2/17.

³⁹ Frederick Ayrton, 'Referee Report: James MacQueen, "The Country around the Great South African Lake"', 1852, RGS-IBG, JMS/2/30.

⁴⁰ Livingstone, 'Letter to the Editor of the "Athenaeum"', RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

an abstract should be resubmitted. A marginal note on this review, however, seemingly made by MacQueen, claimed it would be ‘impossible’ to condense this research to a four-page summary.⁴¹ The full paper appeared in volume 20 of the *Journal*, ‘in accordance with the desire of the President’, which MacQueen declared in his opening sentence.⁴²

These examples demonstrate that there was not one ‘correct’ approach to being deemed a ‘credible source’ by the RGS. Rather, it was negotiated through many layers of social, practical, and bureaucratic scrutiny and judgment. The next section takes a closer look at how credible knowledge could be made without travel. It takes as its focus Cooley’s map of ‘Inner Africa’, which was drawn in 1851 and reduced for publication in 1853 by Arrowsmith (Figure 7.5).⁴³ Issued just before the great series of explorations spearheaded by the RGS that gradually revealed by direct observation the main features of the East African interior, this work by Cooley was, for a time, the ‘guide book of every African explorer’, and it was suggested that it ‘must always remain a handbook of the critics of African geography’.⁴⁴ Yet, in considering its circulation and reception, particularly amongst contemporary critical geographers, a more complex tale of trust and testimony, and credibility and confidence emerges.

⁴¹ Ayrton, ‘Referee Report: James MacQueen’, RGS-IBG, JMS/2/30. Whilst this MS has been dated as 1852 in the RGS-IBG Catalogue, it actually refers to MacQueen’s paper of 1850 as written on the document itself.

⁴² James MacQueen, ‘Notes on the Present State of the Geography of Some Parts of Africa’, *JRGS*, 20 (1850), pp. 235-252, p. 235.

⁴³ The original proof of the map, William Desborough Cooley, ‘Map of part of Africa South of the Equator: Shewing the Communication between the Coasts & the Routes to Lake Nyassi Iao & the Moenemoezi the Muropue & the Cazembe with the Discoveries of the Missionaries the Rev. Dr Krapf and the Rev. J. Rebmann in Usambara Ukamba & Kilima’, engraved by John Arrowsmith, 1851, RGS-IBG, Map Room, mr Africa Div.326. This was reduced for publication by Saunders and Stanford for a delayed inclusion in Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*. For the reduced final copy of the map, see William Desborough Cooley, ‘Map of Africa, from the Equator to the Southern Tropic, shewing the routes to Lake Nyassi, Moenemoezi, Muropue, the Cazembe and across the continent, with the Discoveries of the Missionaries in Eastern Africa’, 1853, RGS-IBG, Map Room, mr Africa Div.213.

⁴⁴ George Birdwood, ‘Dr Livingstone and the Royal Geographical Society’, *The Academy* (1874), pp. 338-339, p. 339. As highlighted in Chapter 6, Burton took Cooley’s maps of the African interior into Africa with him.

Cooley, the Critical Geographers, and a Crisis of Confidence

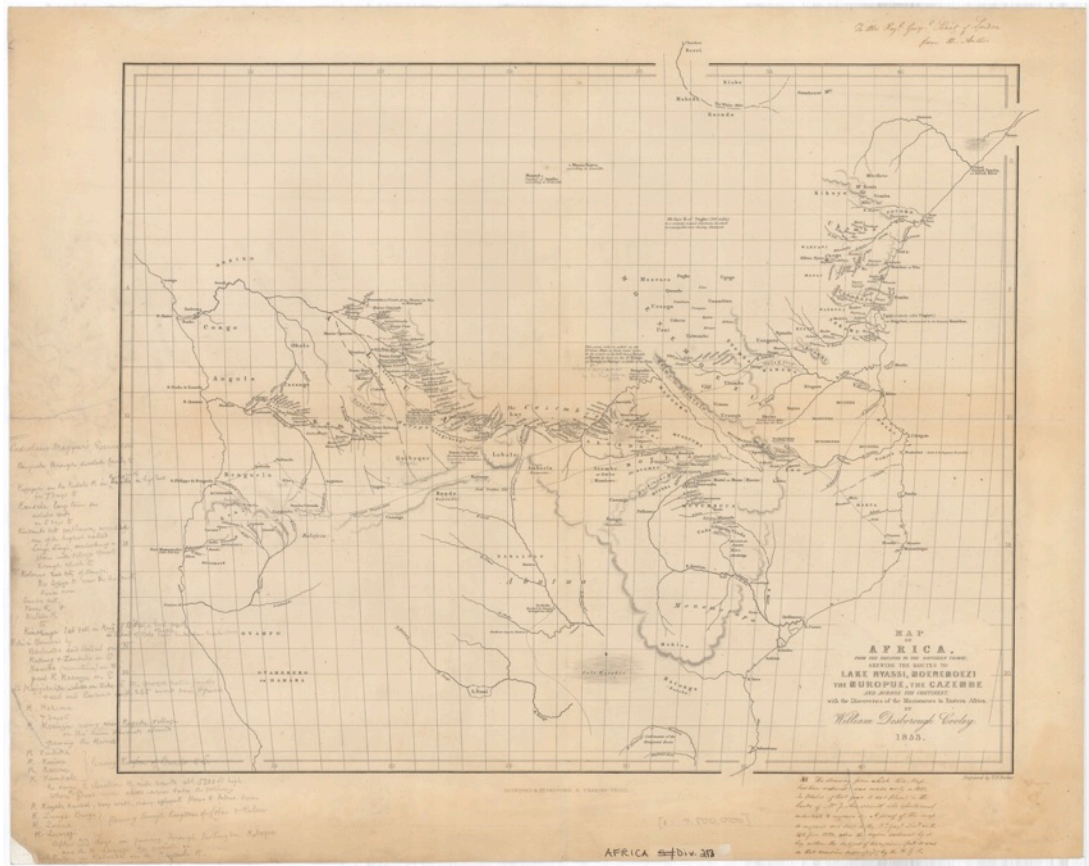


Figure 7.5. W. D. Cooley, 'Map of Africa, from the Equator to the Southern Tropic, shewing the routes to Lake Nyassi, Moenemoezi, the Muropue, the Cazembe and across the continent, with the Discoveries of the Missionaries in Eastern Africa', engraved by John Arrowsmith, 1853 © Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

This map prepared by Cooley in the early 1850s was designed to be the centrepiece for his 'one lake' theory first posited in 1835.⁴⁵ Cooley declared it marked a 'very bold advance in geography' by reducing the dimensions of the maritime regions of Africa, and displaying his interpretation of the most current knowledge regarding the lakes of the East African interior from the emerging reports of contemporary explorers

⁴⁵ Cooley sent a proof of the map to the RGS on 14 June 1852 and later donated two copies of the final map [the original 1851 map and the reduced 1853 copy that was published with his memoir] to the RGS Map Library, see 'Accessions to the Library and Map-Rooms, to May 1858', *JRGS*, 28 (1858), pp. lxi-cxii, p. xcix.

Livingstone, Krapf and Rebmann.⁴⁶ Whilst Cooley did not advance anything new with this map, it did mark a further exhibition of his ‘discovery’ of the large lake ‘Nyassi’, which he continued to uphold even in the face of conflicting reports from the field.⁴⁷ Despite being wholly inaccurate, the map was a manifestation of his claim to have ‘laid open’ Africa through his method of rectification, undertaken in his Bloomsbury study as discussed in Chapter 3.

In support of his hypothesis, Cooley also made extensive use of Arab and other non-Western intelligence through exchanges with men who had first-hand experience of travelling in the region. Cooley first introduced geographical details from these non-Western informants in 1835, when he described his ‘advantage of conversing with a respectable and intelligent Arab, a native of Zanzibar’.⁴⁸ This was Khamis bin Uthman, whom Cooley met when he travelled to London to serve as Lieutenant Emery’s interpreter at Mombasa.⁴⁹ Cooley questioned him about the information gathered by the Indian Navy Lieutenant Hardy, from his three months at Zanzibar in 1811, and by the African coastal voyage of Captains Owen and Boteler in 1822, in order to form the basis of his critique that these missions failed to chart the River Lufiji (Rufiji).⁵⁰ Oral information was also drawn from Khamis’ servant, Nasib, a native of Iao, whose homeland lay east of the lake being discussed, the Malawi, which he claimed to have

⁴⁶ William Desborough Cooley, ‘Dr Livingstone’s Great Discovery’, *Athenaeum*, no. 1581, 13 February 1858, pp. 208-210, p. 209.

⁴⁷ Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, p. 2. Cooley declared his ‘discovery’ of ‘Lake Nyassi’ in his review article, [Cooley], ‘Art. III – *A Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia*’. This was later expanded on in Cooley, ‘Geography of N’yassi’.

⁴⁸ [Cooley], ‘Art. III – *A Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia*’, p. 345.

⁴⁹ Khamis had been British Consul at Zanzibar from 1826–1831 and had also served Seyyid Said, Sultan of Muscat, the overlord of the East African Coast.

⁵⁰ [Cooley], ‘Art. III – *A Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia*’. The information collected by Smee and Hardy was never published in full, and was only known through an abridgement that Smee sent in the form of a dispatch from Zanzibar and a report authored by Hardy. These were later printed, see Captain T. Smee and Lieut. Hardy, ‘Observations during a Voyage of Research on the East Coast of Africa from Cape Guadrafui South to the Island of Zanzibar in the H.C. Cruiser Ternate’, *Transactions Bombay Geographical Society*, vol. VI (Bombay: Times Press, September 1841–May 1844), p. 23. Cooley also used Thomas Boteler, *Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia, performed in His Majesty’s Ships Leven and Barracouta, from 1821 to 1826. Under the Command of Capt. F. W. Owen, R.N.* 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1835).

directly seen.⁵¹ These testimonies were then combined with those of four other informants that he later acquired, either from a personal encounter or from intelligence collected in the field that was brought to his attention.⁵² These testimonies provided important information on major African-Arab trading routes and the places along them, which Cooley then traced to the same inland sea of 'Nyassi'.⁵³ Cooley positioned these six independent witnesses as primary authorities in the presentation of his speculative geography. In later writing his geographical memoir, Cooley did not transform these encounters into abstract testimony, but he was clear to acknowledge the dialogic moments in which geographical knowledge was gleaned from his informants.

Whilst this use of indigenous and non-Western testimony was common amongst both critical geographers and explorers, it was also always openly acknowledged that it presented fundamental problems of evidence, interpretation, and the credit given to this information. For the sedentary researcher, however, the information obtained from these testimonies enabled the construction of 'much more convincing' geographies, as they presented a testimony that was immediate and could therefore be pursued as a form of direct observation by proxy.⁵⁴ MacQueen's use of enslaved knowledge can be viewed as directly connected to his later position of geographical expertise because his

⁵¹ Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, p. 72.

⁵² The first of these was a sketch map of the country behind Kilwa given to Cooley by European traveller John Studdy Leigh that he had drawn in Zanzibar from the dictation of an Arab merchant, Mohammed bin Nassur. The map depicted a route through the country of the Monomoezi into the interior and the outline of one lake. The second informant was the account of the route up the valley of the Lufiji to Lake Tanganyika given by Nyawezi trader, Lief bin Saeid. This visit was later independently published by MacQueen, see James MacQueen, 'Notes on African Geography', *JRGS*, 15 (1845), pp. 371-376. The third informant was the itinerary of the journey taken from 'Mozambique to Lake Nyassi' by the Sherif Mohammed ben Ahmed. The testimony was published in Dr Barth, 'Extract of a letter from Dr Barth to Dr Beke, Dated Timbuctu, Sept. 7th, 1853', *JRGS*, 24 (1854), pp. 283-288. The fourth was another Arab, Mohammed bin Khamis, whose reaction to a map by Rebmann was recorded by Cooley in *Inner Africa Laid Open*, p. 78. It is not clear if Cooley actually met Mohammed, and whether he was the same Mohammed also mentioned by Cooley (p. 93), who was the son of Khamis bin Uthman, sent to London to study navigation and languages, see Bridges, 'W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part I', p. 33. This Mohammed was also said to have approached the RGS with his own proposal for exploring Central Africa, see Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol. 2, p. 287.

⁵³ [Cooley], 'Art. III – *A Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia*', p. 345. The routes described were from Kilwa and another was traced roughly along the Rufiji-Ruaha River Valley.

⁵⁴ Dritsas, 'Local Informants and British Explorers', p. 27.

accurate Niger theory had relied, in part, on the testimony of a slave on the sugar estate in Grenada he had earlier managed. David Lambert has suggested that his interactions with this ‘intelligent’ negro boy had been a ‘well-known and oft-repeated tale’ that MacQueen likely relayed with the Fellows of the RGS as it gave him legitimacy and a connection to the field.⁵⁵

However, these testimonies needed to be treated with caution and subjected to verification. MacQueen gave an exposition of the practical difficulties in considering the narratives of Moor and Arab travellers. He stated that without an awareness that errors in the descriptions of the positions and courses of rivers could be made and were often given as the reverse, the reader of these ‘irreconcilable statements’ would be left, ‘in his mind, ... walking to, or starting from, the wrong place’.⁵⁶ Cooley attended to the issues of accuracy and credibility by assessing the character of his informants – both directly and indirectly. Whilst it is evident that Cooley only directly conversed with two of his six key informants, he was sure to note that each of them had local knowledge, experience of travel, and, crucially, that they were ‘intelligent’. This was a common method of justification because, as a discursive feature, it positively framed each informant as trustworthy, virtuous, and reliable in the matters to which they testified.⁵⁷

Cooley stated that he had gathered the most critical information from the M’iao slave, Nasib. Whilst it was said that he was ‘not much used to geographical accuracy’ and did not possess the language to expand on his particular points, in describing his demeanour, Cooley believed him to be ‘ingenuous’.⁵⁸ Drawing on Lacerda’s observations of the indigenous populations of Central Africa, Cooley asserted that the M’iao were not an inferior race in terms of intellect, but were the ‘most civilised of the

⁵⁵ Lambert, “‘Taken Captive by the Mystery of the Great River’”, p. 51.

