

From Exploration to Publication: The Evolution of a 19th-Century Arctic Narrative

I.S. MacLAREN¹

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ABSTRACT. Relations between explorers of early Canada and their English publishers are sufficiently complex as to call into question the customary straightforward equation that readers draw between explorers' eyewitness experiences and the narrative account of them, issued some time after their return to England. Captain Cook's first published narrative is the notorious case in point. Narratives of exploration played important roles in the establishment of imperial claims. The case of the publishing house of John Murray, good friend of Sir John Barrow, Second Secretary to the Admiralty for much of the early 19th century, offers an examination of much of the discursive shaping of the Canadian Arctic during the British Navy's search for a Northwest Passage. Archival materials pertaining to two of Murray's books, from John Franklin's first Arctic Land Expedition (1819-22) and from George Back's voyage to Hudson Bay (1836-37), place on view the process by which narratives of exploration evolved through the authorization of them by the Admiralty (Sir John Barrow) and the preparation of them by a publisher (John Murray) into published commodities.

Key words: George Back, John Barrow, John Franklin, John Murray Publishers, publishing history, HMS *Terror*, Northwest Passage

RÉSUMÉ. Les relations entre les explorateurs des débuts du Canada et leurs éditeurs anglais sont suffisamment complexes pour que l'on remette en question le parallèle évident qu'établissent ordinairement les lecteurs entre les expériences vécues par les explorateurs et le récit qui en fut fait, publié quelque temps après leur retour en Angleterre. Le premier récit publié du capitaine Cook constitue un exemple notoire. Les récits d'exploration ont joué un rôle important dans l'établissement des revendications impériales. Le cas de la maison d'édition de John Murray — ami intime de sir John Barrow et deuxième secrétaire de l'Amirauté — au cours du début du XIX^e siècle, permet d'examiner comment le discours entourant la recherche du passage du Nord-Ouest par la marine britannique contribua à la création de l'Arctique canadien. Des documents d'archives contenus dans les deux livres publiés par Murray — celui relatant la première expédition terrestre de John Franklin (1819-1822) et celui racontant le voyage de George Back dans la baie d'Hudson (1836-1837) — révèlent le processus par lequel les récits d'exploration se sont transformés, grâce à la sanction que leur accordait l'Amirauté (sir John Barrow) et leur préparation par un éditeur (John Murray), en des produits d'édition.

Mots clés: George Back, John Barrow, John Franklin, maison d'édition John Murray, histoire de l'édition, le HMS *Terror*, passage du Nord-Ouest

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INTRODUCTION

This tripartite paper aims to probe the relation between explorer and author, between, that is, his explorations and the process by which they were brought to public attention and, usually, won the explorer public acclaim. While it suggests a general pattern in that relation, it warns against the invocation of it except in cases where archival materials warrant its invocation. Part one recapitulates relations between late-18th-century British explorers (not all of arctic regions, but of obvious concern to the present study) and the books that won them or confirmed their renown in Britain. Part two discusses the consequences of the working relation between the publisher John Murray and the Second Secretary to the Admiralty, Sir John Barrow, during the second and third decades of the 19th century, when the Admiralty's activity in the Arctic reached almost a frenzy. Part three examines the evolution into book form of one narrative, *Narrative of an expedition in H.M.S. Terror . . . in the years 1836-1837* (Back, 1838e), the second book that the arctic explorer Sir George Back published with Murray.

BRITISH EXPLORATION AND PUBLICATION BEFORE THE AGE OF BARROW AND MURRAY

In 1773 John Hawkesworth paid a steep price for what the British public, including such custodians of Enlightenment English thought as the Reverend John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and Elizabeth Montagu, censoriously judged his improper preparation for publication of the journals

of British captains in the Pacific, including James Cook's (Abbott, 1982). Hawkesworth's ignominy, perhaps even his early death, were the cost of the alleged improprieties and liberties he had taken with the explorers' own words. This lesson was not lost on Cook, of course. It is not surprising to find him demanding of Bishop Douglas, Hawkesworth's successor, that the published version of the journal of his second voyage to the Pacific Ocean be without blemish; "unexceptionable" (*sic*) was Cook's word (as quoted in Withey, 1987:311; MacLaren, 1992a:45). However, as much as anyone, Cook stood to gain from Hawkesworth's *faux pas*, the publishing event of the decade, for the explorer not only learned what could and could not go before the public, but also almost immediately began to benefit from what Hawkesworth had done that had *not* prompted public outrage. This was the creation of the heroic adventurer.

Two decades earlier, on 18 November 1752, in the fourth number of *The Adventurer*, Hawkesworth had identified the central literary failing of the genre known as "Voyages and Travels." It was the lack of interest attracted by the character of the traveller himself:

Voyages and Travels have nearly the same excellencies and the same defects [as history]: no passion is strongly excited except wonder; or if we feel any emotion at the danger of the traveller, it is transient and languid, because his character is not rendered sufficiently important; he is rarely discovered to have any excellencies but daring curiosity, he is never the object of admiration, and seldom of esteem. [Hawkesworth *et al.*, 1756: I, 24; Pearson, 1972:64.]

¹Canadian Studies Program and Canadian Circumpolar Institute, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2E1
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Thus, when Lord Sandwich nominated him for the preparation for publication of the journals from the voyages to the Pacific Ocean, Hawkesworth was prepared to right this endemic insufficiency. He did so chiefly in two ways: by adopting the first person for his narration, and by rendering the character preeminently magnanimous, gracious, noble, in short, an adventurer who suffered adversity, whether inflicted by the elements or by the heathens encountered en route, in the name of a nation's acquisition of knowledge and perhaps of territory.

Dr. John Douglas (1727-1807), canon of Windsor who would go on to a canonry at St. Paul's (1776), a trusteeship of the British Museum (1778), the bishopric of Carlisle (1779), and the deanery of Windsor (1788) before obtaining the bishopric of Salisbury in 1791, knew well that, in replacing the deceased Hawkesworth, there was something to be avoided — *any* hint of moral relativism, for example — but also much to be retained from the literary invention of his deceased predecessor. Not only the first-person voice for the narrator but also that characterization of the dutiful, magnanimous patriot and the securing of the monarch as patron of the publication constituted the chief qualities of the pattern that Douglas retained and polished in his editions of Cook's second and third voyages. Needless to say, Cook's convenient death made the literary ennobling of the explorer a much more straightforward task because the reading public was disposed to such a rendering of the narrative of the third voyage, but also because Cook was not around to take umbrage had he been inclined to. (On the roles played by eulogies and visual depictions of this explorer — both of which were central to the ennobling of him — see Smith, 1979. On the matter of field notes transformed into narratives before and by Hawkesworth, see two seminal studies by Williams, 1979, 1981.)

