

Book Reviews

Travels into print. Exploration, writing, and publishing with John Murray, 1773–1859. Innes M. Keighren, Charles W.J. Withers and Bill Bell. 2015. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. xiii + 364 p, illustrated, hardcover. ISBN 978-0-226-42953-3. £31.50; US\$45.00.

doi:10.1017/S0032247415000881

Antiquarian books have long been big business in the polar world, as first editions of expedition accounts from the ‘Heroic Age’ of Antarctic exploration and the nineteenth-century Arctic can sell for very high prices. Few are as dear as the deluxe three-volume edition of Ernest Shackleton’s *The heart of the Antarctic*, which was bound in vellum and signed by the members of the shore party of the *Nimrod* Expedition (Shackleton 1909). It sells (when it sells) for around £30,000.

Expedition accounts from other parts of the world can be pricy as well, with, for example, James Cook’s *A voyage towards the South Pole and round the world performed in His Majesty’s ships the Resolution and Adventure* (Cook 1777) being priced regularly between £4000 and £5000.

Frequently lost in the economics of such books is how they actually came into being. From the late-eighteenth century through the opening decades of the twentieth century, exploration thrilled the western public. The opening of new lands and discovery of unknown peoples, the gains made in scientific knowledge, the elimination of the white spaces on the map, and the demonstration that man could conquer nature at her most extreme were all reasons that not only drove explorers themselves but kept the public fascinated by what these brave men and women did far from the comforts of home. In a time before radio, television, or the internet, written expedition accounts were – along with newspapers and magazines, grand paintings, children’s books, and music hall performances – one of the key elements in popularising explorers and their achievements.

No publishing house was more renowned and respected for its books about exploration than John Murray, founded in 1768 and guided for seven generations by successive men of that same name. John Murray did not just concentrate on exploration, as it was also the publisher for many great British writers and scientists, including Lord Byron, Jane Austen, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Darwin, Charles Lyell, and John Betjeman. However, the list of explorers whose accounts it brought out was unmatched.

Travels into print is a scholarly examination of the relationship between the house of Murray – during the period of the first three John Murrays – and the world of travel and exploration. It shows how the company began to produce expedition accounts and then became progressively more involved in exploration as, from 1813, it served as the official publisher to the Admiralty – and thus brought out most of the official Arctic and African accounts. Then in 1831, John Murray took over the publication of *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, making it even more closely involved in exploration. Further,

the book illustrates how, over a period of decades, John Murray not only helped create a broad public interest in exploration, but gave explorers themselves the chance to gain celebrity, social standing, and scientific credibility.

The launching point for the study is 1773, with John Murray’s first venture into exploration: Sydney Parkinson’s *A journal of a voyage to the South Seas, in His Majesty’s ship, the Endeavour*. It concludes in 1859 – after John Murray had published 239 works of travel or exploration – when Sir Francis Leopold McClintock’s *The voyage of the Fox in the Arctic seas* gave some initial answers to the mysteries surrounding the disappearance of Sir John Franklin’s Northwest Passage expedition.

Travels into print examines the relationships between explorers, publishers, editors, and printers throughout this period. It does so primarily by following three themes. First, why, how, and for whom did explorers write? That is, what were their motivations for exploring, what kinds of written records did they keep, and how much of their writing was based on assessments of the moment and how much upon later reflection? And how precisely were their personal writings transferred to the submitted manuscript? Second, how did explorers convince first their publisher and then the general public of the truth behind their stories about their actions and events in strange places? Unlike the sceptical reception to the tales and writings of James ‘Abyssinian’ Bruce – whose account was published in this same period (Bruce 1790) – how could Murray’s authors persuade readers that what they wrote was an honest image of faraway lands? And third, in what ways and for what purposes did the various John Murrays or their editors amend an author’s specific words and general tales?

The result of this in-depth investigation is a significant interdisciplinary study that makes contributions not just to the history of geographical exploration and of the book trade, but also to the history of science, art, and cartography, as well as to popular culture, literary studies, and theories of the meaning and reception of ideas.

From the standpoint of readers of *Polar Record*, the time period of the book is, sadly, rather short. Works by John Barrow, John Ross, James Clark Ross, William Edward Parry, John Franklin, and George Back are all included in the study, but the post-Franklin-search polar explorers are all excluded. It would have been nice to have expanded the time frame to include the many Arctic and Antarctic expeditions that were conducted up through the Great War. Then again, some of the major accounts would not have been included regardless, since, for example, Robert Falcon Scott’s works were published by Smith, Elder, and those of Ernest Shackleton and Douglas Mawson by William Heinemann. Thus, this is a small niggle, as the major conclusions and contributions would have been virtually the same even with a larger set of accounts upon to which to draw.