⁵⁶ MacQueen, *Geographical Survey of Africa*, pp. 271-272.

⁵⁷ Beke also approached his use of local informants in this way. See Charles Tilstone Beke, ‘On the Countries South of Abyssinia’, *JRGS*, 13 (1843), pp. 254-269.

⁵⁸ Cooley, ‘Geography of N’yassi’, p. 212.

negro tribes' who were highly prized in the slave markets due to their 'ingenuity' and 'steady habits'.⁵⁹ Through his description of distance as the hours a day spent paddling, and direction judged against the setting sun, Cooley based the proportions of his 'Nyassi' on the basis of, what he deemed, a sincere testimony. Cooley added 'comparative weight' to his deductions by following the testimonies of travellers Lacerda and Gamitto to establish the continuity of the lake on the western side.⁶⁰

The map was originally intended to be the focal point of his 1852 memoir, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, as an announcement of the effectiveness of his critical methodology.⁶¹ Despite a delay in Cooley's drafts being prepared for publication by Arrowsmith, the critical purchase of the memoir was not adversely impacted and it was well received as marking a crucial interval in knowledge.⁶² Its exhibition corresponded with a significant point in the history of the critical geographers' engagement with the labours and activities of the RGS. The programme for its 24 January 1853 meeting featured MacQueen, Cooley, and Beke who each gave their view on the accounts of three recent travelling expeditions in Central and East Africa.⁶³ From this position of expertise and authority, Cooley was able to promote certain interpretations of these accounts and, as a

⁵⁹ Lacerda, cited in [Cooley], 'Art. III – *A Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia*', pp. 350-352.

⁶⁰ Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, p. 72.

⁶¹ Cooley, *History of Maritime and Inland Discovery*, vol. 3, p. 14.

⁶² Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, preface. The book appeared instead with a smaller, less detailed version as a frontispiece and the larger, more detailed version was added at the end, apparently at a late stage in the production, as it is not referred to in the text. For contemporary reviews of *Inner Africa Laid Open*, see 'Art. V. – Inner Africa Laid Open, in an attempt to trace the chief lines of Communication across that Continent, south of the Equator; with the routes to the Muropue and the Cazembe, Moenemoezi, and Lake Nyassa, &c. By William Desborough Cooley. London: Longmans, 1852', *The English Review*, 18.36, January 1853, pp. 340-353; 'Inner Africa Laid Open...', *The Literary Gazette*, 21 August 1852, p. 641; 'Inner Africa Laid Open', *The Examiner*, 18 September 1852, p. 595; 'Art. VI. – 1. Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa in the years 1849–55', *The Quarterly Review*, April 1861, pp. 496-530; Roderick Impey Murchison, 'Address to the RGS of London', *JRGS*, 22 (1852), pp. lxii-cxxvi, p. cxxii. *Inner Africa Laid Open* was donated to the RGS Library by Cooley, see 'Accessions to the Library, to May 1853', *JRGS*, 23 (1853), pp. xxviii-xlix, p. xxx; 'Address to the RGS of London', *JRGS*, 23 (1853), pp. lxii-cxxxviii, p. cxii.

⁶³ The papers read at the 24 January 1853 meeting were 'Ascent of the Upper Nile, by Mr Brun-Rollet, communicated by Sig. Christoforo Negri of Turin, Cor. F.R.G.S., with remarks by Mr Macqueen, F.R.G.S.'; 'Traject across Africa, by a Moorish Caravan from Zanzibar to Angola, with Notes, by Mr Cooley, F.R.G.S.'; 'An account of two Expeditions made into Central Africa, by the Furans, communicated by Dr Barth through Dr Beke, F.R.G.S.'. See 'Proceedings of the RGS of London. Session 1852–53', *JRGS*, 23 (1853), pp. i-vii, p. li.

result, bolster his own knowledge claims. Cooley was quick to position himself in support of the results of the journey made across the continent from Zanzibar to Benguela by ‘three moors’ (Mohamedan Arabs) and their caravan, as the details aligned with his own views and afforded ‘a very striking confirmation’ of his own map.⁶⁴

Nonetheless, Cooley keenly demonstrated his belief that historical evidence should always be brought to bear on contemporary geographical problems. With this as his guiding premise, he did not hesitate to tell travellers and observers that they had made ‘considerable errors’ in what they had seen or measured.⁶⁵ This was the case when letters from the Hungarian traveller Ladislaus Magyar were read.⁶⁶ Despite penetrating nearer to the equator than any modern traveller had yet managed, Cooley remarked that Magyar was not furnished with ‘any means of scientific observation’ and that the geographical detail of his journey had been severely affected as a result.⁶⁷ Cooley pencilled the itinerary of ‘Ladislaus Magyar’s Excursion’ on the margin of his 1853 Map, which indicates that he closely read incoming travel accounts alongside his own work (Figure 7.6). He held his work as an authoritative control to deduce that the geographical positions were ‘not merely discordant, but wholly erroneous and unfounded’. The distances were worked through in his notes, as Cooley marked the number of days travelled between locations, and he asserted that these proved to be ‘tolerably correct’.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Vice-Consul Brand, William Desborough Cooley and Bernardino Freire F. A. de Castro, ‘Notice of a Caravan Journey from the East to the West Coast of Africa’, *JRGS*, 24 (1854), pp. 266-271, p. 269.

⁶⁵ H. Rónay and William Desborough Cooley, ‘Extracts from the Letters of an Hungarian Traveller in Central Africa’, *JRGS*, 24 (1854), pp. 271-275, p. 275.

⁶⁶ ‘Abstracts of Letters received from Mr Ladislaus Magyar, dated April 20, 1851, Sah-Quilm, on the River Kaszabi, in the Kingdom of Kalunda, in Central Africa, S. lat. 4° 41’, and E. long. 23° 43’, translated by Dr H. Rónay’, read at 14 February 1853 meeting, see ‘Proceedings of the RGS of London. Session 1852-53’, p. li.

⁶⁷ Rónay and Cooley, ‘Extracts from the Letters of an Hungarian Traveller’, p. 275.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

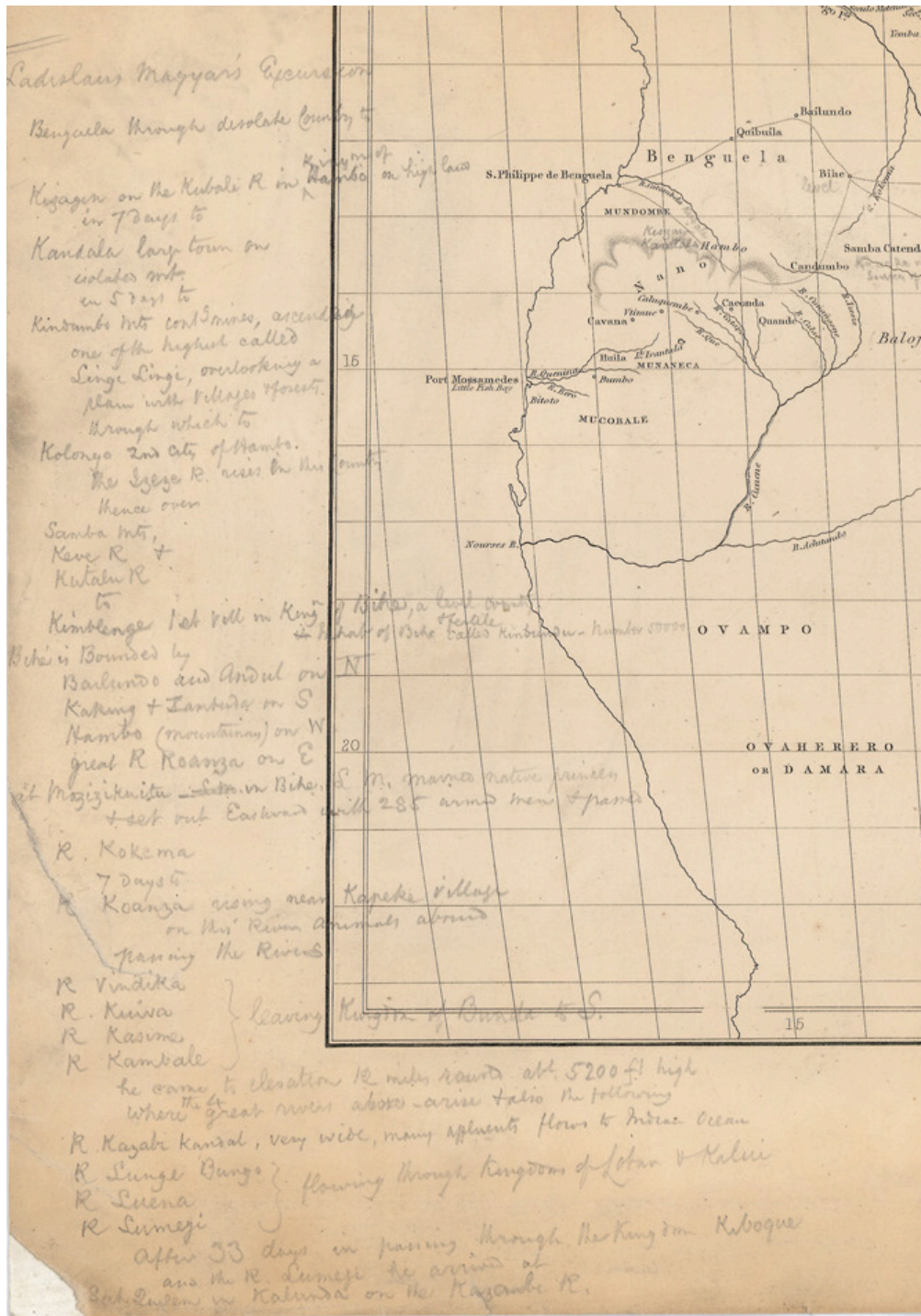


Figure 7.6. 'Ladislaus Magyar's Excursion', detail from Cooley, 'Map of Africa', 1853 © Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

As these theories on inner Africa had appeared before the RGS sponsored a series of expeditions into East Africa, Cooley claimed that he had provided the most ‘certain’ geographical statements that could be made ‘in the absence of scientific observations’.⁶⁹ Yet, this was not simply a case of a critical geographer waiting to demonstrate the credibility of their conclusions against reports from the field. Cooley also had to withstand the scrutiny of the metropolitan community of critical geographers. These sedentary scholars worked in a similar area and had the same limited textual sources available to them; yet whilst tracing the same route, they did not always reach the same destination, often identifying different sites and sights of interest. With such attention being focused on the African Lakes, fellow geographers dealt with Cooley’s publications in the same way that they approached other forms of evidence: critically. Burton stated that he found it ‘instructive and suggestive to walk over the grounds’ upon which Cooley worked, and then to inspect the authorities upon which he had based his conclusions.⁷⁰ One particular source of contention was the credibility of the testimony of his non-Western informants.

Upon reading Cooley’s ‘Geography of N’yassi’, Beke declared himself to be ‘a disciple’, and he had begun his own research relying on the ‘substantial correctness’ of Cooley’s conclusions as to the existence of a single lake.⁷¹ Yet his own investigations, based on similar methods and sources, led him to initially posit that Cooley’s ‘Nyassi’ extended considerably further northward of the limits that had been assigned to it.⁷² Beke initially saw his alteration as an attempt to ‘reconcile respective opinions’ and he was reluctant to challenge Cooley, preferring to find a way to collaborate in the view of

⁶⁹ Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, p. 53.

⁷⁰ Burton, ‘The African Mystery’, p. 407.

⁷¹ Charles Tilstone Beke, ‘African Discovery’, *Athenaeum*, no. 2075, 3 August 1867, p. 146.

⁷² Beke, ‘On the Nile and its Tributaries’.

progressing this speculative geography.⁷³ However, his modification prompted fierce criticism from Cooley.⁷⁴ Taken aback, Beke claimed that Cooley had mutilated his work because it did ‘not happen to accord with his own views’, and that this made him particularly difficult to work alongside and not against.⁷⁵

As Beke had begun to cast doubt upon Cooley’s theory, he continued to collect information on the interior lakes, and three years after Cooley’s 1853 map was published he contended that there was ‘no alternative, but to contend for a *second* lake’. This counter-claim was founded on Beke’s belief that Cooley had ‘mixed up’ the routes given to him by his non-Western informants.⁷⁶ He supported this claim by obtaining his own intelligence from one of Cooley’s informants: ‘the intelligent Swahili’, Mohammed bin Khamis, whom he encountered in Mauritius. Beke recalled that he laid Cooley’s recent works before Mohammed and he explained ‘in the most positive and unqualified manner’ that there existed two lakes.⁷⁷ This issue of ‘correct’ testimony was highlighted by West African explorer Richard Lander, who asserted that ‘natives do not decidedly deceive’, but that they often had a difficulty of expressing themselves to a stranger, and often this lack of clarity in the exchange, on both sides, led the interrogator to form an opinion of their own.⁷⁸ Indeed, Cooley had united non-Western testimonies as they appeared to adhere to the theories he derived from reading textual sources, yet Beke also drew on similar testimonies that ‘confirmed’ his alternative theory.⁷⁹

⁷³ Charles Tilstone Beke, ‘The Great Lake of Southern Africa’, *Athenaeum*, no. 1498, 12 July 1856, pp. 867-868, p. 867.