British exploration subsequent to Cook's visit to territory that is now Canada perpetuated that pattern. Certainly, all British naval officers exploring either in the waters or, however oddly for naval officers, the terrain of northern and western modern Canada knew their Cook, that is to say, Douglas's Cook, intimately; indeed, one may go further and state that regardless of their institutional affiliation, British explorers were well versed in their Cook. And vestiges of that ennobled pattern appear now and again. Samuel Hearne's narrative (Hearne, 1795; Glover, 1958), which also appeared posthumously, eleven years after Cook's last book, but which narrates explorations of the Arctic that he completed just after Cook had sailed on his *second* voyage, had at least something to do with Bishop Douglas, who had used his introduction to Cook's third narrative in part to promote Hearne to "an officer in the Navy," which he apparently had never been, and in part to call for the publication of Hearne's journal:

... he set out from Fort Prince of Wales, on Churchill River, in latitude 58°50', on the 7th of December 1770; and the whole of his proceedings, from time to time, are faithfully preserved in his written Journal. The publication of this would not be an unacceptable present to the world, as it draws a plain artless picture of the savage modes of life, the scanty means of subsistence, and indeed of the singular wretchedness, in every respect, of the various tribes, who, without fixed

habitations, pass their miserable lives, roving throughout the dreary deserts, and over the frozen lakes of the immense track of continent through which Mr. Hearne passed, and which he may be said to have added to the geography of the globe. [Cook, 1784:I,xlvii.]

Hearne, who had spent as much time — two years — as any European explorer ever would solely in the company of non-Europeans, must have had a difficult time conforming to the model set out by Hawkesworth, but one can notice even in this brief remark that Douglas strove to highlight the difference between the English "officer" and his guides, for while they, nomads, are seen "roving" (aimlessly, one is left to infer) over dreary deserts, the Englishman "passed . . . through," and passed through with a purpose: to fulfil the high-minded quest of adding to the English geography of the globe. In this connection, it is not surprising to find in the published account what Hearne's field notes never mention: that when he arrived at the Arctic Ocean, "[f]or the sake of form . . . [he] erected a mark, and took possession of the coast, on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company" (Glover, 1958:106; MacLaren, 1991a, 1993). This worthy, not to say noble, sacrifice of self for geographical knowledge serves in the narrative register to demarcate and to insist upon a hierarchy in the characterization of the explorer and the explored. This seems to have been Douglas's chief refinement on the model of Hawkesworth, who had not so insistently drawn the hierarchical line. But with Cook and perhaps with Hearne, Douglas rarely squandered an opportunity to draw it boldly or to make his explorer worthy of nobility.

The literary consequence was a sort of contact-without-contamination version of how explorers encountered and interacted with the explored. This sanitized version of events played out an ideology, if it did not quite represent matters as accurately as was thought by credulous readers of travel literature. Those readers nearly always found the putative testimony of the eyewitness irresistible, and modern readers, including the present author, doubtless have kept this reading practice alive and well. The authority of a narrative very much depends from its implicit claim to being the record of an eyewitness. Because this is the case, it is significant to note, Glover is a strenuous defendant of Hearne's having authored his published narrative on his own (Glover, 1958:xli-xlii, 1951). (Glover's defence is questioned in MacLaren, 1992a:56-58.) A more recent example, from the pages of this publication, may stand for many others: the publication of James Ross's "original diary" (Ross and Savelle, 1992) was deemed significant because, unlike the brief account rendered by John Ross (1835) in his published version of the expedition to Boothia Peninsula in 1829, the younger Ross's diary provides "the only available first-hand account of the activities of the forward party during the retreat from Boothia" (Ross and Savelle, 1992:179).

Aspiring to an exalted level of self-presentation such as Douglas achieved for Cook was not every explorer/writer's choice. Certainly, Cook's junior officer, George Vancouver, did not approve of the literary fate of his hero. This can be inferred from Vancouver himself (Vancouver, 1798:III, 193-194; Beaglehole, 1967:1, 357n). Moreover, the line of enquiry that will be followed in this paper, that is, the concern

to consider the role played by editors and publishers in the literary and artistic creations of narratives of exploration, sails into a deep bay in the case of Vancouver, there being nothing left to study but what Vancouver's modern editor has termed "a revised version of George Vancouver's own journals" (Lamb, 1984:I,287). Certainly, the figure of a noble, entertaining, magnanimous adventurer does not leap on deck in Vancouver's book. This may have been intentional. Vancouver appears to have determined that such a published fate not be meted out to him whose penchant it was to record matters with scrupulous accuracy, come what may, and come what did when influential members of English society visited their displeasure on him for his alleged brutal treatment and early dismissal at Hawaii of midshipman-in-training Thomas Pitt, heir to Lord Camelford, brother of Lady Grenville, the wife of the foreign secretary, and relative of both William Pitt the Younger, the prime minister, and John Pitt, first Lord of the Admiralty. Vancouver undertook his explorations and diplomatic duties with less sense of manifest destiny than Douglas's Cook possessed. Upon his return to England, there is no indication — at least none has surfaced — that Vancouver sought the services of anyone in preparing his journal for publication, and while after his death his brother saw the work through its final stages, it appears that the preparations were completed almost entirely by George himself. The consequences of his choice to handle on his own all the stages of composition that he could are perhaps predictable: his narrative is seldom read for interest's sake because his character reverts to the kind bemoaned by Hawkesworth in 1752 — informative but uninteresting. And Hawkesworth likely would have discounted the one respect in which Vancouver continues to be universally admired: his tenacity in striving to obtain and register accurate detail.

Like John Meares, the man who made Vancouver's diplomacy necessary, fur trader Alexander Mackenzie sought the services of editor William Combe when it came to furnishing a publishable narrative from his journals (Montgomery, 1937). Combe, who gained an unending fame for his droll creation of Dr. Syntax, the quintessential early 19th-century traveller and seeker of the picturesque, supplied Mackenzie's words with the patina that he knew they lacked. In the case of Mackenzie, because a portion of his own journal survives, one can see the pattern of Combe's revisions, which extend again to the elevation of tone and characterization of the explorer himself. Although a fur trade partner seeking economic backing for his exploits, rather than the officer of a British institution, Mackenzie was necessarily mindful of the impression that his publication would need to make. His knighthood certainly helped matters, but it fell to Combe to add the polish to his literary persona. Combe knew the parlance of picturesque landscape description, part of the vogue of landscape touring that enjoyed such popularity in England and on the continent at the turn of the century. By invoking this parlance, Combe leant a narrative the "excellencies" of which Hawkesworth spoke, transforming it and its explorer-author into objects "of admiration . . . of esteem."

