



**Henry Morton Stanley and His Critics: Geography, Exploration and Empire**

Felix Driver

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## HENRY MORTON STANLEY AND HIS CRITICS: GEOGRAPHY, EXPLORATION AND EMPIRE\*

The name Henry Morton Stanley is popularly associated with a heroic age of discovery, when Europe marvelled at stories of exploration and conquest from all over the globe. Stanley, who “discovered” Livingstone at Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika in 1871, returned to Europe the following year in a blaze of publicity. The style in which his mission had been accomplished (“Dr. Livingstone, I presume?”) secured him a place in the popular mythology of imperialism; his image, immortalized at Madame Tussaud’s, was subsequently reproduced in countless advertisements selling everything from soap to Bovril. Stanley himself had an unrivalled gift for self-publicity: his experience as a journalist for the *New York Herald* accounts, in part, for the style of his best-known books, *How I Found Livingstone* (1872), *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) and *In Darkest Africa* (1890). The sheer volume of his writings, both public and private, suggests that Stanley was as much a man of words as a man of action; indeed, he represented the process of exploration in ways which have had a lasting impact on the modern world.

The history of exploration has until recently been dominated by two sorts of historical writing: biographies, which of necessity focus on the life and personality of individual explorers,<sup>1</sup> and somewhat Whiggish general histories, which have tended to celebrate the triumph of modern geographical science over the mysteries of the earth.<sup>2</sup> Neither of these approaches is particularly

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<sup>1</sup> African explorers have proved immensely popular subjects for biographical study. For recent examples of the genre, see F. Brodie, *The Devil Drives: A Life of Sir Richard Burton* (London, 1967); T. Jeal, *Livingstone* (London, 1973); F. McLynn, *Stanley: The Making of an African Explorer* (London, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> J. N. L. Baker, *A History of Geographical Discovery and Exploration*, 2nd edn. (London, 1937), pp. 325–43; J. N. L. Baker, “Sir Richard Burton and the Nile Sources”, in J. N. L. Baker, *The History of Geography* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 193–208.

well equipped to meet the requirements of a more contextual perspective, concerned with the wider contemporary significance of the ideas and practices of exploration.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, historians have paid much more attention to the institutional, intellectual and social contexts in which projects of exploration were sustained, emphasizing in particular the relationships between exploration and empire.<sup>4</sup> Whether explorers like Stanley are considered to be “progenitors” or merely “precursors”<sup>5</sup> of the new forms of imperialism developing during the late nineteenth century, their labours at the colonial frontier must be seen in the wider context of changing relationships between Europe and the non-European world. It has been suggested that the attitudes and assumptions of explorers constituted a kind of “unofficial symbolic imperialism”, helping to define the cultural terms on which unequal political relations between colonizer and colonized could subsequently be established.<sup>6</sup> The fact that British explorers of Africa (including Livingstone, Richard Burton and Samuel Baker) received official sanction and support is, according to this view, but one aspect of their contribution to imperial history; another is their role in the popularization of myths and fantasies about the non-European world. For geographical exploration did not merely overcome distance; it helped to create “imaginative geographies”.<sup>7</sup> Joseph Conrad once described the most famous African explorers as “conquerors of truth”,<sup>8</sup> not because they

<sup>3</sup> Cf. D. Livingstone, “History of Science and the History of Geography”, *Hist. Science*, xxii (1984), pp. 271-302; D. Stoddart, “Geography and its History”, in D. Stoddart (ed.), *On Geography* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 1-5.

<sup>4</sup> R. Rotberg, *Africa and its Explorers: Motives, Methods and Impact* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970); R. Bridges, “Europeans and East Africans in the Age of Exploration”, *Geograph. J.*, cxxxix (1973), pp. 220-32; R. Bridges, “The Historical Role of British Explorers in East Africa”, *Terrae incognitae*, xiv (1982), pp. 1-21; R. Stafford, *Scientist of Empire: Sir Roderick Murchison, Scientific Exploration and Victorian Imperialism* (Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> Rotberg, *Africa and its Explorers*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>6</sup> H. A. C. Cairns, *Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central African Society, 1840-1890* (London, 1965), pp. 238-40. See also P. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (London, 1965); J. and J. Comaroff, “Through the Looking Glass: Colonial Encounters of the First Kind”, *Jl. Hist. Sociol.*, i (1988), pp. 6-32.