⁷⁴ William Desborough Cooley, ‘The Geography of the White Nile’, *Athenaeum*, no. 1866, 1 August 1863, pp. 148-149, p. 148.

⁷⁵ Beke, ‘The Great Lake’, p. 71.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁷⁷ The ‘Nyassa’ of Cooley’s conjecture was said to be smaller and laid more towards the south, nearer the coast. The second lake, the ‘Monomoezi Lake’, was described as being considerably larger, more towards the north, and much further into the interior.

⁷⁸ Richard Lander, *Records of Captain Clapperton’s Last Expedition to Africa*, 2 vols, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), p. 146.

⁷⁹ Beke, ‘The Great Lake’, p. 77.

Whilst Cooley claimed that he was keen to garner new information to fill the silences left by the archive and to expand his view beyond the trading routes described by Arab traders, Beke's revelation was not a welcome addition to his knowledge.⁸⁰ Cooley accused Beke of having steered Mohammed's testimony in order to maintain his accordance with Ptolemy. From examining their exchange, Cooley stated that Mohammed's 'statements were not spontaneous, but were wrung from him by one who absolutely required certain answers and would not be satisfied till he [Beke] got them'.⁸¹ Such 'leading questions', Cooley asserted, should be 'struck out' of geographical documents in order to offer 'precise' intelligence.⁸² Moreover, Cooley attempted to discredit Mohammed as not having travelled into the interior of Africa himself, in order to assert that he could not be judged as a credible enough witness to discount the other testimonies that Cooley professed still held strong to his views.⁸³ This manipulation of competing sources of information to buttress his claims was a common Cooleyan trait.

As shown in the previous chapter, Burton closely and critically read Cooley's *Inner Africa Laid Open* and surmised that it was founded upon a 'variety of blundering beliefs', which Cooley 'held as to Holy Writ'.⁸⁴ In particular, Burton was also sceptical about the dependence he had, and continued to place, on his non-Western informants. Whilst stating that Cooley was 'by no means incredulous', Burton believed that 'some notable tricks' had been played upon him.⁸⁵ It was claimed that Khamis was in fact a convinced imposter, known as 'the Liar' by his own countrymen, after having financially defrauded his master, the Sayyid.⁸⁶ Cooley assayed the sense that he could have been duped by his informants by openly questioning the 'earnest and sincere' testimonies and

⁸⁰ [Cooley], 'Art. III – *A Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia*', p. 347.

⁸¹ Cooley, 'The Source of the Nile', p. 55.

⁸² Cooley, 'Referee Report: James MacQueen', RGS-IBG, JMS/2/17.

⁸³ Cooley, 'The Source of the Nile', p. 55.

⁸⁴ Burton, 'The African Discovery', p. 407.

⁸⁵ Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol. 1, p. 301.

⁸⁶ Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol. 2, p. 287. For an account of these supposedly 'fraudulent' activities, see Bridges, 'W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part I', p. 31.

the validity of their claims to have seen certain geographical features with their ‘own eyes’, but this reconciliation between habitual opinion and ascertained fact was left incomplete.⁸⁷ Yet, in response to Burton, Cooley again attempted to shift the source upon which he had placed most reliance and that ‘he had followed a map drawn in Zanzibar from the dictation of Mohammed ben Nassur, whose route to the interior Burton had previously commended as ‘honest’.⁸⁸ This failure to even acknowledge that there may be some flaws in his material, and that even in the face of such criticism Cooley would not rectify his own work, led Burton to rage that Cooley continued to foist ‘fallacies’ on his readers.⁸⁹

Despite presenting multiple plausible sources of evidence that had been initially well received, on reflection and with further interrogation they were soon shown to be inconsistent, and this led to doubt being cast upon Cooley’s sources of knowledge and his ability to contribute to and participate in this network of scientific exchange. Specifically, Beke queried whether Cooley could use his method of rectification effectively to ensure the deliverance of the most credible account using all of the information available, rather than simply dismissing criticisms and discrediting any new intelligence that conflicted with his own.⁹⁰ The call from Cooley that ‘geography can never be advanced to the rank of science unless by the constant application of exact, searching, and rigorous criticism’ elicited particular ire. Burton scribbled in the margin of his work that ‘he [Cooley] is quite unfit to apply it’ and exhibited a self-serving nature (Figure 7.7).⁹¹ The sources he used to underwrite the ‘certain’ nature of his work in order to present it as trustworthy were therefore undermined and precipitated a crisis of confidence in, not only the knowledge claims themselves, but also in Cooley as a

⁸⁷ Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, p. 56.

⁸⁸ William Desborough Cooley, ‘The Land of the Moon’, *Athenaeum*, no. 1703, 16 June 1860, pp. 823-824, p. 823.

⁸⁹ Burton, ‘The African Discovery’, p. 408.

⁹⁰ Beke, ‘African Discovery’, p. 146.

⁹¹ Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, HEH, BL 1544, p. 126.

competent critical geographer. Burton came to view Cooley as a ‘*serpit humi*’ (one who crawls), whose research objectives were not even aligned with his own dictate, but rather, his specialty was to ‘crawl, spit venom, and bruise heels’.⁹²

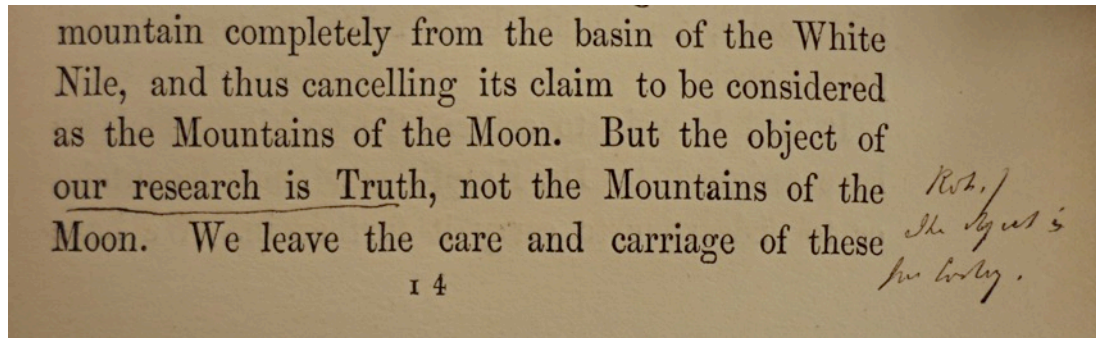


Figure 7.7. ‘Rot – The object is for Cooley’
Burton’s comments in Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open* (1852), HEH, Rare Books Collection, BL 1544, p. 199.

As exploration advanced, Cooley’s self-assured sense of infallibility was increasingly challenged. This was not just because of flaws in his work, but also because explorers had a professional self-interest in discrediting or undermining the value of the various competing sources of information. Livingstone himself mocked Cooley’s informants as his ‘great geographical oracle[s]’, upon which no dependence could be placed for ascertaining precise knowledge.⁹³ Despite, Cooley stating that a map ‘exemplifies an intermediate condition’, where there is a ‘wide interval between the process of creating a blank in a map by reducing exaggeration, and that of filling the same blank with exact details, scientifically established’, it was clear that he would not concede that his speculative geography was incorrect, until he could be offered satisfactory proof by positive observation.⁹⁴ Yet, as the reports from the field reached the RGS, it became evident that Cooley would not simply set aside the results of his

⁹² R. Burton, ‘Correspondence: Captain Burton and Mr Cooley’, *Ocean Highways*, 1 (1873–1874), pp. 432–434, p. 432.

⁹³ Waller (ed.), *The Last Journals of David Livingstone*, vol. 1, p. 226.

⁹⁴ Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, pp. 41–42.

sedentary surveys in favour of accounts of actual observation, no matter how great the challenge to his speculations. The next section considers a significant moment of tension: a meeting of the conjectures of a critical geographer and the results of an expedition recently returned from the field, in the public arena of the RGS. In moving from the ‘angry letter[s]’ exchanged between geographers and explorers, to the first formal face-to-face encounter of contrasting geographical methodologies, it is shown how this episode marked a critical point in the crisis of confidence in Cooley.⁹⁵

Cooley against the Zambesi Expedition

One of the most ‘animated’ of the RGS’s ‘African Nights’ was the meeting of 13 June 1864, which concerned the hydrography of the northern end of Lake Nyassa as presented by the Zambesi Expedition (1858–1864) led by David Livingstone.⁹⁶ Funded by the government, it was despatched with a ‘broad brief steeped in the ideology of the “civilising mission”’. The RGS, and in particular, Murchison had played a central role in organising and equipping the expedition, and aided in drafting its scientific aims.⁹⁷ The meeting welcomed a map prepared and presented by Dr John Kirk, alongside Livingstone’s report read by Markham. Kirk had held the post of economic botanist and chief medical officer to the expedition and was described as being ‘emphatically the scientific member of the party’, who was frequently ‘the leader of its adventurous essays in bold exploration’.⁹⁸ Kirk, alongside David and, his brother, Charles Livingstone attempted to navigate the Nyassa between August and November 1861. They

⁹⁵ Cooley, ‘Capt. Burton and the Land of the Moon’, p. 510.

⁹⁶ David Livingstone, ‘Letters from the Zambesi to Sir R. Murchison, and (the Late) Admiral Washington’, *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 8 (1863–1864), pp. 256–263, p. 263.

⁹⁷ Dritsas, ‘Conflicts in Expeditionary Science’, p. 263. On the formation of the Zambesi Expedition and its instructions, see Dritsas, *Zambesi*, especially Chapter 3.

⁹⁸ H. H. Johnston, ‘Obituary: Sir John Kirk, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., F.R.S, M.D., LL.D., D.Sc., D.C.’, *The Geographical Journal*, 59 (1922), pp. 225–228, p. 225.

ascertained its breadth by rough triangulation whenever the haziness of the air allowed the opposite shore to be seen, and they found the lake to lie 'due north and south, both by compass bearings and by absolute observations of longitude'.⁹⁹ They also concluded that there was no large river flowing to the northern end of Nyassa, therefore showing that it was separate to Tanganyika. Kirk's map was not, however, the only one on display at this meeting. The expedition's findings were placed next to a map compiled by Cooley from rectified Portuguese manuscripts that also represented Lake Nyassa and its position in south-central Africa (Figures 7.8 and 7.9).¹⁰⁰ In contrast to the expedition that had spent six years in the field, Cooley had been labouring in his field of texts for over thirty years. His route to this 1864 map was taken through the 'careful examination and comparison ... of several Portuguese travellers, which he saw as being so full and so accordant that they were quite reliable'.¹⁰¹ Despite this assertion of accuracy, he had made no visible advance on his speculations from 1845, and he again presented his 'one lake' theory: Lake Nyassa lying in a north-west direction, which he made continuous with the Tanganyika, to form an elongated lake called 'Nanja mucuro'.¹⁰² Whilst it may appear to be an insignificant piece of information, the central questions surrounding the direction of the river and its tributaries were directly relevant to the much wider discussion of the search for source of the Nile.

Cooley's paper and his propositions directly contradicted many of the expedition's findings. The two large maps flanking the presenters also visually

⁹⁹ Livingstone, 'Letters from the Zambesi', p. 261.

¹⁰⁰ John Kirk, 'Map of Lake Nyasa and country southwards to R. Zambezi from compass bearings' [1 map on 3 sheets], 1861, RGS-IBG, Map Room, nr Malawi G.8. This manuscript map was later published in connection with Kirk's article, 'Notes on the Gradient of the Zambesi, on the Level of Lake Nyassa, on the Murchison Rapids, and on Lake Shirwa', *JRGS*, 35 (1865), pp. 167-169, after p. 167. Although the map presented by Cooley was never published, his hand drawn map of Central Africa is dated 1864 and delineates the topographical and hydrological features in accordance with the description given in the *Proceedings*, see William Desborough Cooley, 'Central Africa', 1864, RGS-IBG, Map Room, nr Africa S/Div.85.

¹⁰¹ William Desborough Cooley, 'On the Travels of the Portuguese and Others in Inner Africa', *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 8 (1863-1864), pp. 255-256, p. 256.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

communicated to the audience the disagreements over the position, size, and orientation of the lake. Murchison, as Chair of the Meeting, stated that Cooley's contributions were welcomed as they were 'of a critical nature' and could comment 'to a great extent on the accuracy' of Livingstone's observations. He also recognised the potential for dissidence amongst the audience due to speculations from the cabinet being afforded the same platform as exploration in the field. Murchison therefore gave support to Cooley, with his request that: 'All deference should be shown to Mr Cooley ... for he was sure the Society desired to do justice to every man, whatever his labours might be, whether in critical geography or actual observation'.¹⁰³

The direct juxtaposition of these two cartographic products heavily suggests that this meeting had been choreographed to stimulate discussion. Murchison had previously backed away from making a judgment on the 'the relative merits of the writings and maps of critical geographers upon Africa', in the face of reports from the field. As President of the RGS, he stated that it was not his 'province ... to endeavour to show how in the south-east the recent observations of Livingstone may have substantiated or modified the ingenious views of Cooley, the practical sagacity of Arrowsmith, or the laborious analyses of MacQueen'.¹⁰⁴ Yet, at the 1864 meeting, he was discursively framing and physically staging a direct confrontation between 'actual observation' and 'critical geography' in the metropolitan arena of the RGS.¹⁰⁵ Whilst Cooley and Livingstone had duelled previously over both their geographical theories and the relative value of their methods in making 'discoveries', this was the first time that the labours of the critical geographer and the field had been formally laid side by side in this manner

¹⁰³ Murchison, cited in Cooley, 'On the Travels of the Portuguese and Others', p. 256.