To take one example of such a transformation: when Mackenzie wrote of the ramparts on the Mackenzie River,

seen in the summer of 1789, his tone was decided and declarative, his grammar faulty: "The River appeared quite shut up with high perpendicular White Rocks, this did not at all please us" (Lamb, 1970:190). Combe not only corrected the comma splice and vague pronoun reference but translated the description into an aesthetically judged landscape view: ". . . the river appeared to be enclosed, as it were, with lofty, perpendicular, white rocks, which did not afford us a very agreeable prospect" (Mackenzie, 1801:42). Combe achieved this correction principally by the introduction of a term — "prospect" — from the vocabulary of landscape viewing. Thereby, even though it was *not* a picturesque view, the ramparts appears in published form encoded in terms habitually used by Englishmen, principally on the "grand tour" and on the tours around Britain that William Gilpin, the doyen of the picturesque, had introduced and made fashionable. As well, "lofty" is a more refined (because more poetic) term in this parlance than is the merely literal "high." Meanwhile, "as it were" conveys the hesitation of the discriminating landscape connoisseur that the original fails to convey (further contrasts are drawn in MacLaren, 1982). From this example may be seen that, however faithful to the moment of exploration the original is, the altered published version creates a character whose demonstrated awareness of linguistic fashion qualifies him as an authoritative, urbane, knowledgeable, perhaps even "admirable" gentleman, certainly a figure worthy of the attention and interest of the armchair-travelling gentleman who could well have picked up his Combe's Mackenzie after putting down his Douglas's Cook, his corrected Hearne, or his Combe's Meares.

BARROW, MURRAY, AND
THE FIRST FRANKLIN EXPEDITION 1819-22

Expeditions of exploration by the British Navy resumed following the defeat of Napoleon and the naval battles against the American fleet on the Great Lakes during the war of 1812-14. When they did, they centred on the search for a Northwest Passage. They did so chiefly as a result of the efforts of John Barrow, Second Secretary to the Admiralty, who somehow bled the necessary support out of diminished post-war government coffers (Lloyd, 1970; Barrow had anything but an easy job of securing permission for his program of expeditions). Barrow was the most important figure in the Navy's enterprise, although he did not accompany any of the expeditions that he planned. His involvement included not only the duty of assigning command of the expeditions, but also the important role of publicist, for he would promote the expeditions' successes, authorize their submitted narratives, and review the books in the *Quarterly Review* before and after they appeared.

In this last respect, Barrow's influence cannot be over-emphasized. The reason has to do with his friendship with John Murray II, the British publisher who figured prominently and centrally in the rise in readership of books by British explorers and travellers. The first John Murray to appear as a publisher in London began as a bookseller in 1768 and died in 1793. His third child, John Murray II (1778-1843), managed the publishing house until 1843, but his son John Murray III (1808-92) began work with the firm

in 1830 and, following his father's death, managed the firm until his death in 1892. In the correspondence for the period 1830-42, it is often unclear to which John Murray the correspondent is writing. In 1812, the same year that he met Lord Byron, John Murray II bought the house at 50 Albemarle Street, where the company remains today (Stephen and Lee, 1909:XIII,1287-1289). In 1818, this publisher had issued Barrow's *Chronological history of voyages into the arctic regions* (1818). Barrow also wrote regularly for the *Quarterly Review*, which John Murray II founded in 1809 out of dissatisfaction with the management and editorial policies of the *Edinburgh Review*. As well, as a founder and the third president (1835-37) of the Royal Geographical Society, Barrow arranged for Murray to publish the society's *Geographical Journal*. In 1845, at the conclusion of his official career, Barrow (1845) published a last book with Murray, by then, John Murray III.

Under the editorship of John Murray II, Barrow's *Chronological history* proceeded from the recapitulation of past exploration to the announcement of future efforts. Thereafter, Barrow took naval explorers' journals and draft manuscripts in hand and did not let go until they were books. This pattern established and maintained itself during his immensely long tenure as the Admiralty's second secretary (1804-06, 1807-45). Among others about arctic exploration, the four narratives of William Edward Parry, as well as the two by each of John Franklin, George Lyon, and George Back, appeared from Murray's firm during the second and third decade of the 19th century. Indeed, of the first generation of 19th-century British explorers for the Northwest Passage, only John Ross did not publish consistently with Murray, probably because he and Barrow had had a great quarrel over Ross's apparent sighting in 1818 of the fictitious Croker Mountains at the head of Lancaster Sound. Barrow refused either privately or officially to accept this sighting, one that was not confirmed by most of Ross's officers, probably because it blocked the way of Barrow's dream of a passage. Of course, Ross was proved wrong by Parry's voyage of 1819-20, but even before it Ross had switched publishers for the second edition of his narrative (Ross, 1819). While Richard Bentley and Longman would rise to compete for the Admiralty's business in the 1840s after the death of John Murray II, as long as the friendship and working relations remained in place, Barrow and Murray made a formidable team.

No doubt, part of that impression of a formidable liaison derives from the good fortune that greets the researcher into this period of exploration, in so far as Murray remains an active English publisher, remains at the same address that it occupied in the early 19th century (in Murray's rooms occurred the famous meeting of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron; a painting commemorating the occasion hangs over the fireplace in the front room), and, by virtue of its archives, remains interested in its extensive involvement in two centuries of London publishing. Moreover, the grandfather of John Murray VIII, the current publisher, had the foresight to move the firm's papers out of London during the Blitz, so that files of correspondence are extant for the early period, as they are not for most London publishing houses

dating from the early 19th century. In combination with other important depositories of naval explorations, including the Royal Geographical Society, the Public Record Office, the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the Naval Library in Fulham, the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, and the Hydrographic Office in Taunton, the Murray archives provides an important source of documentation relating to the last stage of an expedition of naval exploration: the publication of its narrative and art. And although one would not reasonably expect the publisher's files to contain more than incoming correspondence, there are occasional surprises, such as the brief missing portion of John Franklin's field notes from the first Arctic Land Expedition (1819-22).