In summary, this is a well-researched, in-depth analysis of a relevant and interesting subject. It is recommended for those interested in historical geography, the history of books, or the relation between popular culture and exploration,

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Rethinking Greenland and the Arctic in the era of climate change. New northern horizons. Frank Sejersen. 2015. London & New York: Routledge. xii + 235 p, hardcover. ISBN 978-1-13-884515-2. 90.00£.

doi:[10.1017/S0032247415000893](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247415000893)

Climate change – probably the very core issue of the various disciplines of Arctic and polar research. Apart from environmental changes, climate change is also what is perceived as one of the core drivers of socio-economic change in the Arctic (ACIA 2004), contributing to a discourse which victimises especially the Arctic's indigenous peoples. The present volume by renowned anthropologist and Greenland-expert Frank Sejersen aims to go beyond this narrative and already in the opening pages of this book notes that 'we have to rethink how we approach and understand the Arctic [...] as 'Arctic peoples are actively changing, creating and anticipating the very world they perceive to be their homeland' (page 3). As a consequence, these societal actions, Sejersen asserts, 'cannot be understood purely as adaptation or simply in terms of coping with climate change' since they are active players in 'reorganising and transforming their societies' (ibid.).

With these words in mind, the author engages into a truly thought-provoking and somewhat provocative discussion on the public discourse on the Arctic and the Arctic's indigenous peoples. He stipulates that the Arctic is a region of flow, integrated into the world's shifting system, and should thus not be considered an isolated region. Similarly, using Greenland as his case study, Sejersen shows how perceptions on the Arctic's indigenous peoples in light of climate change consider them primary as vulnerable stakeholders, while they themselves are indeed 'future makers', as Sejersen calls them, and rights holders. The Greenlandic debates concerning large-scale industrialisation and their recognition as a distinct people under international law as stipulated in the 2009 Self-government Act (Greenland 2009) underlines this.

Sejersen thus moves on to discuss the role of indigenous peoples in the decision-making processes and the need not only to consider them as stakeholders, but as fully integrated rights holders into larger legal and political framework, especially with regard to adaptation strategies, which are often barred by legal or political acts, preventing them from fully unfolding. By establishing the term 'double agency', the author highlights that it is participation in combination with right-holder possibilities/self-determination that would enable full adaptive capacities within already existing legal frameworks, such as land claims agreements, in the Arctic. All existing agreements, however, show shortcomings in fully enabling 'double agency'.

The somewhat contradictory roles Greenland plays within the discourse of climate change are elaborated upon by the

author when he discusses Greenland's dual position as a symbol of climate change on the one hand, and on the other as an (emerging) independent economy establishing industrial mega-projects and thus contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Sejersen skilfully links the different narratives that he discussed in the previous chapters into his discussion on the long-term transformation of the Greenlandic society, also touching upon the role of technology as a contributor to societal and cultural change.

The direct implications of societal change are presented by the author by depicting the shifts of consciousness about the community, the environment and identity of the community of Maniitsoq in south-western Greenland where an aluminium smelter is planned to be built. Contrary to large-scale industrial projects in other indigenous areas that are mostly faced with opposition (see for example Bush 2013), the citizens of Maniitsoq by and large welcome the smelter to contribute to the town's future development and sustainability (page 141). And what this implies for the identity of the town's inhabitants and their understanding, interpretation and utilisation of place and places in and around Maniitsoq is impressively analysed by Sejersen. The transformation of the socio-economic and cultural fabric become understandable and the chapter provides a bottom-up insight into the local consciousness regarding industrialisation, place and development. Here must be mentioned that very short and summarised versions of the chapters 3, 4, and 5, *Mega-industrialising Greenland, Reforming a society by means of society and Place consciousness and the renewal of Maniitsoq* can also be found in Sejersen's contributions, albeit in very shortened and summarised form, to the outstanding volume *Living with environmental change - Waterworlds* (Hastrup and Rubow 2014).

This inevitably leads to the question of scaling: is climate change a locally or a globally perceived and acted-upon phenomenon? Sejersen shows different approaches to this question and highlights throughout the need for a local or 'extra-local' understanding of adaptation. He consequently explicates that scaling 'is more than a question of size and extent but just as much a matter of perspective and room for social agency' (page 184). He shows that by applying different scales, significant differences in analytical results are yielded, 'allowing distinctive voices and forms of agency to emerge while other can be left in the analytical shadows' (page 187). The importance of this finding cannot be stressed enough. Especially the chapter *The social life of globalisation and scale-makers* provides thus an important theoretical and methodological discussion relevant for social and political scientists.

In the last chapter of this thought-provoking and deeply insightful book leaves on an equally thought-provoking note: the disempowerment of indigenous peoples by including indigenous knowledge into the discourse on climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as community development.