¹⁰⁴ Roderick Impey Murchison, 'Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London', *JRGS*, 33 (1863), pp. cxiii-cxcii, p. clxxxiv.

¹⁰⁵ Murchison, cited in Cooley, 'On the Travels of the Portuguese and Others', p. 256.

for the purposes of direct critical comparison.¹⁰⁶ As such, it is an episode that Lawrence Drietsas has drawn on as a significant example of ‘conflict in expeditionary science’.¹⁰⁷



Figure 7.8. W. D. Cooley, ‘Map of Central Africa’, 1864 © Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

¹⁰⁶ Details of these previous debates between synthetic surveys made from the ‘easy chair’ and observations made in the field are given in Chapter 1. Specifically, Cooley did not believe that Livingstone’s Leeambye River was actually the upper part of the Zambesi.

¹⁰⁷ Drietsas, ‘Expeditionary Science’; *Zambesi*, pp. 163-173.



Figure 7.9. J. Kirk, 'Map of Lake Nyasa and country southwards to R. Zambezi from compass bearings', 1861 © Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

The obvious visual discrepancies between the maps elicited intense discussions about the geography of the region, and the methods upon which the papers were based. Responses were heard from the mixed audience of explorers, Kirk and Speke, and the critical authorities of MacQueen, Beke, and Galton. Dritsas has called this a debate where ‘reputations were at stake’, as the discordance of the results publically cast doubt on the labours of those who had built their name upon practices of textual and cartographic criticism.¹⁰⁸ Speke gave initial support to Cooley and he stated that he was ‘inclined to believe’ the Portuguese account and that, at one time, there was a continuous lake of Nyassa and Tanganyika which he thought could still be connected, but not as a ‘broad lake’.¹⁰⁹ Such backing could have possibly come from Speke’s vested interest in Cooley’s conclusions being accepted, as such a connection would decrease the chance of Burton’s Lake Tanganyika being part of the Nile drainage. Yet, Speke had also read Cooley’s previous papers and believed that he showed ‘great foresight and ability, much more so than any others of which I have read’.¹¹⁰

Despite this assertion of confidence in the critical geographer from a Nile explorer, the other audience members found too many discrepancies within Cooley’s map. The most damning blow to Cooley came from his contemporary, MacQueen. In a previous meeting, MacQueen had insisted that all of the Zambesi Expedition’s supposed ‘discoveries’ were already inscribed on Portuguese maps and in Portuguese texts.¹¹¹ Specifically, he referred to the 1623 map of Antonio Sanches, where the entire coast of East Africa was accurately portrayed, including the interior lakes ‘laid down in the very latitude and longitude’ observed by Livingstone.¹¹² Despite this cartographic

¹⁰⁸ Dritsas, *Zambesi*, p. 168.

¹⁰⁹ Speke, cited in Livingstone, ‘Letters from the Zambesi’, p. 258.

¹¹⁰ ‘Letter from Speke to Norton Shaw’, 8 May 1859, RGS-IBG, JHS/1/5.

¹¹¹ Livingstone, ‘Latest Accounts’, p. 27.

¹¹² MacQueen, cited in Livingstone, ‘Letters from the Zambesi’, p. 263. He claimed that Murchison had directed him to this 1623 map. MacQueen also referred to a ‘very valuable Arabic map’ that he had been previously shown by Admiral Washington, but he had never seen since, and thus urged the Society to make some inquiries about it.

precedent demonstrating the significance of historical sources, he stated that Cooley was not the best advocate for them. MacQueen further eroded Cooley's credibility by exclaiming that he had placed the Portuguese observations 'wrong' on his map and, as they did not mention a large river in that location, any connection between the Nyassa and the Tanganyika was 'impossible'.¹¹³ Murchison supported these observations as he held 'great confidence' in MacQueen's abilities as a critical geographer, and decreed them as being 'very important'.¹¹⁴

However, the expedition's authority was also undermined, with questions asked about whether it had managed to directly observe the entire lake. As the main point of contention for the meeting was the northern end of the lake, Speke asked Kirk whether he derived his information that no large river entered the Nyassa at this extremity 'from Arabs or from his own personal inspection'.¹¹⁵ Kirk revealed 'that this part of the lake had not been seen by any of their party', but that the observed details had been supplemented with local knowledge.¹¹⁶ Although their reliance on local testimonies in 1861 confirmed the continuing importance of critical approaches, the more recent information that had been sent back from Livingstone continued to confirm the initial deductions until direct observation could occur.

In bringing the 1864 meeting to a close, Murchison stated that this 'knotty question' remained unsolved which, on the surface, appeared to leave the answer open to critical geographers, and their forms of evidence and theorisations. Yet, in mediating between, what he termed the 'de facto' observations of Livingstone and Kirk, and the

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 262. It does not appear that the Zambesi Expedition consulted these texts when it had been organised, and Cooley did not draw on Sanches either.

¹¹⁴ Murchison, cited in Livingstone, 'Letters from the Zambesi', p. 263.

¹¹⁵ Speke, cited in Livingstone, 'Letters from the Zambesi', p. 258.

¹¹⁶ Kirk, cited in Livingstone, 'Letters from the Zambesi', pp. 260-261. The furthest point reached by the boat in 1861 was latitude 11° 20", as indicated by the higher red line at the northern tip of the Lake on his map. The lower red line marked the 'furthest reached by land party' (Figure 7.10).

earlier observations of the Portuguese, Murchison claimed that ‘actual observation’ was empirically superior:

When gentlemen go into such countries, risking their lives to search out the truth and making astronomical observations which fix latitudes and longitudes, it is obvious that all preceding accounts, derived from Portuguese and Arab travellers who did not make such observations, must give way to facts.¹¹⁷

This statement reveals his assessment of credibility through physical markers, namely travel, experience, danger, and training, rather than social position, scholarly attainment, or critical theorising. In this sense, Murchison echoed John Barrow’s 1826 description of geographical discoveries being made through ‘minute observation’ and ‘bodily fatigue’, not from the ease of ‘hypothesis’.¹¹⁸ Although he was not present, Livingstone took such strong statements to be not only a validation of his expedition’s efforts, but his own personal victory over Cooley and the ‘easy chair’ geographers; as he wrote, after the 1864 Meeting, that Kirk had finally ‘hit the nail on the head’.¹¹⁹

The letters and reports of the Zambesi Expedition were readily accepted for publication by the RGS.¹²⁰ Galton particularly commended Charles Livingstone’s 1862 description of Nyassa for being ‘remarkably graphic’ and recommended it be printed

¹¹⁷ Reginald Foskett (ed.), *The Zambesi Journal and Letters of Dr John Kirk, 1858–1863*, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), p. 390; David Livingstone and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries: And of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa, 1858–1864* (London: John Murray, 1865), p. 411.

¹¹⁸ [Barrow], ‘Recent Discoveries in Africa, Made in the Years 1823 and 1824’, pp. 543–544.

¹¹⁹ ‘Letter from Livingstone to Kirk’, 18 July 1864, cited in Reginald Foskett (ed.), *The Zambesi Doctors: David Livingstone’s Letters to John Kirk 1858–1872* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964), p. 78.

¹²⁰ Series of papers communicated to the RGS appeared in the *Journal*: Charles Livingstone, David Livingstone and H. de Wint Burrup, ‘Dr Livingstone’s Expedition to Lake Nyassa in 1861–1863’, *JRGS*, 33 (1863), pp. 251–276; David Livingstone, ‘Explorations to the West of Lake Nyassa in 1863’, *JRGS*, 34 (1864), pp. 245–251; John Kirk, ‘Notes on Two Expeditions up the River Rovuma, East Africa’, *JRGS*, 35 (1865), pp. 154–167; ‘Notes on the Gradient of the Zambesi’.

‘without abridgement’.¹²¹ In contrast, Cooley’s paper was rejected for publication within the *Journal*. Whilst Findlay stated that it was ‘original’ and ‘skilful’, he assessed that in light of Livingstone’s latest expedition, the Society would require the majority of the views to be ‘modified or subverted’ in order to proceed to publication. As a notice of the paper had already appeared, it was decided that it was ‘better’ not to print the full article.¹²² Roy Bridges has marked this incident as a ‘turning point’ in the critical geographer’s career.¹²³ His stubborn refusal to modify his views as first hand information was received led to his displacement within the geographical establishment, as he moved from a potentially powerful position of critical authority and into a place of isolated obscurity. Aside from his presentation of forty-nine books from his own collection to the RGS Library in 1880, Cooley’s collection of his journal manuscript on 15 November 1864 is the last evidence of Cooley’s physical presence at the Society.¹²⁴

However, this withdrawal from the activities of the RGS was not so he could quietly retreat to rework his theories or to rewrite his papers, as instead Cooley sought to defend his stance and the content of his 1864 paper in order to ‘abate’ the ‘momentary triumph’ of Kirk at the Meeting.¹²⁵ In a review of Livingstone’s account of the Zambesi Expedition provocatively entitled ‘Dr Livingstone’s Errors’, Cooley continued to forward the same arguments and he further disparaged Livingstone’s intellectual equipment, by declaring that ‘as an explorer he stands in the highest rank, but as a geographer the very lowest’.¹²⁶ Cooley argued that the entire meeting had been

¹²¹ ‘Letter from Charles Livingstone to Sir R. I. Murchison’, 8 January 1862, [published with Referee Report by Francis Galton], RGS-IBG, DL/3/13/2. For the published paper, see Livingstone, Livingstone and de Wint Burrup, ‘Dr Livingstone’s Expedition to Lake Nyassa’.

¹²² A. G. Findlay, ‘Referee Report: W. D. Cooley, “Travels of the Portuguese in Inner Africa between Mozambique and Benguela”’, 1864, RGS-IBG, JMS/2/79.

¹²³ Bridges, ‘William Desborough Cooley’, p. 53.

¹²⁴ Bridges, ‘W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part II’, p. 283. This is the date that Cooley collected his paper from the Society, as given on Findlay, ‘Referee Report: W. D. Cooley’, RGS-IBG, JMS/2/79.

¹²⁵ William Desborough Cooley, ‘The Nyanza Mystery’, *Athenaeum*, no. 1940, 31 December 1864, pp. 896-897, p. 896.

¹²⁶ William Desborough Cooley, ‘Dr Livingstone’s Errors’, *Fortnightly Review*, 4 (1866), pp. 96-110, p. 96.

stage-managed, not to facilitate a critical dialogue, but to ‘discredit’ his work.¹²⁷ Specifically, he attacked the wider culture of exploration sponsored by the RGS, and he accused the institution of publically popularising the ‘traveller’ and ignoring, what he deemed, the ‘trustworthy’ geographer:

Instead of endeavouring to draw together learning and enterprise, or of serving as a medium of conciliation between the traveller and the sedentary student, it draws a line between them, and teaches the former to regard the latter as an adversary.¹²⁸

These criticisms were worked into a book-length chastisement of the ‘superficial’ institution of geography, and its promotion of Livingstone.¹²⁹ This diatribe was mostly a reiteration of similar grievances to those he had made in the 1840s about the ‘hollowness’ and unworthy aims of the Society.¹³⁰ His newest complaint was that Murchison and Shaw were ‘charlatans’, who had begun to run the RGS like an ‘advertising partner’ to patronise travellers and their adventures in order to engage public attention, rather than as a centre of learning, science, and critical research.¹³¹ Despite the RGS granting him free membership and petitioning his Civil List pension, Cooley believed his work was viewed as being a threat to this ‘monopoly of geographical information’ that was built on the figure of the heroic explorer, with Livingstone as their ‘star’.¹³² It was for this reason that Cooley claimed he had been deliberately ousted from the Society and his work ‘suppressed’.¹³³

¹²⁷ Cooley, ‘The Source of the Nile’, p. 55.

¹²⁸ Cooley, *Dr Livingstone and the RGS*, p. 25.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹³⁰ As discussed in Chapter 4.

¹³¹ Cooley, *Livingstone and the RGS*, p. 25.

¹³² Cooley, ‘Livingston’s [sic] Remarkable Journey’, p. 114; Cooley, *Livingstone and the RGS*, p. 18.

¹³³ Cooley, *Livingstone and the RGS*, p. 18.