In October 1820 William Edward Parry returned to London from what would prove to be the most successful of all 19th-century efforts to sail west through the Canadian Arctic. On 7 November 1820, Parry wrote to Murray to confirm the terms of publication of his narrative and, later, of his shipboard newspaper (see MacLaren, 1992b). The explorer would receive 1000 guineas for his manuscript, the cost of engravings to be borne by the publisher. This was a formidable sum for a first-time author who had never proven himself as a writer. The sum helps put into perspective the popularity of the genre, the profits to be realized from publication of explorers' accounts, and the belief that, as long as the events of an expedition were interesting, the figure of the explorer could readily be made equally so if he himself had not accomplished as much in the literary enterprise (Parry, 1820; cited in Smiles, 1891:I.99). Indeed, Murray's principal concern resided in not being scooped by the earlier publication of other officers' journals. His fears were realized (Fisher, 1821) but, as had Bishop Douglas, Murray had the upper hand by having the official account from the commander himself. Though eager for any published account, the public showed patience for the official ones, which, because of charts and engravings as well as the necessity of passing muster before the Admiralty, always took some time to produce. They were, as well, lavish productions compared to the opportunistic early releases of unauthorized and, so far as Murray was concerned, illegal accounts by junior officers. Once Murray had lodged a formal complaint regarding Parry's first narrative, he did not need to do so again; breaches of agreements between his house and the Admiralty stopped.

In subsequent publications, correspondence shows that Barrow was vitally involved, and with his penchant for publicizing the Admiralty's feats, Murray could only have gained from his involvement. For example, in late 1822 and 1823, Barrow oversaw the preparation of the official narrative from the disastrous first Franklin expedition, which had ended in the death by starvation of half the men involved and in the alleged necessity of shooting one of the *engagés*, Michel Terohauté, who had apparently been driven to cannibalism. Clearly, the narrative of a not just unlucky but mismanaged expedition required particular care, and Barrow, keen to keep his dream alive, involved himself intimately. With the engravings he was particularly concerned, perhaps hoping that readers would be beguiled by their aesthetic appeal and sheer quantity. There were thirty plates, none

pertinent to the expedition beyond the point when starvation set in. Their lavish elegance intriguingly complements the stark plainness of Franklin's prose, itself particularly effective in evoking the stark and gripping tragedy. At one point, on 14 November 1822, Barrow wrote to Murray to advise him on the amount that he should agree to pay the engravers, Edward Finden and his assistants, suggesting that the price could probably be shaved by several guineas to twenty per plate. Meanwhile, he had enquired into who was reducing Lieutenant George Back's and the deceased Midshipman Robert Hood's enlargements of their watercolours and "putting in the figures in a very beautiful manner" (Barrow, 1822a). Barrow was particularly keen to avoid the need for lithography, a much cheaper but aesthetically less appealing reproductive process in engravings, and counselled Murray to stick with the more expensive hand colouring of each copy, a time-consuming process all but unimaginable today.

By Christmas day, Barrow was satisfied that the work, which he directed Murray to sell for a haughty three guineas, was "superlatively beautiful" (Barrow, 1822b), at least as far as the illustrations were concerned. What he meant can be glimpsed from one of the supreme coloured engravings in the work: *View of the Arctic Sea, from the Mouth of the Copper Mine River, Midnight. July 20, 1821* (Figs. 1, 2). This is one of the eleven engravings that were coloured in most copies of the first edition (Franklin, 1823: facing 361). The corresponding watercolour sketch is contained in one of two sketchbooks by Back from the first overland expedition, both of which are privately owned. "Superlatively beautiful" are the moderately scaled and varied "scene," the cropped tundra, the harmonious blending of the hues, and the prominence accorded the British and the Navy's flags. That the one stands more prominent than the other indicates one hierarchy, and that the Union Jack breaks the horizon line and, thereby, signifies a British possession of the continent at its northern extremity is also worth remarking. Moreover, the dating of the scene encourages one to infer that the flag adumbrates the message of possession by gesturing northward, perhaps as far as 900 miles, to where Parry's ships had wintered the previous year. As noted by the title, the novelty of its being an eventide scene at midnight further excites the picturesque connoisseur, whose ideas of novelty in landscape are thereby expanded, but not disagreeably; the calm mood and the tranquil, even serene, composition regularizes the wilderness tundra into countryside, where there is but a slight breeze and, somehow, no mosquitoes. Moreover, as the picturesque hunter preferred it when it came to choosing a prospect, the viewer looks *down* on nature. He thus symbolically controls it, if he does not quite own it. Britain's manifest destiny is fashionably captured by gentlemen who take their ease amidst their achievement after having crossed a large expanse of that destiny's claim, from Hudson Bay to Coronation Gulf, the last a name that the figures in the scene bestowed on the scene out over which they look. (Thereby, Hearne's published claim of the same site on behalf of a British corporation is usurped by the Crown.) The domination over the scene by two tents (there is only one in the original, unpublished sketch) is unmistakable. Nor does one fail to note that these are the officers'

tents; those of the *engagés* are not accorded visual representation. Neither their nationality nor their role as labourers in the explorations find a place in the picturesque and consummately symbolic depiction of the site, except where the dwarf attends the cooking at the fireside. Indeed, with pink sky and fleecy clouds, the landscape exudes a mood of repose, not of struggle, uncertainty arising from a failure to contact Inuit on the coast, short rations, or even frustration at the explorers' way being blocked by ice.