<sup>7</sup> A phrase borrowed from E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978). Said’s work is of considerable importance for the history of exploration and geographical knowledge more generally: see F. Driver, “Geography’s Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge”, *Society and Space* (forthcoming 1992).

<sup>8</sup> J. Conrad, “Geography and Some Explorers”, in J. Conrad, *Last Essays*, ed. R. Curle (London, 1926), p. 19.

exposed the inner secrets of distant regions (as they often claimed), but rather because they established particular ways of reading unknown landscapes.

If it is necessary to highlight the wider cultural and political significance of the history of exploration, it is perhaps equally important to acknowledge the heterogeneity of contemporary attitudes towards the relationship between Europe and the non-European world. To the extent that it culminated in the expansion of European political and economic influence, the history of modern exploration is necessarily tied to that of imperialism. Yet attitudes towards both exploration and empire were far more diverse than has often been recognized. The relationships between philanthropy, science and colonialism were widely debated, even at the height of the age of empire itself. Methodologically, study of specific moments of controversy offers the historian an opportunity to consider directly the tensions and contradictions within contemporary attitudes to exploration and empire.<sup>9</sup> That bitter dispute was liable to erupt whenever the Victorians debated geographical exploration has not escaped the modern biographers of men such as Livingstone, Stanley, Burton and Speke. However, such controversies have often been treated rather narrowly — as the product of personal rivalry, for example — with little reference to their broader social and cultural connotations. Clearly such differences played their part; in many cases, however, much more was at stake than personal reputation and ambition.

This paper examines contemporary reactions to the African expeditions of Henry Morton Stanley, perhaps the most controversial of all nineteenth-century explorers. It focuses on three episodes in the history of exploration when private criticism of Stanley's motives and methods spilled over into the public domain. The first and most celebrated of these controversies occurred during the summer of 1872, when Stanley returned from his search for Livingstone; the second erupted in 1876, when reports of violence on Stanley's second African expedition reached London; and the third developed in 1890-1, in the wake of Stanley's mission to "rescue" Emin Pasha, the German governor of Equatorial Sudan. These three moments of controversy exposed a wide

<sup>9</sup> For studies with a related focus, see B. Semmel, *The Governor Eyre Controversy* (London, 1962); G. W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987); D. Livingstone, "Human Acclimatization: Perspectives on a Contested Field of Inquiry in Science, Medicine and Geography", *Hist. Science*, xxv (1987), pp. 359-94.

variety of attitudes towards exploration and empire. Their interpretation requires a contextual rather than a biographical approach: that is, an approach which is concerned less with the meaning of such controversies for Stanley, than with the meaning of Stanley for his critics. The first section of this article thus considers Stanley's significance in the wider context of the history of imperialism. The remainder explores the principal quarters from which his fiercest critics came: first, the geographical establishment (represented by the Royal Geographical Society), and secondly, what might — with only a touch of irony — be described as the liberal establishment (represented by Exeter Hall).

## I

### H. M. STANLEY, GEOGRAPHY AND EMPIRE

Stanley finds his place in conventional accounts of the history of exploration as the man who finally settled the long-running dispute over the sources of the Nile, synthesizing the fragments of knowledge gathered by his predecessors.<sup>10</sup> On his death in 1904, Sidney Low claimed that "The map of Africa is a monument to Stanley".<sup>11</sup> Such an epitaph draws our attention not only to Stanley's contributions to geographical science, arising from various African expeditions between 1871 and 1890 (see Map), but also to his role as an agent of European colonial influence. For Stanley was a tireless advocate of commercial and political intervention in Africa: indeed, to describe him as the "Napoleon of African travellers"<sup>12</sup> seems particularly appropriate in view of both the scale of his ambitions and the lengths he was prepared to go to in order to realize them. His career as an explorer bridges what is sometimes regarded as the golden age of African exploration (1851-78) and the era of the "scramble" (1884-91). If the 1870s were indeed a critical turning-point in the history of European involvement in Africa<sup>13</sup> then Stanley himself played a significant role in the transition to new forms of imperialism in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