Even though he argued otherwise, the collapse of Cooley's credibility as a critical geographer in the eyes of the RGS was primarily caused by his inflexible insistence on the correctness of his approach. His difficult and erratic temperament further exacerbated his social demise.¹³⁴ Bridges has emphasised the role his congenital deafness played in this situation, as his inability to 'engage in normal converse with his peers would have made him more likely to become cocooned in a world where the realities were his own "discoveries" of the 1830s'.¹³⁵ Cooley had been aware of the need to break out from the limited focus of geographical study and the concentration on exploration. He regarded the fixation on the Africa's great lakes as an 'overvalued geographical problem' that had descended into 'farce'.¹³⁶ Yet his life was consumed by this obsession and his last public statement on the lakes question saw him resolutely stand by his 'one lake' theory. Despite evidence that Livingstone had finally proved Tanganyika and Nyassa were separate, Cooley still directed Livingstone – who was 'not a literary man' – to take 'half an hour's perusal' of his *Inner Africa Laid Open*.¹³⁷ Burton mocked Cooley's sense of infallibility by revealing that geographers had designated his sacred work 'Inner Africa Fast Shut'.¹³⁸

Whilst these events signalled the growing irrelevance of Cooley and his 'one lake' theory, crucially they did not initiate the demise of such critical approaches to problems of geography. With Cooley cutting an increasingly isolated figure, detached from the geographical community, others sought to garner support to strengthen their arguments, and collaborations between armchair geographers and explorers began to emerge.

¹³⁴ 'Obituary: William Desborough Cooley', p. 233.

¹³⁵ Bridges, 'W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part II', p. 282.

¹³⁶ Cooley, *Inner Africa Laid Open*, p. 117; *Livingstone and the RGS*, title page.

¹³⁷ Livingstone, *Livingstone and the RGS*, p. 62.

¹³⁸ Burton, 'The African Mystery', p. 407.

Burton and his Critical Collaborations

After returning from his East Africa Expedition in 1859, Burton never saw the lakes of Africa again. Yet this neither reduced his insatiable interest in their exploration, nor prevented him from promoting his theory about the sources of the River Nile. On 14 November 1864, Burton gave a paper to a meeting of the RGS, persuading them that Lake Tanganyika was actually Ptolemy's 'western lake reservoir'.¹³⁹ This was an allusion to the northern drainage of the Tanganyika Lake and to the southern limit of the Nile Basin, as far as could be known at that point. Drawing heavily on the recent explorations of Livingstone and Kirk of the Nyassa and their earlier RGS presentation, Burton agreed that the Tanganyika could not lie towards the Nyassa and he was left inclined to reconsider his original refusal that there was no outflow to the north.¹⁴⁰ With this paper and his altered view, Burton aligned himself with MacQueen, Beke, Galton, and Livingstone, who had each questioned openly the pronouncement of Burton's former travelling partner Speke, that he had discovered the source of the Nile to be the Victoria Nyanza.¹⁴¹ Whilst the critical stance of Burton's paper points to its potential for creating a tense encounter at the RGS, the actual circumstances that led to its presentation and subsequent circulation were shrouded in high drama.

Originally intended to be delivered at the September meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Bath, the paper formed one side of a public debate that had been arranged between Burton and Speke.¹⁴² Yet the day before the meeting, Speke died in an incident involving a firearm. Although ruled as an accident, an air of suspicion pervaded amongst his contemporaries that Speke had

¹³⁹ Richard Francis Burton, 'Lake Tanganyika, Ptolemy's Western Lake-Reservoir of the Nile', *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 9 (1864–1865), pp. 6–14. The paper was later published, Burton, 'On Lake Tanganyika'.

¹⁴⁰ Burton, 'On Lake Tanganyika', p. 2.

¹⁴¹ See Lovell, *Rage to Live*, p. 437.

¹⁴² The meeting was termed a 'gladitorial exhibition', in *The Times*, 14 September 1864, p. 10.

committed suicide – a suggestion that still endures.¹⁴³ Whilst Burton publically acknowledged the many noble qualities of his contemporary and his genuine sadness at his premature death, he resolutely held to his own geographical hypothesis.¹⁴⁴ With the metropolitan scientific communality still divided on a substantial answer to the Nile question, Burton continued to give his paper outlining his main objections to Speke and his prizing of the Victoria Nyanza, and set forth his own erroneous claim that Lake Tanganyika was the primary source of the Nile.

After being read at the RGS, the paper appeared in the Society's *Journal* and was later published as 'Part I' of the small book, *The Nile Basin* (1864).¹⁴⁵ The second, and more substantial, part of this book featured a series of reviews of Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (1863) that had originally appeared in the *Morning Advertiser*, written by MacQueen.¹⁴⁶ As one of 'Speke's most relentless critics', the pair had clashed at an earlier RGS meeting in which Speke had been called upon to comment on MacQueen's paper on the Upper White Nile.¹⁴⁷ Having just recently returned from the first East African Expedition, Speke asserted that he had 'no doubt' that the Nyanza was the great reservoir of the Nile, yet MacQueen disagreed.¹⁴⁸ He continued to openly question and shed doubt on the latitudes quoted by Speke, and requested he provide further evidence to substantiate his claims, which Speke was

¹⁴³ On Speke's death, see Lovell, *A Rage to Live*, pp. 447-455. A strong case for this being an accidental death is presented by Alexander Maitland, *Speke and the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London: Constable, 1971), see Chapter 10. The intense pressure surrounding African exploration and the unfortunate timing of this incident making suicide 'impossible to dismiss' are indicated by Kennedy, *Highly Civilised Man*, p. 124, 306.

¹⁴⁴ *The Times*, 23 September 1864, p. 64.

¹⁴⁵ Richard Francis Burton and James MacQueen, *The Nile Basin. Part I. Showing Tanganyika to be Ptolemy's Western Lake Reservoir, a Memoir Read before the Royal Geographical Society, November 14, 1864. With Prefatory Remarks. By Richard F. Burton, F.R.G.S. Part 2. Captain Speke's Discovery of the Source of the Nile. A Review. By James M'Queen, Esq., F.R.G.S., Author of a 'Geographical Survey of Africa'. (Reprinted by Permission from the Morning Advertiser.)* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1865).

¹⁴⁶ Part I comprises 65 pages, followed by Part 2 formed of 130 pages of MacQueen's reprinted reviews.

¹⁴⁷ Kennedy, *Highly Civilised Man*, p. 124.

¹⁴⁸ James MacQueen, 'Observations on the Geography of Central Africa', *JRGS*, 3 (1858–1859), pp. 208-214.

unable to adequately provide.¹⁴⁹ Building on this shared foundation of scepticism, Burton engaged MacQueen in a critical collaboration to discredit the late Speke, both as an able explorer and as a disciplined gentleman.

As Burton presented his scholarly and technical arguments against Speke's claim and forwarded criticisms of his exploratory practice, MacQueen specifically accused Speke of immoral behaviour, scathing that 'Speke never should have allowed such narratives to have been issued from his mouth, or stained his pages with such rubbish as this'.¹⁵⁰ Although Burton praised MacQueen for his 'acumen and dryness of style', this positive reception did not extend to the wider readership. Robert Collins described his reviews as 'slanderous', which added 'little value' in terms of facts or logic to the geographical arguments. These 'personal attacks' also made salacious references to the explorer's encounters with African women during his 1860-1863 Nile Expedition with James Grant.¹⁵¹ Five of the reprinted articles contained comments that had appeared before Speke's death and had been openly discussed.¹⁵² Whilst Speke was aware then of what was being said about him, claiming that he did not 'deserve the imputations ... which you have cast at me', now deceased, there was no opportunity for him to respond to the charges laid out against him.¹⁵³ Even with an inscription that acknowledged the 'encouragement' of its publication from members of the RGS, one reviewer claimed

¹⁴⁹ See the discussion in Burton and Speke, 'Explorations in Eastern Africa', pp. 352-358.

¹⁵⁰ Burton and MacQueen, *The Nile Basin*, p. 168.

¹⁵¹ Robert O. Collins, 'Introduction', in Richard F. Burton and James MacQueen (ed.), *The Nile Basin and Captain Speke's Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967), p. xxv; xxxvii. Attention has been drawn to this 'language of defilement and risky racial mixing' as a common discursive feature of MacQueen's reviews, both scientific and political, see Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 216.

¹⁵² These five articles were dated: 18 February; 24 February; 22 March; 24 March; and 19 May 1864. The final reprinted article had appeared after Speke's death on 2 December 1864.

¹⁵³ Speke, cited in Lovell, *A Rage to Live*, p. 848. This was from a letter Speke wrote to the editor of the *Athenaeum* on 19 December 1863 in response to an unflattering review of his work that questioned his sexual morality. See, 'Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile', *Athenaeum*, no. 1886, 19 December 1863, pp. 829-832.

that the work resonated with anger and spite, based ‘not on geographical conviction but a sentiment of envy’.¹⁵⁴

Whilst this collaboration of an explorer and a critical geographer has been said to be ‘rich in irony’ due to the dismissive attitude that many travellers had towards those untravelled geographers – and Burton was vocal in these disputes – the association of Burton and MacQueen was not a surprising one.¹⁵⁵ It has already been shown that Burton actively engaged in critical methods of textual exegesis and had travelled with MacQueen’s papers in the field.¹⁵⁶ He was a keen admirer of MacQueen’s work, particularly his 1860 map of the ‘Sources of the Nile’, in which he separated the Tanganyika and the Nyassa, at a time when ‘maps still suffered from that incubus the N’yassi’.¹⁵⁷ Yet this was more than an intellectual collaboration, being also a valuable social alliance for both of them. In positioning his work alongside Burton, MacQueen was able to restate his geographical vision and assert the ‘validity of critical geography and importance of Ancient authorities, particularly Ptolemy’.¹⁵⁸ Burton generously acknowledged MacQueen’s expertise in his ‘Prefatory Remarks’ and the solid and laborious service he had extended in the cause of African geography.¹⁵⁹ The critical and irascible nature of MacQueen made him a ‘useful weapon’ in Burton’s overarching desire to discredit Speke.¹⁶⁰ Such a curious connection led some to lament this working partnership, as Burton was seen as ‘dignified in his style. Not so Mr M’Queen [sic]’.¹⁶¹

Yet, this served Burton’s purpose, as he did not have to directly smear Speke’s

¹⁵⁴ [Laurence], ‘Nile Basins and Nile Explorers’, p. 105.

¹⁵⁵ Kennedy, *Highly Civilised Man*, p. 124.

¹⁵⁶ See Chapter 6.

¹⁵⁷ Burton, *Zanzibar*, vol. 1, p. 62. Burton also commended MacQueen’s efforts in editing the journeys of Portuguese travellers and other non-Western accounts. Their opinions also aligned on issues of race and people of African descent, with them both advocating the view that black Africans constituted a separate and inferior species of humankind. See Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 217.

¹⁵⁸ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 217. MacQueen also sought to rebut Speke’s accusations that his friends, John and Katherine Petherick, had failed to help his 1860–1863 expedition.

¹⁵⁹ Burton and MacQueen, *The Nile Basin*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁰ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 217.

¹⁶¹ *The Nile Basin*. By Richard F. Burton, F.R.G.S. London: Tinsley Brothers’, *The Press*, 14 December 1864. This was a cutting affixed to Burton’s own copy of *The Nile Basin*, HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 20.

reputation himself, and instead employed MacQueen to ‘do his dirty work’.¹⁶² Burton was effective at playing the critical geographers at their own game and the extreme nature of the criticism set a tone so insistent that, although the geographical problems remained unsettled, a large shadow of doubt was cast on Speke.

Despite *The Nile Basin* receiving heavy criticism for being in poor taste, Burton saw the potential of working in collaboration with another geographer to discredit a contemporary’s account. His next target, unsurprisingly, was Cooley. Burton wrote to his friend Albert Tootal of his intentions to give it ‘hot to him’, especially as the recent observations from the field had ‘utterly abolished’ his ‘Nyassi’.¹⁶³ The continued complaints made by Cooley that the RGS was a ‘college of wicked magicians’ that had ‘suppressed’ his work angered Burton, as he felt his ability to make critical judgments for himself was being undermined.¹⁶⁴ He was particularly irritated with Cooley’s pedantic nature, relentless denunciations of others’ work, and apparent contempt of explorers:

Mr Cooley will have the lash, and he shall have it. I bring a heavier charge against him even than “alternate servility and insolence”. During the last twenty years he has shown himself systematically ungrateful to every traveller who has corrected his misapprehensions and mistakes, and who has taught him his own specialty, the geography of Inner Africa.¹⁶⁵

In a bid to put an end to Cooley’s ‘little game’ of denial, Burton approached Beke to collaborate with him on what would become the contentious ‘Supplementary Papers’ to

¹⁶² Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 217.

¹⁶³ ‘Letter from Burton to Tootal’, 22 October 1869, HEH, Burton Correspondence, Box 27, RFB 324; Burton, ‘Captain Burton and Mr Cooley’ (November 1874), p. 433.