Nor does the composition alter so very much when the hues of sky or "lawn" change and English clouds disappear, as they do from one hand-coloured copy to the next. Comparisons of copies (Figs. 1, 2) serve to indicate a certain variation, including the disappearance of the two figures who humanize the middle ground's knoll in most of the versions, the alteration of the Navy's flag into another one, or the addition of figures to the party, as was deemed necessary and/or desirable by Finden's assistants, by Barrow, or by whomever — the point being that it is unlikely that this variation, any more than the others, was introduced by someone who actually stood at the site being depicted. A complementary point is one made in Barrow's letter that in any case Back did not provide the figures in the finished engravings. But the interest here, as indeed it is with Hawkesworth's or Douglas's tidying-up of Cook's journals, is how exploration takes shape as a commodity for public consumption. It is carefully managed, especially where institutional reputations are at stake. The idea of a plainer, or a cheaper, presentation of the official version would likely have been as unthinkable to Barrow and Murray as the notion of transmitting explorers' accounts unaltered in any way would have been to Richard Hakluyt or Samuel Purchas. Barrow and Murray merely extrapolate on, while carrying forward, the traditions of such men as well as, closer to their own lifetime, of Douglas, all of them precursors in the published production of national/imperial exploration. But the success of this enterprise depends on and from the reality claim that the eyewitness report or depiction necessarily makes, and which most readers, no less today than two centuries ago, find irresistible. We are prepared to believe the person who was there before we will countenance anyone else's views. That several stages of composition intervene between the first effort with pen or brush to mediate the experience of wilderness and the final effort that is deemed worth bringing before the public, worth risking someone's financial investment on in the hope of a profitable venture, comes as no surprise and yet does not attract much scholarly attention. We do not mind being duped because it still seems clear that the reality factor, however infinitesimally dimmed by these intervening stages, remains valuable. That the wilderness has been constructed as much as witnessed, refined as much as recorded, and by people who did not experience it, is a small price to pay for the acquisition of any record of it at all, so long as that record is borne home by a gentleman, a man, *pace* Hawkesworth, worthy of society's respect, admiration, esteem. Besides, one cannot escape representations that reflect one's cultural values; why, then, not ensure both that those values are the right ones and that they are represented in superlatively beautiful fashion? Would it not

have been tasteless indeed, if only to the heroic memory of Robert Hood, the officer who did not survive the first Franklin expedition, to present the official version as a full-blown catastrophic encounter with wilderness? Surely Barrow would have argued as much. Certainly, struggling to set his career on a permanent and distinguished footing, Franklin would have.

However, we are in no position to pass judgement on another era's publishing decisions. Just as Hakluyt and Purchas provided Barrow and Murray with their model, the Hakluyt and Champlain societies' elegant editions of exploration narratives and journals continue Murray's tradition today. When one compares those societies' books or the titles in Hurtig's elegant *Canadiana Reprint Series* with the editions of early Canadian long poems and fiction being offered by the Canadian Poetry Press and by the Centre for the Editing of Early Canadian Texts, it is clear that the genre of travel and exploration remains comparatively exclusive. Only the long-since deceased series of editions from Macmillan Canada, including the fine edition of *Fraser* by W. Kaye Lamb (1960) and the difficult edition of *Hearne* by Richard Glover (1958) offers exceptions.

BACK, MURRAY, AND THE VOYAGE OF 1836-37

Fame was not the least of the considerations involved in book production. Not only the Murray-Barrow correspondence,

but also that between John Murray II or III and the explorers yields this understanding. The example to be traced here is that of George Back, who, it ought to be noted, may not provide the typical example in so far as he was particularly upwardly mobile by the standards of any age (see MacLaren, 1991b). By the time that Murray was producing Franklin's narrative from his second overland expedition (Franklin, 1828), on which Back also served, the latter was keenly aware of just how much could be accomplished in a publication. He had seen Parry celebrated for his voyages and Franklin lionized after the first expedition and had won some fame for himself by his engravings in the first narrative. He therefore wrote impatiently to Murray on 28 May 1828 expressing a desire to see the sheets of Franklin's book as soon as the printer had completed them, and adding a further note of hope that "the narration will be ready for the 4th June as I have just rec'd an invitation from the Duke of Clarence to dine with him on that day" (Back, 1828). This opportunism is noted as a trait in Back's character, probably one that was indispensable to his remarkably active and successful career. Inference should not be drawn that it was a flaw of his character; simply, it appears to have been the essence of it. It remains a strong feature of his correspondence, for, a decade later and after publishing one book of his own with Murray already (Back, 1836), Back was still racing to have a title produced in time to do him some good. The case in