Stanley's approach to geographical exploration in many ways embodied the cultural style of the new imperialism — bold, brash

<sup>10</sup> W. Garstin, "Fifty Years of Nile Exploration", *Geograph. Jl.*, xxxiii (1909), pp. 127-9.

<sup>11</sup> *The Autobiography of Henry M. Stanley*, ed. D. Stanley (London, 1909), p. 392.

<sup>12</sup> "Henry Morton Stanley", *Scot. Geograph. Mag.*, xx (1904), p. 284.

<sup>13</sup> Bridges, "Europeans and East Africans", p. 220.

and uncompromising. On his return from his second expedition to Central Africa in 1878, he began lecturing to geographical societies and chambers of commerce on the economic opportunities created by the work of exploration. At the inaugural meeting of the Manchester Geographical Society in 1885, for example, he portrayed the world as a huge market-place, its ports just "so many stalls", its people "so many vendors and buyers".<sup>14</sup> In this world, the prime function of geographical knowledge was to clear the path for commercial enterprise and endeavour. The exploration of Africa would be followed by the navigation of rivers, the establishment of trading stations and the building of railways. Nowhere was this vision more clearly mapped out than in Stanley's account of his work for King Leopold of Belgium, in *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State*. Here he gloried in the name *Bula Matari*, the "breaker of rocks", portraying the story of African exploration as a quest for mastery of the earth.<sup>15</sup> Stanley's geography was ever a militant and manly science, dedicated to the subjugation of wild nature; its books and maps were weapons of conquest rather than objects of contemplation. "The study of Geography", he proclaimed in 1885, "ought to lead to something higher than collecting maps and books of travel and afterwards shelving them as of no further use".<sup>16</sup>

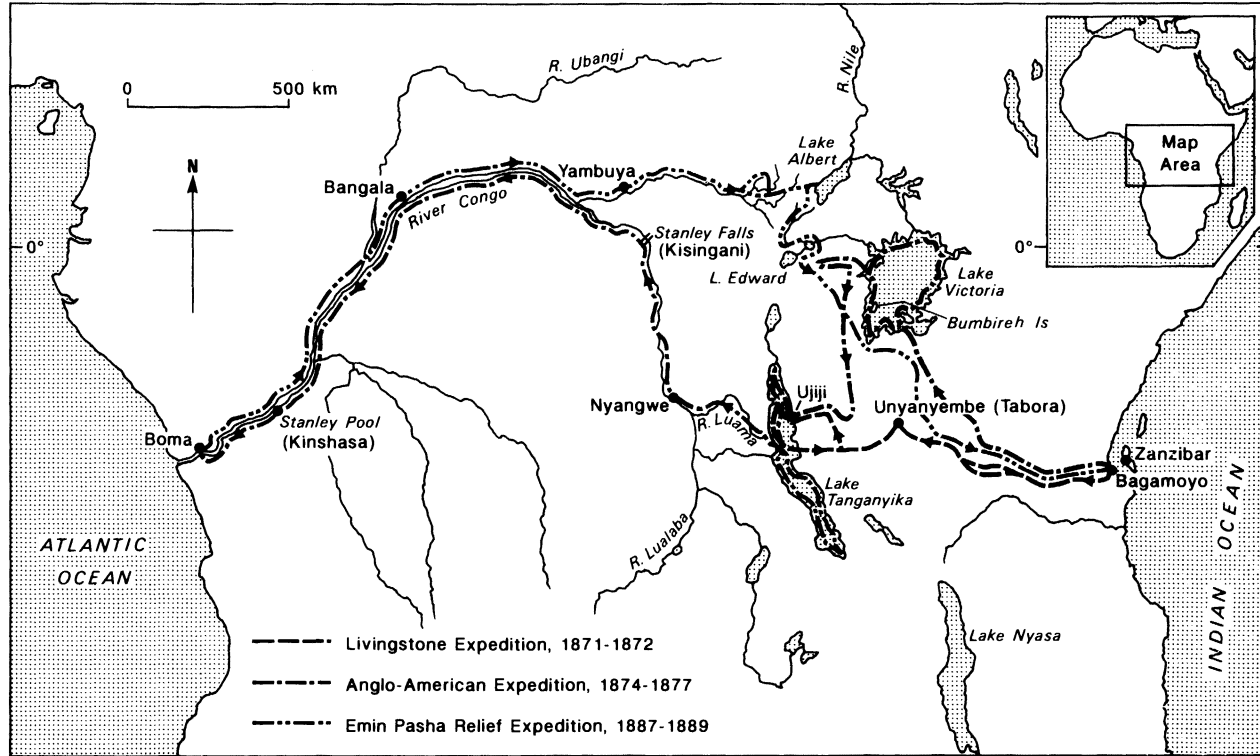
Stanley's involvement in the extension of Leopold's African empire, and in the expansion of British influence in East Africa during the 1880s, indicates that his vision of geographical science as the handmaiden of colonial power was more than mere fancy. Indeed the motives behind his last major expedition, to relieve Emin Pasha, cannot be fully understood without some appreciation of the wider commercial and political interests involved.<sup>17</sup> Equally, any assessment of Stanley's contribution to the history of imperialism must consider not only his role as an instrument of imperial interests, but also the part he played in the symbolic representation of Africa as a field for European endeavour. In *How I Found Livingstone*, Stanley popularized the influential myth of Livingstone as the patron saint of British imperialism in