¹⁶⁴ Burton, ‘Captain Burton and Mr Cooley’ (November 1874), p. 433.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

his translation of Lacerda's travel narrative.¹⁶⁶ He recognised that Beke had also been 'attacked, with characteristic petulance' by Cooley and this led Burton to entertain the idea of reprinting Beke's articles on their contemptuous relationship, in a similar manner to *The Nile Basin*.¹⁶⁷ Responding to Burton, Beke stated the need to expose the 'gross blunder[s]' in Cooley's work, particularly over his use and interpretation of Lacerda, that he 'deliberately presented for nearly twenty years – doubtless persists still'.¹⁶⁸ Despite Beke's intimation that he was willing to cooperate, this project did not develop further due to a dispute over who held the legal rights to the reproduction of Beke's papers. Burton went ahead and published the work himself.¹⁶⁹ He later withdrew himself from this 'general scolding match' with Cooley, however, claiming the arguments and methods of his 'ancient antagonist' were now outmoded. Whilst Burton pitied this 'Old Man of the Sea', he continued to express his disdain, impudently remarking that 'there is a sadness in the spectacle of white hairs and no wisdom'.¹⁷⁰

However, Burton's collaborations with critical geographers extended beyond engaging in personal disputes. He also allied himself with the geographical knowledge of others in order to advance his theories. Burton's hypothesis that the Tanganyika had a northern outlet and was the head of the Nile owed much to that 'eminent and energetic geographer', Findlay.¹⁷¹ From his London study, mapmaker and critical compiler Findlay had long harboured the conviction that 'Lake Tanganyika would some day prove to be the southern reservoir of the Nile'; a conclusion he claims to have arrived at when discussing and calculating the data brought back from the first East African Expedition

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. These appeared as Burton, *Supplementary Papers to the Mwátá Cazembe*.

¹⁶⁷ Burton, 'Captain Burton and Mr Cooley' (November 1874), p. 433.

¹⁶⁸ 'Letter from Beke to Burton', 30 March 1872, RGS-IBG, Correspondence Block 6/176.

¹⁶⁹ Burton, *Supplementary Papers to the Mwátá Cazembe*.

¹⁷⁰ Burton, 'Captain Burton and Mr Cooley' (November 1874), p. 434.

¹⁷¹ Burton, 'Lake Tanganyika', p. 10. Burton had been criticised in this meeting at the RGS for deliberately adopting the ideas of Findlay without acknowledgment. See 'Discussion on Nilotic Discoveries: 14 November 1864', in Burton, 'Lake Tanganyika', pp. 10-14.

by Burton and Speke.¹⁷² As Burton now advocated for the reversal of the data that he had previously given to the RGS, Galton observed that explorers and geographers should be ‘tolerant’ of one another’s mistakes.¹⁷³

With reports from the field appearing to strengthen the Tanganyika hypothesis, RGS Assistant Secretary, naturalist and explorer, Henry Walter Bates wrote to Burton in encouragement of an association between him and Findlay. Bates detailed that he was ‘spurring Findlay to write a short paper on the subject’ for the Society and that this would position Burton favourably as the ‘discoverer’ of the head of the Nile.¹⁷⁴ For this paper, Findlay produced a series of maps to illustrate the progress in knowledge through the different observations that had been made by various explorers, alongside one detailing the most recent knowledge provided by Livingstone and combined with Portuguese testimony.¹⁷⁵ In compiling his maps, Findlay stressed that accounts ‘given by older authors should be judged by the light of recent and positive knowledge, and not be arranged according to the imperfect reports of incompetent travellers, or the vague ideas gained from native report’.¹⁷⁶ Burton followed this axiom and constructed his own diagram that continued to follow Livingstone’s footsteps as he undertook his final, fatal journey to locate the source of the Nile (Figure 7.10).¹⁷⁷ The primary objective of this expedition was to travel in search of Lake Bangweolo (Bangweulu), which Livingstone had become convinced held the source of the Nile. He expected to find a river flowing north to Lake Tanganyika, which he could follow north to Lake Albert. In so doing, this would disprove the other circulating hypotheses of Burton, Speke, and Baker.

¹⁷² Findlay, ‘On Dr Livingstone’s Last Journey’, p. 193.

¹⁷³ Galton, cited in ‘Discussion on Nilotic Discoveries: 14 November 1864’, p. 10.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Letter from Henry Walter Bates to Burton’, 5 April 1867, RGS-IBG, Correspondence Block 5/114 [photocopy of letter from Richmond Public Library].

¹⁷⁵ Findlay, ‘On Dr Livingstone’s Last Journey’. Burton lent Findlay a manuscript copy of his translation of Lacerda’s ‘Journey to Cazembe’ in order for him to research his paper.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹⁷⁷ This large hand drawn map was recovered many years later folded and laid in the back of Burton’s own copy of David Livingstone’s *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: John Murray, 1857), HEH, Rare Books Collection, RFB 1622.

With scanty intelligence and rumours circulating that Livingstone had died, geographers began to speculate on the ‘probable line’ his research had taken. Murchison stated in his 1869 ‘Address to the RGS’ that he believed Livingstone had been ‘following the waters which are laid down upon the old map of Duarte Lopez [sic]’ from the late sixteenth century; these were the Victoria Nyanza and the Albert Nyanza. He directed interested parties towards this map for the ‘curious information’ it could afford geographers, until they received news from Livingstone.¹⁷⁸ In this context, Burton’s map, labelled a ‘diagram to assist in the reading of Livingstone’s letter’, could have been his attempt to locate and track Livingstone’s movements out in Africa.¹⁷⁹ Yet, the content of these letters suggests that this diagram could also have been a cartographic experiment to test Livingstone’s most recent theory regarding the source of the Nile. Livingstone claimed to have found ‘not one source from a lake, but upwards of twenty of them’ in a watershed between 10° and 12° south latitude, ‘or nearly in the position assigned them by Ptolemy’.¹⁸⁰ Burton’s map can be read therefore as a response to Livingstone’s claim, and shows how Burton attempted to navigate his way through these assertions. Its markings trace Livingstone’s route south to Bangweolo from Bemba in his bid to verify that it was, as his African informants had claimed, the most southerly source of the Lualaba, which he would then follow north as far as might be necessary to prove it was the Nile.

¹⁷⁸ Roderick Impey Murchison, ‘Address to the RGS of London’, *JRGS*, 39 (1869), pp. cxxv-cxciv, p. clxxiv. The map had been brought to the attention of Murchison and the RGS by Henry Major at the British Museum, see Richard Henry Major, *The Life of Prince Henry of Portugal, surnamed the Navigator, and its results: Comprising the Discovery, within One Century, of Half the World* (London: A. Asher & Co., 1868).

¹⁷⁹ Livingstone had sent a disptach of four letters to the RGS which were read at a meeting, see David Livingstone, ‘Extracts of a Letter from Dr Livingstone to Dr Kirk; Despatch from Dr Livingstone to the Earl of Clarendon; Extracts from a Letter of Dr Livingstone to the President; Letter from Dr Livingstone to Sir Bartle Frere’, *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 14 (1869–1870), pp. 8-16.

¹⁸⁰ Livingstone, ‘Extracts of a Letter from Livingstone to Kirk’, p. 8.



Figure 7.10. Richard Francis Burton, 'Diagram to assist in the reading of David Livingstone's Letter/Bangweolo [sic] July 8 1868', HEH, Sir Richard Francis Burton Map Collection.

The map is drawn in pencil, with the names of rivers and places layered over in pen, and it charts the supposed flow of the River Chambeze west into Lake Bangweolo, thence onto Lake Moero, via the Luapula, and further north, where it was reported to run into Lake Ulenge. Livingstone's route is traced in red, alongside the dates of his arrival at particular places. In moving beyond the material frame of this diagram, the various texts and testimonies drawn on by Burton in its preparation are apparent. The scribbled list which appears in the top right corner, titled 'remarks', notes the sources from which he drafted the watershed of the country between Lakes Tanganyika and Nyassa, and positioned its geographical areas and landscape features (Figure 7.11). These include Speke's Map; Livingstone's Map; Mr Findlay's Map; and Portuguese authorities, such as Lacerda, whom he notes on the map itself. Whilst Burton did not approximate anywhere near an accurate delineation of the Central African watershed, he showcases how he formed it from his relationship with a diverse and interwoven range of textual and historical sources, as he mobilised them beyond the page and transformed them in a new view and form. Critically, this map was constructed by Burton at a distance.¹⁸¹ It was formed almost ten years after Burton last set foot in that region, drawn not from his own direct experience in the field, but from sedentary textual practices of reading, writing, compiling and reconstructing. Whilst it could be viewed as embodying the practical and spatial conflicts between the armchair and the field, it also reveals the potential for collaboration between the two: a topographic vision alluded to by Findlay, and at an earlier time, Rennell. Burton used texts as sites of active encounter, and he had worked on and through them here to reconstruct Livingstone's observations, which he no doubt compared to his own and other maps.

¹⁸¹ In July 1868 Burton was in South America. He resigned from his consular post in Santos and was preparing to embark on visits to Paraguayan war zones.

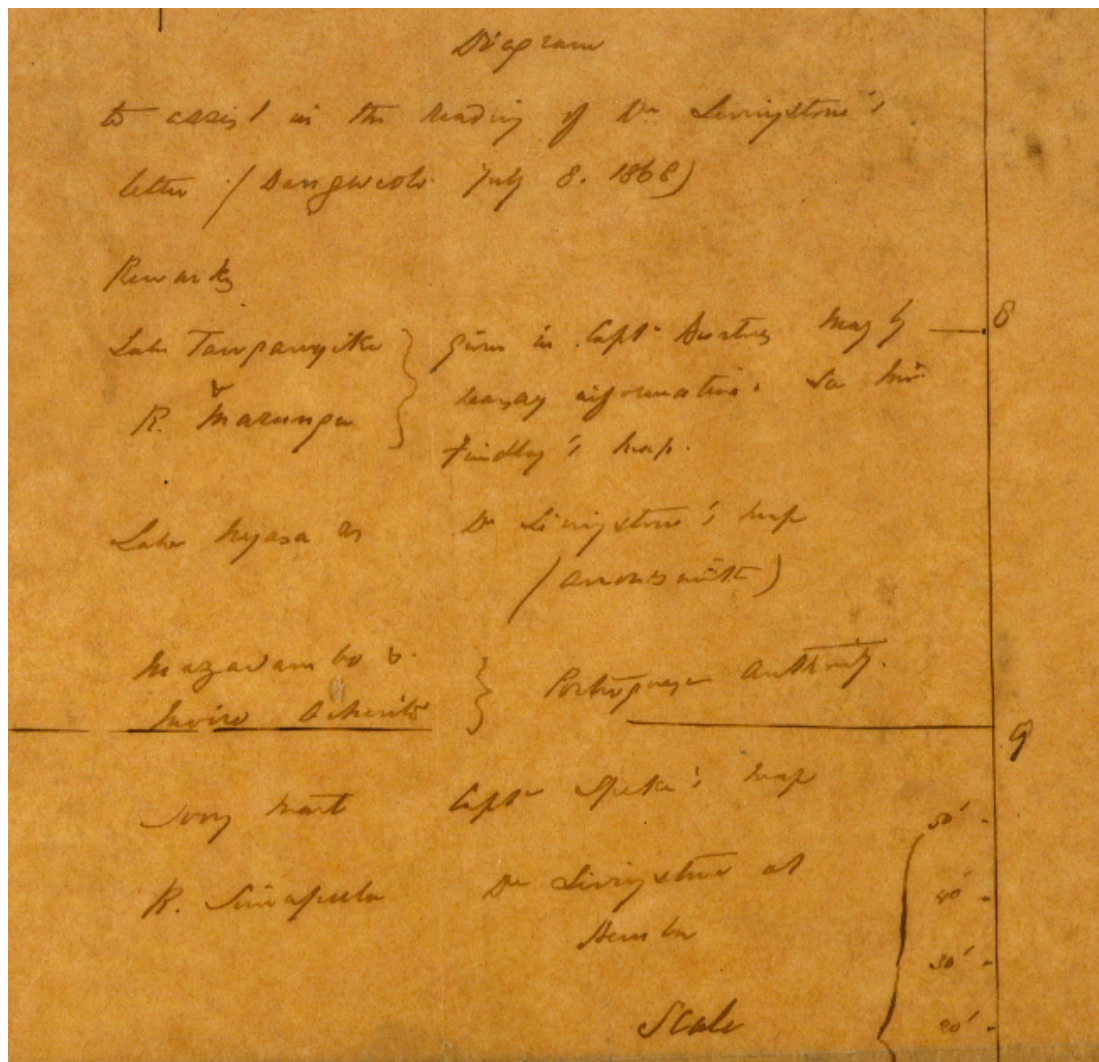


Figure 7.11. 'Remarks' on Burton's diagram to assist in the reading of David Livingstone's Letter (detail from Figure 7.10).

In the mid-1870s, Verney Lovett Cameron and Henry Morton Stanley finally answered the question of the Nile's sources with a series of expeditions, which mapped and 'discovered' Africa's great lakes.¹⁸² Although Livingstone did not return from his

¹⁸² Stanley settled the debates over the hydrography of the central African watershed in his Trans-Africa Expedition (1874–1877), see Henry Morton Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent: Or the Sources of the Nile around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa, and Down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean*, 2 vols (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1878). Cameron made the definitive 'discovery' that the Lake Tanganyika has a western outlet that connected it to the Congo during the RGS funded Livingstone Relief Expedition (1873–1875), see Verney Lovett Cameron, 'Exploration of Lake Tanganyika: Letter from Lieut. V. L. Cameron, Describing the Discovery of an Outlet', *Proceedings of the RGS of London*, 19 (1874–1875), pp. 75-78; *Across Africa* (London: Daldy, Isbister & Co., 1877).

African expedition alive, Burton's hand drawn map has survived as material testament to the continued reliance on critical reading and comparative methodologies in forming geographies from the 'armchair'.