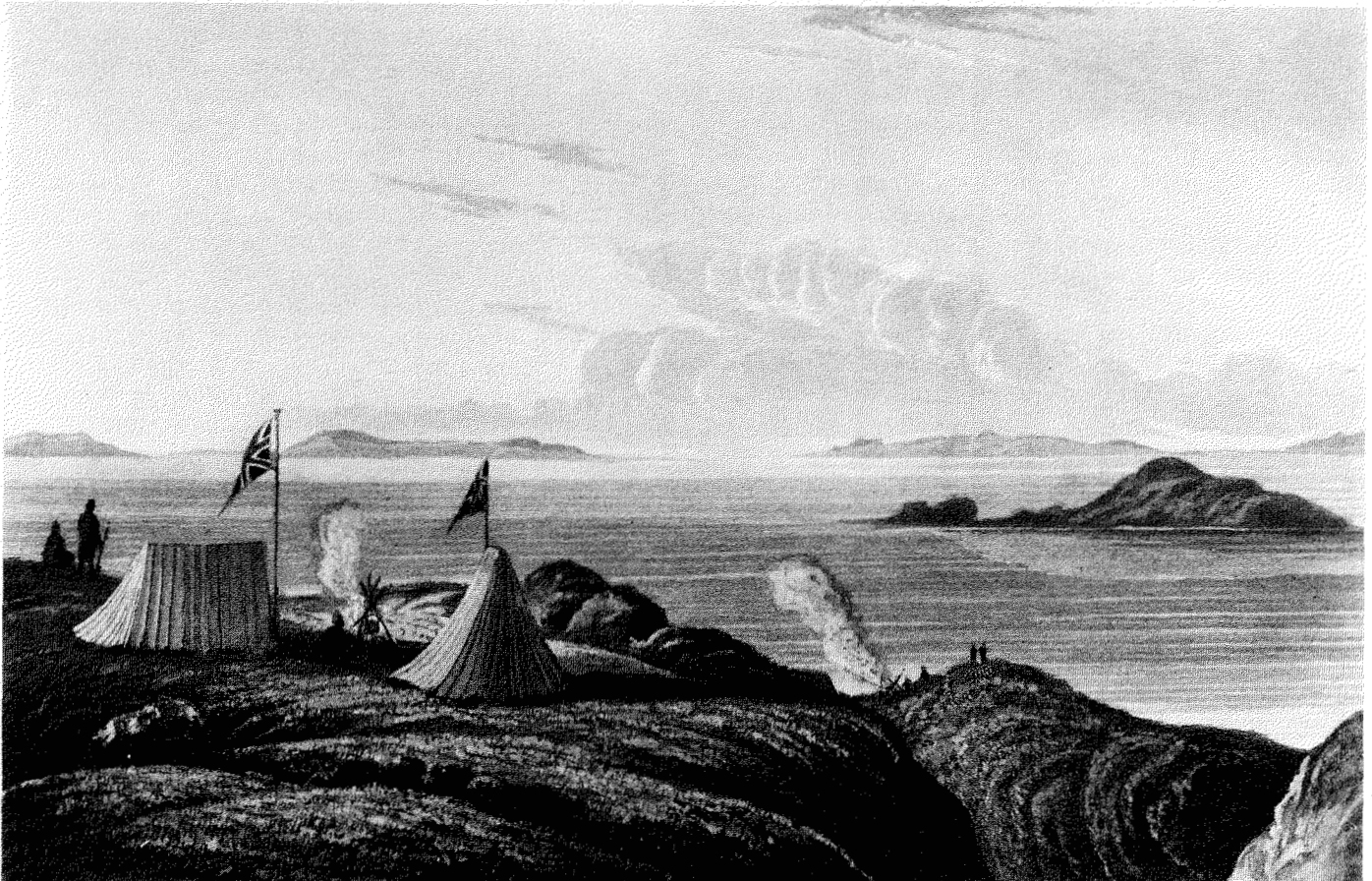


FIG. 1. *View of the Arctic Sea, from the Mouth of the Copper Mine River, Midnight, 20 July 1821.* Drawn by Lieutenant Back, R.N.; Engraved by Edward Finden.

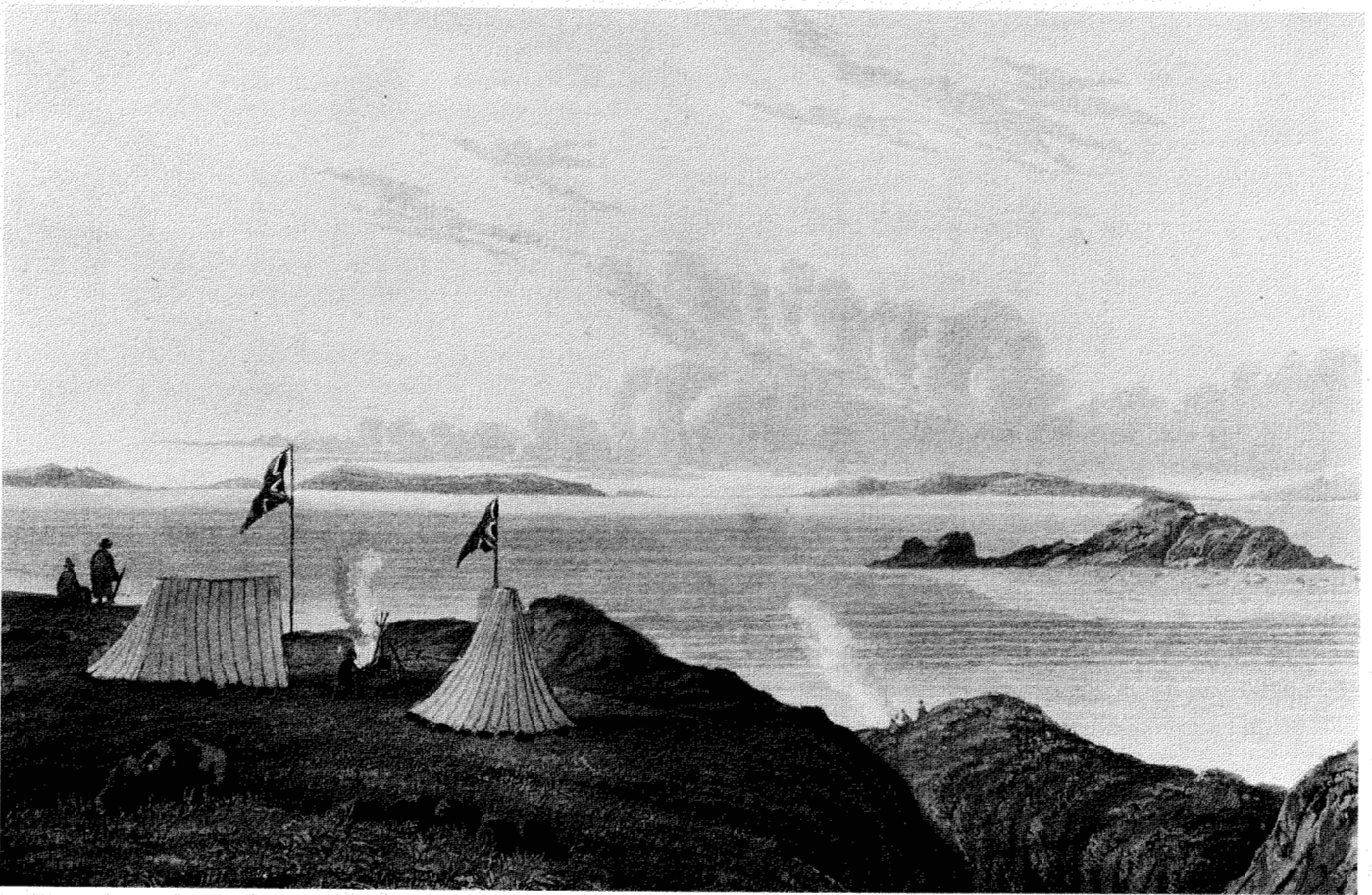


FIG. 2. *View of the Arctic Sea, from the Mouth of the Copper Mine River, Midnight, 20 July 1821.* Drawn by Lieutenant Back, R.N.; Engraved by Edward Finden.

question is *Narrative of an expedition in H.M.S. Terror . . . in the years 1836-1837* (Back, 1838e), the published account of Back's last arctic expedition (only its text and not its illustrations will be treated here). A letter by Back to John Murray (Back, 1838b) dated 13 April 1838 shrewdly points out that "It is very desirable both for the sale of the work, and on my own account that it should come out about the 10th of June, ten or twelve days before the Coronation" of Queen Victoria, who had come to the throne when her uncle, William IV, died on 20 June 1837, but whose coronation did not take place until 28 June 1838. But Back, who had reached Ireland, after a terror of a voyage, only in the previous September, was "sadly apprehensive that Haghe [the engraver] [would] not be able to finish all the drawings by that time. What think you therefore," he proposed to Murray, "of dividing them, and allowing some other clever Artist to do five or six . . . ?" Meanwhile, there was the map to prepare, reviewers (including Barrow in the *Quarterly Review*) to line up, and the printer's proofs to check. Still, Back was able to write to Murray on 25 June telling him that although some of the plates were erroneously placed in the text, he had "sent the Book to the Queen" (Back, 1838c).