<sup>14</sup> H. M. Stanley, "Central Africa and the Congo Basin: or, The Importance of the Scientific Study of Geography", *Jl. Manchester Geograph. Soc.*, i (1885), p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> H. M. Stanley, *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State*, 2 vols. (London, 1885), i, p. 237.

<sup>16</sup> Stanley, "Central Africa and the Congo Basin", p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> See below, pp. 160-4; I. Smith, *The Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, 1886-1890* (Oxford, 1972).



STANLEY'S MAJOR EXPEDITIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA 1871-1889

Africa.<sup>18</sup> His writings represented Central Africa as a primeval place, untouched by history, yet full of possibility. They were far from unique in this respect, of course: in the period between the publication of Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1903), the vision of "Darkest Africa" appears to have gained an ever more powerful hold on the minds of Europeans. As Patrick Brantlinger observes, "Africa grew 'dark' as Victorian explorers, missionaries and scientists flooded it with light".<sup>19</sup> The peculiar power of this myth of the "Dark Continent" lay in its fusion of a complex of images of race, science and religion; the iconography of light and darkness thus represented European penetration of Africa as *simultaneously* a process of domination, enlightenment and emancipation.<sup>20</sup> Although Stanley did not create this myth, his writings popularized existing stereotypes, combining the symbolism of "Darkest Africa" with an unshakeable faith in the potential for European mastery over the entire continent. His mission, as it was described in 1884, was to strike *A White Line across the Dark Continent*.<sup>21</sup>

The myth of "Darkest Africa" took many forms, visual as well as verbal. In 1890, for example, European exploration of the continent was the subject of the "Stanley and African" Exhibition at the Victoria Gallery in Regent Street, London. The catalogue to the exhibition advised visitors to move through the main hall via a series of "stations", *en route* for the "heart of savage Africa", which included a "native hut, an African primeval forest and village scene", complete with two "slave boys".<sup>22</sup> Another section was devoted to the achievements of "eminent men associated with African enterprise", including geographers, missionaries, traders and sportsmen. Such exhibitions typically represented African explorers in heroic terms, as pioneers of civilization in

<sup>18</sup> T. Youngs, "My Footsteps on These Pages": The Inscription of Self and 'Race' in H. M. Stanley's *How I Found Livingstone*", *Prose Studies*, xiii (1990), pp. 239-40, 245-6. It was frequently remarked that Livingstone's true monuments were his journals: D. Helly, *Livingstone's Legacy: Horace Waller and Victorian Mythmaking* (Athens, Oh., 1987), pp. 66, 69.