Conclusions

Situated at a time of increasing exploration and heated discussions about the geography of Africa, as claims were challenged or confirmed, this chapter has sought to complicate the view that armchair geography was defeated in the face of an assault from the field. Through the presentation of a series of critical exchanges, the chapter has argued that this was not, at once and always, a clearly defined battle of armchair 'versus' field. Rather, it was a dialogue between methods that occurred across and between different spaces and at each stage, the credibility of claims was negotiated, and re-negotiated; a process that saw the combination of both critical practice and field observation. As such, this chapter has demonstrated that the view of increasing field observation leading to the ultimate demise of armchair geography is an oversimplification.

The RGS has been mobilised in this chapter as a critical site in which different knowledges and methods were brought into direct conversation with one another. The debates surrounding the differing maps of the African interior demonstrate how judgments of accuracy and credibility were formulated and bestowed upon certain claims and not on others, which resulted in tensions and antagonisms between geographers, regardless of their particular place of practice.

Whilst the field has been recognised as a site of increasingly regulated discipline in this period, critical geographers also subjected their work to methodological rigour and sought to demonstrate their own credibility by situating their theories within an intertextual web of citations. The case of Cooley, his 1853 'Map of Africa' and the

tussles with Beke complicates the binary distinction that is often made between two distinct groups of practitioners. Clearly, frictions and tensions existed between the critical geographers, just as they did between individual explorers.

Amidst the tense discussions over his work that spanned almost three decades, the woeful demise of Cooley's reputation as a geographer could and has been viewed as marking the increasing irrelevance of critical practices.¹⁸³ However, his downfall was not, as he claimed, an act of conspiracy against him, but rather his loss of credibility was due to his steadfast refusal to acknowledge any opinions other than his own, rebuking armchair geographers, field explorers, and the authorities of the RGS alike. Despite the clearly acrimonious relationship that existed between Burton and Cooley, Burton stated that if Cooley deigned to present any new information or ideas to the geographical community, then he would be willing to hear them.¹⁸⁴

Although the distinction between 'sedentary knowledge production' and the 'mobile knowledge of the field' was often drawn on to assert the legitimacy of certain claims, the increasing intensity of the disputes by 1864 gave rise to collaborations across the supposed epistemic divide.¹⁸⁵ The example of Burton shows how he moved to ally himself with the opinionated MacQueen, the disgruntled Beke, and the respected Findlay to garner strength in support of his theories, and to collectively undermine the researches of both field explorer Speke and armchair critic Cooley. Burton further demonstrated his reliance on critical practices in this endeavour, as he traced the movements of Livingstone to ensure that this explorer was not encroaching on another discovery that would discredit his own. This manipulation of expertise to promote certain understandings highlights the broader instruments of exploration at work during

¹⁸³ Bridges, 'W. D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography: Part I'.

¹⁸⁴ Burton, 'Captain Burton and Mr Cooley' (November 1874), p. 434.

¹⁸⁵ Driver, 'Distance and Disturbance', p. 82.

these debates, and reveals how such actions continued to instil armchair geography with critical potential that could work to challenge, and even ‘disprove’, eye witness accounts.

Whilst the place of armchair geography as a source of critical contribution and knowledge, as opposed to one of simply dissent and dispute, has been obscured in its history, this chapter has repositioned it not as a fading body of defunct scholarship, but as a central practice in the negotiation and production of ‘discovery’ in Central and East Africa during the mid-nineteenth century.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

I know, for example, that I did not on that occasion do sufficient justice – and I am sorry for it – to able critical geographers, who had framed hypotheses, or had collated data from natives and other authorities.

Roderick Impey Murchison, 1863.¹

In the midst of the central debates over the elusive source of the Nile, RGS President Roderick Murchison turned apologist and publicly conceded that he had failed to acknowledge sufficiently the ability, relevance, and continued importance of critical geographers, as he was ‘solely bent’ on developing and promoting the results of ‘actual and practical survey’.² This admission clearly exposes the elevated position given to the field over the armchair at this point in geography’s history, and it is indicative of how, over time, the contribution of the ‘able’ critical geographer to the development of geographical knowledge has come to be overlooked. This thesis therefore, has sought to remedy Murchison’s oversight and, on this occasion, ‘do sufficient justice’ to the work of armchair geography in the mid-nineteenth century, and redress its effacement and obscurity from the historical narrative of this period.

¹ Roderick Impey Murchison, ‘Fifteenth (Special General) Meeting, Monday, 22 June, 1863: Discovery of the Sources of the Nile’, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 7 (1862–1863), pp. 213-215, p. 214.

² *Ibid.* For further discussion, see Murchison, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1863), p. clxxiv.

It sets out an understanding of the complexities of what armchair geography was in relation to the making of geographical knowledge, and where and how it occurred in the period 1830–1870. This has entailed examining what the presence of armchair geography reveals about the practice of exploration, and how a focus on these more sedentary geographers complicates and challenges our received understanding of geography’s formation as a discipline and discourse. This has been elucidated further by using armchair geography as a lens through which to interrogate the wider historical geography of geographical science. Critically, this thesis has sought to dismantle the static binarism that positions the critical geographer as both separate from, and in opposition to, the field explorer. Rather, it has revealed the unsettled physical and spatial boundaries between modes of doing geography. As such, the aim here has not been to simply narrate a story of ‘curious’ armchair geographers and their personal and social affairs, but it has attended to critical, textual, and often sedentary practices to show how they were enmeshed in the labours of geography, the formation of geographical knowledge, and the practice of exploration in this period.

In taking a more nuanced and spatially sensitive approach to this period of geography’s history, this thesis challenges a number of assumptions that historians and geographers of Victorian science have developed since the pronouncement of Rennell as the ‘perfect geographer’ by Markham in 1895.³ The birth of the RGS in 1830, the same year as Rennell’s death, is commonly characterised as a significant point in the transition from comparative humanism into modern empiricism.⁴ However, this thesis moves away from the notion that critical textual practices expired and a new modern science of geography emerged. Rather, it views the mid-nineteenth century as a period of liminality, in which these two modes of geography co-existed and overlapped, and

³ Markham, *Major James Rennell*, p. 9.

⁴ This chronological language and marking of 1830 as a ‘transition’ is employed in Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography*; and in Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*.

were combined and contested. Therein, this study does not fixate on a ‘single foundational “moment”’, as is often the tendency for histories of geography, and instead expounds a more detailed analysis of the geographical activities that occurred during this period by recovering the practices and performances that sat between these two epistemic poles.⁵ As such, the critical contribution of this thesis does more than redress a lacuna in histories of geography, but it offers a critical cross-examination of geographical knowledge making that interrupts and challenges current histories of the development of geography as a field of knowledge and set of practices in the nineteenth century.

In order to form this thesis as a historical geography of geographical knowledge and practice, the chapters have approached its central concerns from a range of different sites, in which knowledge about exploration and geographical theories was constructed, presented, and received, and the intra- and inter-institutional politics that played out both between and within them. Through engaging with the material products of ‘armchair geography’, this thesis has explored not just the cognitive content and institutional history of nineteenth-century British geography, but also its methodological procedures and authorial regimens.

By examining how the ‘field’ of geographical knowledge was physically constituted, inhabited, and animated, Chapter 3 recovered the more particular ways in which the ‘field’ was both produced and reproduced through material and cultural practices. Cooley and Livingstone were used to exemplify the extremes of the binary division that separated the notoriously critical armchair geographer and the romanticised notion of the ‘intrepid explorer’. Whilst they were both recognised as ‘experts’ within their particular field, there existed a clear antagonism between them as to who could lay claim to the title of ‘geographer’, and where its ideal site of study was located. The

⁵ Withers, *Geography and Science in Britain*, p. 8.

material binaries constructed by Livingstone in his 1856 letter placed the marked body of the ‘field geographer’ in opposition to the comfortable distance of the ‘easy chair’, and worked to assert the superior value of fieldwork over textwork. He sought to expand not only the physical distance, but also the epistemic distance between the two practices, by claiming that the results of his work were ‘discovery, not a survey’.⁶

However, the critical purpose of this chapter was to move beyond the preoccupation of the spatial boundary between the explorer in the field and the scholar in the study, to focus on the bodily comportment and movements of geographers within these spaces. As Dorinda Outram has argued, at this time ‘knowledge gathering was inseparable from movement *through* space, inseparable therefore from bodily involvement’.⁷ This chapter supports this conclusion, and in doing so, it unsettles the entrenched notion that Cooley only ‘thought’ and Livingstone only ‘did’ by animating how these geographers’ bodies were positioned, structured, and involved in these spaces. In tracing the physical contours of this debate, the chapter has unravelled a complex tale of exploratory movement to expose the fragility of the fabricated dichotomy of mobility/immobility that has simplified the history of geography to becoming an active and masculine science of empire.

This critical boundary between fieldwork and textwork was critically examined in relation to the RGS in Chapter 4. The period between the Society’s foundation and its launching of an active exploration programme in the 1850s is often overlooked as insignificant. Yet this chapter demonstrated that these decades represent an immensely important and critical juncture, not just for the Society, but also for the historical development of a geographical science as it was being laid out at the time. In closely reviewing the internal politics of the institution, the RGS has been shown to be a site of anxious disciplinary development, and the two debates over labour in 1838 and 1846

⁶ Livingstone, ‘Letter to the Editor of the “Athenaeum”’, RGS-IBG, DL/2/12.

⁷ Outram, ‘New Spaces in Natural History’, p. 255.

serve as prime examples of the blurred boundaries between textwork and fieldwork. The chapter identified that the central conflict centred on whether the RGS was a depository for the facts of travel or an exponent for the act of travel, and the role of its members within these activities was a point of continuing conflict.

The debates following the defection of Cooley's speculative mission to Delagoa Bay in 1838 directly questioned the process of 'speculative geography' and its capability to define and drive physical labour in the field. It was at this point that a bifurcation between the muscular science of the expedition and the sedentary science of trialling theories on paper became apparent in the institutional discourse of geography. Significantly, this chapter identified the later debates in 1846 as a key turning point in drawing a critical epistemic and discursive line between a geography forged in the field and one formulated in the cabinet. At the core of many of these heated debates were fundamental divisions over the concept of 'geography': what it was, what it should be, how it should be practised, and by whom. These discussions remained constant throughout the period under study, and this analysis deepens our understanding about those involved and the attempts to reconcile both practices of textual collation and empirical measurement.

In accordance with the previous chapters, Chapter 5 revealed how certain nineteenth-century geographers saw the site of the study as a significant place of geographical knowledge production. Cooley in particular argued that the collection and preservation of travel texts were not to be dismissed in favour of sponsoring active travel. Critically, RGS President William R. Hamilton lamented in 1839 that they were unable to offer adequate space to act as a study for the critical engagement with texts, for the formulation of speculative geographies, and for dialogues to occur both between

book and reader, and between geographers.⁸ The chapter revealed that this perceived failure on the part of the RGS was a matter of such contention that it gave rise to a new ‘geographical’ society, and the analytical spotlight was moved from the RGS to focus on the literary undertakings of the Hakluyt Society. A critical examination of the role of the editor in re-assembling the worlds of past narratives of voyages and travels for the Hakluyt Society illuminated not only the multiple agency nature of book production, but also the many spaces and scholarly networks involved in the recovery of texts. In so doing, the geography of encounter has been extended beyond the four walls of the study and the restrictive arms of a chair. The commentaries of the individual editors within the volumes’ introductory material emphasised this as a mobile ‘travail’, which saw texts circulate between repositories and across desks, as editors bemoaned the intellectual fatigue that was often incurred in their production. As such, this chapter has further complicated the sense of geographical ‘discovery’ – as textual recovery, in this case – as being made solely in the field.

The practice of geography as spanning the field and the study was critically dealt with in Chapter 6 by tracing methods of textwork on the move, through the example of Burton and his library. In engaging with the material traces and marginal marks left by his acts of reading, books have been identified as key instruments in Burton’s exploratory praxis; melding both fieldwork and textwork. Burton’s copious annotations and his reforming of the materiality of his books demonstrate how he engaged in comparative observation between the immediate scene he directly witnessed and the words of speculative geographers such as Cooley and MacQueen that he held in his hand. In many ways, Burton’s actions are an example of what Daniela Bleichmar has termed ‘bookish travel’, in that these books were to be ‘companions’ to travel, aiding in translating the landscape for both the reading observer and the observing reader, and

⁸ Hamilton, ‘Address to the RGS’ (1839), p. xlvi.

prompting progression in thought.⁹ Furthermore, this chapter marks a critical contribution to studies in the history of science that are concerned with the materiality of travel by demonstrating the intersections between reading practice and books as tools of travel within the field, the study, and on the page.

The recovery of Burton's travelling library and the reconstruction of how he engaged with books both under the stars in Africa and at his rough deal tables in Trieste has exposed and dismantled the constructed distinctions between the field and the study. Whilst Burton was a critical voice in debates over how geographical labour was institutionally organised and the requirements placed on the explorer by their sponsor, he also recognised the study as a significant space for both contemplative acts such as reading and reflecting, and also active pursuits, such as writing and mapping.

The tangled intertextual and interspatial network of geographical knowledge was further exposed in Chapter 7. In drawing out the debates that surrounded the search for the source of the Nile at the RGS in the 1850s and 1860s, it revealed the turbulent and fractious relationships between and amongst the metropolitan community of critical geographers, armchair authorities, and field explorers alike. The process of discovery within the debating halls of the Society proved to be a far more protracted and dialogic process than the momentary triumph of the solitary explorer in the field. In drawing attention to these layers of testimony and method, this chapter has also lent credence to David Lambert's assertion that these were intertextual debates that complicate the distinction between 'field' and 'cabinet', as they were 'fought not only on wordly and textual sites, but also *across* them, as those on both sides cited earlier accounts and made comparative points to substantiate their arguments'.¹⁰ In doing so, it brought together and examined the questions of accuracy, testimony, credibility, and authority-at-distance, that had been raised throughout the rest of the thesis.