The ten months between Back's arrival at Lough Swilly on the Irish coast and the queen's coronation were taken up in Back's life by a continuous enterprise of transforming into a published commodity the experiences of a failed expedition. Having been beset by ice north of Southampton Island at the

top of Hudson Bay for nearly an entire year, from September 1836 to August 1837, H.M.S. *Terror* had failed to determine whether or not navigation was possible from Foxe Basin to the Gulf of Boothia. Nor had Back even been able to send a shore party across Melville Peninsula to chart the connection by land. Writing on 9 September 1837 to Captain John Washington R.N., then secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, Back confided: "have much to tell you about my Expedition which has failed in consequence of eleven months [sic] detention among ice — The Ship is broken and strained in every part and is strapped together by chains — To prevent her *sinking under us* — I ran for Lough Swilly — Something ought to be put into the papers" (Back, 1837a). Immediately, Back's concern turns from survival to publicity; nor did his attention waver for the next ten months, rivetted as fiercely on a published account of his voyage as he must have been for the same length of time the year before on the ice around his ship. The first surviving letter to Murray is dated 25 September, a fortnight after his touching the Irish coast.

Before being called back to Lough Swilly from Broadstairs in late September, Back wrote this letter to Murray apologizing for not keeping an appointment:

After seeing yourself, my chief reason was to inform you that I have material sufficiently interesting to publish, together with some beautiful drawings by my Officers and a chart of the North Shore of Southampton Island, not previously surveyed or laid down. —

The subject, though about ice, is so replete with danger and novelty, that when fairly written, which I must do immediately, from my private Journal, as well as those of the Officers, cannot fail of exciting considerable sensation; that is, provided the interest is not absorbed by Articles in Journals or Magazines which I do not intend shall be the case. —

You will be the best judge what such a production, containing nearly, (if not entirely) as much letter press without half the Nat^l Hist^y as *my former one*, will be worth, and I need not say, that from private friendship, as well as other reasons I should not wish any other than yourself to bring it out. — [Back, 1837b.]

In this overture, Back clearly tries to satisfy Murray that even a failed voyage merited a publication. Novelty, danger, and newly charted coastlines (if only those of islands) are offered as ample reasons for a book, although he allows that Murray is the best judge of a price for such a work. As well, he assures Murray on two other accounts. In a postscript, he presumes that the journals will pass muster before the Admiralty — “Sir J. Barrow has not read the Journals, but will understand the nature of the work, which he says [paper torn; piece missing] be published” — and he undertakes to keep the scooping of the story by the periodical press to a minimum. This assurance he was unable to keep, given the turn of events.

A particular nuisance came in the form of a Navy Board decree that Back oversee repairs to the *Terror* at Lough Swilly in order that it might be brought round to Devonport (Plymouth) before the crew was paid off. Back was consequently detained in Ireland, unable to return to London to work with Barrow and Murray. As matters fell out, he managed to separate himself from his journals and charts, which he had purposely left in a hotel in London, when the repairs in Ireland took longer than anticipated. He was forced to arrange matters through Washington at the Royal Geographical Society. Two letters indicate his purposes. He wrote first to Murray to correct his overblown description of the state of his narrative:

As regards the MS, you are not perhaps aware that I have yet only my rough Journals, made from each days [*sic*] occurrences, which though smitten with the full impression of the moment, will require arranging and rewriting, so that some time would elapse before a fair Copy could be got ready and in order to bring it out in any reasonable time, it ought to be sent *at once* to the press; that is, as the *Chapters* are completed.

My Journals, (which I have *never read over*, and which must want *much correcting*) — are in a Trunk at the Salopian [Hotel], so that, if it would at all please you, Captain Washington who has the key, will give you one, or both to read — and we shall then lose no time on my return, which in all probability will be in less than three Weeks or a Month. — [Back, 1837c.]

The next day, Washington received a letter explaining the role Back wished him to play, but explaining as well that the motivation for him to correct his initial exaggerated report to Murray about the state of the narrative had come from Barrow: “he directed me to explain to Murray that the whole thing wanted rewriting and arranging with Chapters etc. — which I have done, but still said he [Murray] might peruse the Journals if he chose — by applying to you —” (Back,

1837d). *Had* Back already arranged the material and accorded it a structure of chapters? This seems unlikely, given what he had just written to Murray. It would appear that conception was overstriding achievement in the explorer’s mind. A clue to why it would be is contained in his next paragraph to Washington: “My object is for Murray to name a price as he did before — Formerly he gave me 700£, though he only offered 500£ which I would not take.” Having driven a hard bargain with his first book, Back knew what he had to do to convince Murray to sign him on as an author a second time.

However, within a week Back was less sure of his position, for Murray had called Back’s bluff and asked Washington for the journals. In the next letter to Washington, Back credits this to a misunderstanding initially: perhaps, he writes, Murray “thought that because [Captain Alexander] Maconochie [Washington’s predecessor, and the first secretary of the Royal Geographical Society] read my last MS — you would do the same with the Journals, which were never intended to be looked at except by a friend since they only contain unarranged daily notes, totally unfit for the eye of a critic —” (Back, 1837e). Here, the awareness that a first-stage narrative would not impress the publisher, let alone the British reader, is brought home forcefully; indeed, Back shows a certain concern that he might lose his chance for a book if Murray read his “daily notes.” Although he chooses to look on the more promising side of the matter, his concern continues to seep into his letter:

Nevertheless you have done quite right to let him obtain an opinion by sending them to him, and when the Pictures are returned, pray allow him to see them also — I wonder however, he should hesitate a moment, since the price was left to him; but if the work be worth any thing, including Chart and drawings, it certainly will merit from 3 to 400£. yet do not you mention this, but leave it to him, who ought not to allow it to slip out of his hands by any doubt of its sale, since he can always dispose of a round number to the trade — As the Author, of course I cannot say more, and should not have cared a fig about the price, if he had (which I thought he would have) taken it at my own recommendation. —

My only apprehension is about the delay which may arise in getting a publisher should M not agree, for if he employs any Person to read the Journals as a task (a Poet for instance) he may not be disposed to bring them out at all —. [Back, 1837e.]

If nothing else, this set of letters (and they continue with both correspondents) indicates the concern of the explorer to go before the public in a correct manner. As is apparent from various of his earlier journals, including one of his Grand Tour in 1830-32 (Back, 1830-32), Back was a fine writer, far more competent to couch matters in the linguistic fashion of his day than, say, Cook, Mackenzie, or Franklin. Yet even he expresses apprehension over the correct presentation of an illustrated narrative; several letters even worry over the appropriate size of the prospective book, and one expounds on possible titles, worried that nominating his an “unparalleled” voyage might be too much for the title itself, but hopeful that it “will be brought forward in a Review on the work” and suggesting “extraordinary” in its stead (Back, 1838a).