⁹ Bleichmar, *Visible Empire*, p. 55.

¹⁰ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, p. 9.

Whilst this chapter is set a decade later than our first meeting with Cooley in Chapter 3, it reveals that his geographical views remained as entrenched in 1864 as they were in 1851.¹¹ Despite Cooley's 'one lake' theory being discredited from all parties involved in the geographical debates, he continued to champion his 'N'yassi' with as much vigour as ever before. This example demonstrated how a critical geographer who failed to deal objectively with new observations could be easily displaced from a position of pertinence and relevance, and be ejected from a seat of authority. Cooley's fallibility was not therefore a question of his particular method, but his own refusal to modify and adapt his views in accordance with new information. As such, the eclipse of Cooley cannot be conflated to being the eclipse of armchair geography as an entire practice in the face of the field. Whilst exploration often directly contradicted or undermined speculative claims, it also increased the field of knowledge from which armchair geographers could draw upon and form their synthetic surveys. Burton, MacQueen, and Beke took an arguably more progressive approach by positioning themselves in alignment with new ideas and acknowledging that others' observations could alter their own view from the armchair. It was in mediating the epistemic divide therefore that the critical geographer could remain relevant.

Recovering the 'Armchair'

The spatial contexts dealt with in this thesis have spanned various 'field' locations: study; cabinet; chair; library; East Africa; and the meeting rooms of metropolitan science. Each location has revealed itself to be a 'space' of geographical knowledge construction, but the differences over the practices associated with these various sites often gave rise to heated controversy. This thesis has worked to recover and reanimate

¹¹ These dates mark the publication of Cooley's *Inner Africa Laid Open* in 1851 and his paper given at a meeting of the RGS in 1864, see Cooley, 'On the Travels of the Portuguese and Others'.

the previously rather static presentation of the ‘armchair’ to reveal the porous nature of the boundaries between the field and the study that defies a simple bifurcation of these sites.

The cabinet was a transformative and translative site of reading and writing. As this thesis has argued, the cabinet was not a site of non-movement, but a crucial site in which geographical knowledge was not only accumulated, but also formulated. This contention has been developed by examining the role of the ‘field’ *in here* as opposed to *out there*, and thereby offers an understanding of how this boundary was constructed, represented, experienced, and even breached in these discussions. It has demonstrated that reading and writing were active, multifarious, and placed practices, with geographies that did not simply equate with a unified and homogeneous ‘cabinet’, and a supposedly passive practice of contemplation. Indeed, the cabinet was a repository of movement for Cooley, and a mobile site of textual encounter for Burton. In each case, the role of the cabinet as a particular form of ‘field’ to travel through and within has contributed to critical work in historical geography that seeks to understand how this space was constructed, inhabited, and operated, as one that was both material and imagined.¹²

The role of books as instruments has been a central focus in mediating the boundary between the cabinet and the field, allowing the cabinet to be as mobile as the field. Through practices of reading, compiling, and editing, it has been shown how such textwork was not disembodied, nor cerebral, but was framed as ‘travail’ by its practitioners. This had both a spaced and physical nature, and required both physical and mental endurance. In examining how the content of books was worked and reworked by critical readers and editors, these discussions advance recent work on publication and book histories, not by fetishising the book as an object, nor by concentrating wholly on the publication process itself, but by attending to the often

¹² Driver, ‘Editorial: Fieldwork in Geography’.

overlooked ‘traces’ of use and movement, and considering the post-publication lives of texts and their reincarnation as ‘new’ texts.¹³

The links identified here between these spaces and the activities therein contribute to wider historiographical debates about geography’s early practices, where they were located, and the different spatial conceptualisations of the ‘field’. In recovering and unpacking located moments of knowledge creation, circulation, and reception, this thesis has detailed a much richer account of the connections between place, practitioner, and objects in the ‘doing’ of geographical science. Specifically, it highlights that, during the mid-nineteenth century, the issue of *where* geography was being produced became increasingly politicised. The ‘chair’ has been identified as an emergent discursive construct within these debates. It became a significant signifier for the cabinet and for identifying the sedentary practitioner, scripting a particular bodily posture, sense of malaise, and bourgeois comfort, which has since permeated historiographical debates. Yet, it has also led to an oversimplified distinction between ‘action’ and ‘repose’ within these discussions, and this thesis challenges such a restrictive view. Throughout contemporary discussions, the term ‘armchair geographer’ appeared relatively little, and when it was used – or a version of it, such as ‘easy chair’ or ‘couch’ – it was part of a critical discourse to discredit or antagonise. Such signifiers were brought into play by prominent proponents of geography as an active field science, such as Barrow and Livingstone, against those who were notoriously sedentary, like MacQueen and Cooley. In the institutional discourse of the RGS, the ‘armchair’ geographer is referred to as a ‘critical’ or ‘comparative’ geographer. Cooley, in particular, held a very

¹³ McGeachan, ‘Historical Geography II: Traces Remain’. On the ‘afterlives’ of objects, see Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (eds), *Writing Material Culture History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Ariane Fennetaux, Amélie Junqua and Sophie Vasset (eds), *The Afterlife of Used Things: Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2015); Scott Warren, Kevin E. McHugh and Jason Roehner, ‘After the Crossing: Afterlives of Found Objects in the Sonoran Desert Borderlands’, *Journal of the Southwest*, 57 (2015), pp. 503-516. For moves to thinking about the lives and afterlives of books, see Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain*.

distinct topographical vision in which the geographer sat separate to the explorer, as a critical theorist, not a walking gentleman.¹⁴

By emphasising the importance of views from the ‘armchair’, the thesis has not only redressed its relative obscurity in previous histories, but it has also shown how the interaction between field and study can inform and connect wider histories of geography, science, travel and exploration, and their materialities and methodologies.

Reflections on the Nineteenth-Century ‘Culture of Exploration’

By viewing the ‘culture of exploration’ through a spatial lens, this thesis has gone some way to answer Driver’s pertinent question of how one could be ‘both in and out of the closet’ during this period.¹⁵ Despite concentrating on one key context, this thesis reveals much about how and where the culture of exploration operated during this period. The key protagonists in this study have been Cooley, Livingstone, and Burton. Yet any story that simply contrasts the famed heroic explorer Livingstone with Cooley as the dusty, outmoded armchair theorist is always going to be an oversimplification. By dismantling this real, yet exaggerated, conflict between the two, this study has worked to deconstruct the discourses surrounding and sustaining the reputation of the explorer, and therefore destabilise the place of the ‘field’. The introduction of Burton into this narrative has provided a much more complex character, serving to obfuscate the binary division between the ‘armchair geographer’ and the ‘field explorer’. Burton himself was both a bookish man and fervent traveller, and viewed in this context, he embodies the qualities posited by Markham of the ‘modern’ geographer: he was one who was able to seamlessly move between the field and the study with ease.¹⁶ In this way, this thesis has

¹⁴ Cooley, *Dr Livingstone and the RGS*.

¹⁵ Driver, ‘Distance and Disturbance’, p. 9.

¹⁶ Markham, *Major James Rennell*, p. 9.

expanded the history of ‘armchair’ practices in geography beyond a mere footnote, or an interesting and entertaining tale of ‘conflict’ in exploration, and presents a critical examination of the many spatial manifestations of the ‘field’ and ‘fieldwork’ in geography’s disciplinary identity.

This study therefore contributes to the current critical push to replace simple biography and unwarranted hagiography with critical historiography, and to attend to the varying scales and sites of encounter that are beginning to re-invigorate discussions on exploration.¹⁷ In so doing, it has sought to extend the scope of existing histories of geography in this period by opening out the analytical scope beyond the explorer in the field in order to view more clearly the previously overlooked entanglements between travel, science, and scholarship, and the epistemological and methodological connections between the field and the cabinet. Whilst there were often moments of controversy and conflict in the results produced, the highlighting of these linkages within this thesis shows the importance of considering armchair geography as a fundamental part of the creation, mediation, and discrediting of geographical knowledge. By illuminating these practices, it reveals a more complex and nuanced articulation of epistemology, methodology, authority, and credibility in nineteenth-century science. Thus, in complicating the received notion of the ‘armchair geographer’ as one who was simply ‘untravelling’, this thesis can inform further studies on travel technologies and materialities, and the work and location of little known and often dismissed scientific practices, practitioner identities, and their social, literary, and scientific networks.

¹⁷ Naylor and Ryan (eds), *New Spaces of Exploration*; Kennedy (ed.), *Reinterpreting Exploration*.

Dr Livingroom, I presume? Further Directions

This thesis has shown that a reflection on the spatial and practical contexts of geographical knowledge making can reveal much about the practices and peoples that have helped to shape and forge the development of geography: as a body of knowledge; a discipline; a discourse; and a set of practices, at different times and in different places. Whilst the thesis offers a tight chronological snapshot that attends to one set of critical debates, it presents the scope to expand the historical and geographical contexts. Such studies could, for example, trace this history further back to offer a deeper insight into Robert J. Mayhew's 'early modern' geography, or move it forward to continue the discussion laid out here and analyse the fate of armchair geography in the face of the increasing pace of professionalisation, manifested in the 'New Geography' of the 1880s.¹⁸ In turn, these debates could also be positioned in a wider European culture of armchair practice, by examining the cabinet geography of the geographical societies of France and Germany.¹⁹

When considering the pertinence and relevance of these historical debates, it is difficult to avoid drawing contemporary parallels, as geography today remains a contested and plural practice. Debates persist over the 'state of geography', and the discipline is tinged with a constant sense of being reflexive and needing to justify its work and approaches. Despite the move into the twenty-first century, the discussions continue as a fight for the basis and purpose of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers).²⁰ Whilst the intellectual and practical base has

¹⁸ Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography*. On the 'New Geography', see David R. Stoddart, 'The RGS and the "New Geography": Changing Aims and Changing Roles in Nineteenth-Century Science' *The Geographical Journal*, 146 (1980), pp. 190-202.

¹⁹ D. R. Stoddart, 'Geography – a European Science', *Geography*, 67 (1982), pp. 289-296; Bond, 'Enlightenment Geography in the Study: A. F. Büsching'; Dunbar, *Geography: Discipline, Profession and Subject*; Godlewska, *Geography Unbound*.

²⁰ The Society merged with the Institute of British Geographers in 1995 (RGS-IBG), which represented university geography staff. At this point, the RGS-IBG consciously directed its resources to continue

been broadened beyond the mapping and measuring of topographies into wider spheres, the core of the grievances retain a striking similarity to those witnessed in this thesis, particularly over how the Society mediates between different strands of geographical thought and their modes of operating. Led by the ‘Beagle Campaign’, questions have been raised about the appropriate levels of funding, training and skills, infrastructure, and media support given to certain projects over others, and a resolution was submitted to the RGS-IBG in 2009 to vote on the Society reactivating its sponsorship of inter-disciplinary research projects.²¹

This study therefore provides some historical context and critical commentary on current discussions on the RGS-IBG’s efficacy in delivering its founding objective of advancing geographical science. The recent debates have again centred on a constructed spatial and epistemic division between ‘academic geography’ and ‘explorers’, with ‘academic geography’ emerging as the successor to ‘armchair geography’ in appearing as ‘secondary and esoteric’.²² These discussions as to what and who produces the best geographical science could, therefore, be viewed as a revival of the 1846 debate between the mundane ‘stay at home’ researchers and the adventurous men in the field.

As the debates recovered within this thesis show, this is a much more complex epistemological and methodological issue than the lack of large-scale expeditions. Indeed, the appropriation of A. A. Gill’s quip ‘Dr Livingroom’ illustrates the romanticism that is still associated with the nineteenth-century culture of exploration,

supporting smaller academic research projects led by other institutions.

²¹ The members of the Society Council were unanimous in their support of the current approach and the proposition was defeated by a majority of the Society’s Fellowship. On the Beagle Campaign, see ‘The Beagle Campaign’ [<http://thebeaglecampaign.com>, accessed 15 August 2016]; Zoe Corbyn, “‘Think Big’ Campaign Splits Geographers”, *Times Higher Education*, 4 June 2009.

²² Avril Maddrell, ‘Academic Geography as Terra Incognita: Lessons from the “expedition debate” and another border to cross’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 35 (2010), pp. 149-153; Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (London: Routledge, 2006); Noel Castree, Duncan Fuller and David Lambert, ‘Geography Without Borders’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 32 (2007), pp. 129-132. On textual methods as a form of ‘couch potato geography’, see Stuart Aitken, ‘Analysis of Texts: Armchair Theory and Couch-Potato Geography’, in Robin Flowerdew and David Martin (eds), *Methods in Human Geography: A Guide for Students doing a Research Project* (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 197-212.

and the bounded site of the 'room' as being an obstacle to the progression of geographical knowledge, learning, and education.²³ As such, it presents the continuing critical need to address the place of the 'cabinet' in geographical practice, not only in a historical context, but also within contemporary debates; as only then can a fuller picture of the multifaceted and spatially variegated nature of the discipline of geography begin to emerge.

²³ A. A. Gill, 'Dr Livingroom, I presume?', *Times*, 24 May 2009.

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