By November, Barrow had results from his end, in so far as he had arranged for Back to receive both the Gold (Founder's) and Silver (Patrons') medals from the Royal Geographical Society. And the manuscript was prepared, probably chiefly by Back, read by Barrow, and accepted by Murray in due course. The qualifier "probably" is requisite because the possibility exists of Back's having been assisted, either because he was unwell physically or because he felt that his prose required assistance. This may be inferred from the following oblique remark in a letter that Back wrote to fellow arctic explorer Sir John Richardson: "I am getting on quietly but my friend Lloyd is behind with the revision" (Back, 1837f). Still, the manuscript in Back's hand underwent important, if minor, changes, before it was pronounced publishable. A few of these may be cited to give the flavour of an array of them. The manuscript had maladroitly described a pressure ridge in the ice as follows: "some ponderous masses had been heaped up like Cyclopean ruins, to the height of thirty feet." One of the four editors whose names appear on the corrected draft manuscript struck out "Cyclopean," correcting it with "Titanian," which was perhaps what Back had meant. The corresponding passage from the *Narrative of an Expedition in H.M.S. Terror* sustains the correction (Back, 1838d:115-16, 1838e:69). Such grace notes do not represent the full range of the corrections, however. The editor deletes an entire sentence in which Back sunk to a maudlin tone to describe a sailor's burial at sea through a hole in the ice: "Some bubbles kept rising to the surface as the weight descended, but in a few seconds ceased and all was still and motionless" (Back, 1838d:254).

In nearly every extended description or contemplation — the narrative segment in which the writer in every traveller tends to shine most strongly — one of the editors has made alterations, not always preferable ones from a literary or aesthetic point of view, but alterations nonetheless. One example among many may represent this trend. A "walking tour" north of Cape Fisher in mid-winter (14 January 1837, when the thermometer sunk to -35°C) provided a sublime prospect and contemplation on the destiny of man. The manuscript description reads as follows:

The most imaginative Mind could scarcely picture to itself such a chaos of destruction and wild confusion mingled with the softest and most beautiful tints, through every shade, from the faint emerald to cerulean blue, and amidst all this, to look from this stern summit of the hill on a prospect of the same description — diversified by the dark frost smoke from a few widely scattered holes or lanes of water — only bounded by the horizon — To let the eye gaze over this, and then turn suddenly to the [illegible] speck denoted — the Ship — the abode of Man, thus manacled — but relying on Hercules — was to behold a scene too impressive ever to escape the memory. [Back, 1838d:255-256.]

Stroked out almost entirely, the draft manuscript's description is rewritten in another hand, that of an editor who signs his name "King" (presumably not Richard King, who explored with Back on his previous expedition and did not think highly of him) on this portion of the manuscript. Pencilled above Back's effort are the words of the book itself, which organize the thoughts only slightly more coherently:

A stranger combination of ruin and confusion with the softness and harmony of the most beautiful tints, from the faintest emerald to the deep cerulean blue, it would have been difficult for the most imaginative mind to conceive. Then from the sterile summit of the hill to gaze, far as the eye could stretch, upon a dreary plain of ice relieved only by the frost-smoke issuing here and there from a few holes or lanes of water, and suddenly to turn to the small dark speck which denoted the ship, the abode, alas how frail! of living men imprisoned amidst the "abomination of desolation." What a multitude of reflections rushed into the mind! — the might of nature — the physical feebleness of man — and yet again the triumph of spirit over matter — man, trusting in his own unquenchable energy and the protection of an omnipresent Providence, braving nature in the very strongholds of her empire, and if not successful in the encounter, yet standing up unvanquished and undismayed! It was indeed a scene not readily to be forgotten. [Back, 1838e:188-189.]

Obviously it is a mistake, one made by the present author (MacLaren, 1984), to suggest from a reading of the published version only that Back's *own* observation of the scene induced a conventional apostrophe to the Creator, one which also echoed contemporary British conceptions of the hero facing nature undaunted (Thomas Carlyle's interest in the hero comes particularly to mind). Clearly, this apostrophe is an editor's extrapolation on Back's own revisions. It aims to pay conventional and, therefore, expected attention to Divine Providence. And however inclined one would be to credit Back himself for thinking of the biblical quotation from Daniel that foretells the destruction of the temple as a fitting complement to his own contemplation, itself rewritten from his unarranged and unfit journals, one does so at one's peril. Finally, one runs a similar risk in attributing to the eyewitness himself the apocalyptic insight, however impressive it appears to the reader only of the book, the official account, the superlatively beautiful production, which does its best to account for, and render a literary success out of, an eleven months' harrowing voyage of nearly no geographical significance.

CONCLUSION

It is the nature of this line of enquiry — essentially a bibliographical one — into the evolution of the words and sketches first written and made in the explorer's encounter with the wilderness that the findings in the case of one book or of one explorer are not necessarily pertinent to any other case. Without evidence to warrant it, one must be chary of extrapolating from a specific example. What may be considered more widely, however, is the complex of factors that impinge upon the process by which words and sketches written and made in the wilderness evolved into the publications by which explorers secured their fame and by which they are known, studied, admired, and esteemed today, perhaps too quickly and universally. This discussion cannot, however, end by implying that one stage is more legitimate or authoritative than another. Certainly a wordsmith and artist in his own right, George Back, of all the arctic explorers, would have had a publication in mind when keeping his log and notes on his fifth expedition to the Arctic. Nor should the availability of publishers' correspondence with authors

necessarily serve to undermine the status of the published text itself. Perhaps Captain Cook had no inkling prior to publication of how John Hawkesworth had served him, but that notorious example cannot be unhesitatingly applied in all cases. No evidence has so far arisen to suggest that George Back opposed, or was anything other than satisfied with, the contents and style of his edited publication. Until such evidence does arise, then, the published commodity by which the history of arctic exploration was read and known in his lifetime, and is read and known by most people in ours, will effectively remain the authoritative words of the explorer himself. Still, in view of the intense study now being accorded European explorers' and travellers' accounts of North America (although hardly this continent only), researchers in several disciplines who are making use only of published verbal and visual accounts stand to benefit from investigating, where the survival of documents permits, the various forces that came to bear on words and images at each stage of composition. This is hardly a new theme, but its reiteration will, it is hoped, prove salutary.

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