<sup>19</sup> P. Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent", *Critical Inquiry*, xii (1985), p. 166.

<sup>20</sup> Driver, "Geography's Empire".

<sup>21</sup> *A White Line across the Dark Continent* (London, 1884), cited in W. R. Louis, "The Berlin Congo Conference", in P. Gifford and W. R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa* (London, 1971), p. 183.

<sup>22</sup> *Stanley and African Exhibition: Catalogue of the Exhibits* (London, 1890). On imperial exhibitions in general, see J. M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 96-120.



the dark places of the earth. Livingstone was perhaps the supreme model, portrayed in one account as a "hard, unflinching instrument, who had gone through lands and tribes and tough problems, and had cut furrows in a wilderness of human life which no one had heard of or dreamed of".<sup>23</sup> While Stanley claimed Livingstone's mission as his own, he was far too controversial a figure to attract the kind of hero-worship which his mentor (posthumously) inspired. Indeed what we know of the popular response to Stanley seems as much designed to deflate his reputation as to enhance it. His celebrated greeting to Livingstone in 1872 became a constant source of embarrassment to him thereafter,<sup>24</sup> and what was supposed to be the crowning moment of his career as an explorer — the publication of his account of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, in 1890 — was greeted as much with scepticism as with praise. In *A New Light Thrown across ... Darkest Africa*, F. C. Burnand (the editor of *Punch* and master of the burlesque) lampooned the moral pretensions of Stanley's *In Darkest Africa*, portraying his expedition as a publicity stunt staged for commercial gain and of no more significance than a mere bagatelle.<sup>25</sup> (See Plates 1-2.)

Following his death in 1904, Stanley was to be hailed by the propagandists of empire as, variously, an "English hero", an "English man of action" and a "great Englishman".<sup>26</sup> Such accolades obscure as much as they illuminate. They gloss over not only Stanley's humble origins (he was in fact the illegitimate son

<sup>23</sup> H. Waller, "The Universities Mission to Central Africa", *Quart. Rev.*, clxviii (1889), pp. 229-30.

<sup>24</sup> Stanley's greeting invited popular ridicule rather than reverence from the very first. "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?", said one dummy to another in a men's fashion plate in the October [1872] issue of the *Tailor and Cutter*; "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" shouted a host of clowns and funny men in the music halls, dressed up in black tights and woolly wigs; "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" murmured the old gentlemen to each other in the soft crannies of their clubs": I. Anstruther, *I Presume: Stanley's Triumph and Disaster* (London, 1956), p. 147.

<sup>25</sup> F. C. Burnand, *A New Light Thrown across the Keep It Quite Darkest Africa*, 6th edn. (London, 1891), pp. 73-4. Burnand's wit was quite merciless: "Suppose Stanley should have the misfortune to lose himself?", one of his characters mused in 1892. "I saw my road at once. *I would go and find Stanley*. And then somebody else could come out to find me. Then some one to find *him*, and so on. In the course of time, one-half of the world would be finding out the other half. This is the law of progress": F. C. Burnand, "Across the Keep-It Dark Continent, or How I Found Stanley", in F. C. Burnand (ed.), *Some Old Friends* (London, 1892), pp. 348-9.

<sup>26</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 29 Oct. 1909; *The Times*, 11 May 1904; *Autobiography of Henry M. Stanley*, ed. Stanley, p. 395.

of a Welsh pauper<sup>27</sup>), but also the more controversial aspects of Stanley's African expeditions. In what follows, I am directly concerned with the impact and significance of controversies over Stanley's motives and methods of exploration. This perspective requires us to see exploration through a different lens, as a site of conflict and controversy, rather than a synonym for the triumphal progress of European science.

## II

### STANLEY AND THE GEOGRAPHICAL ESTABLISHMENT

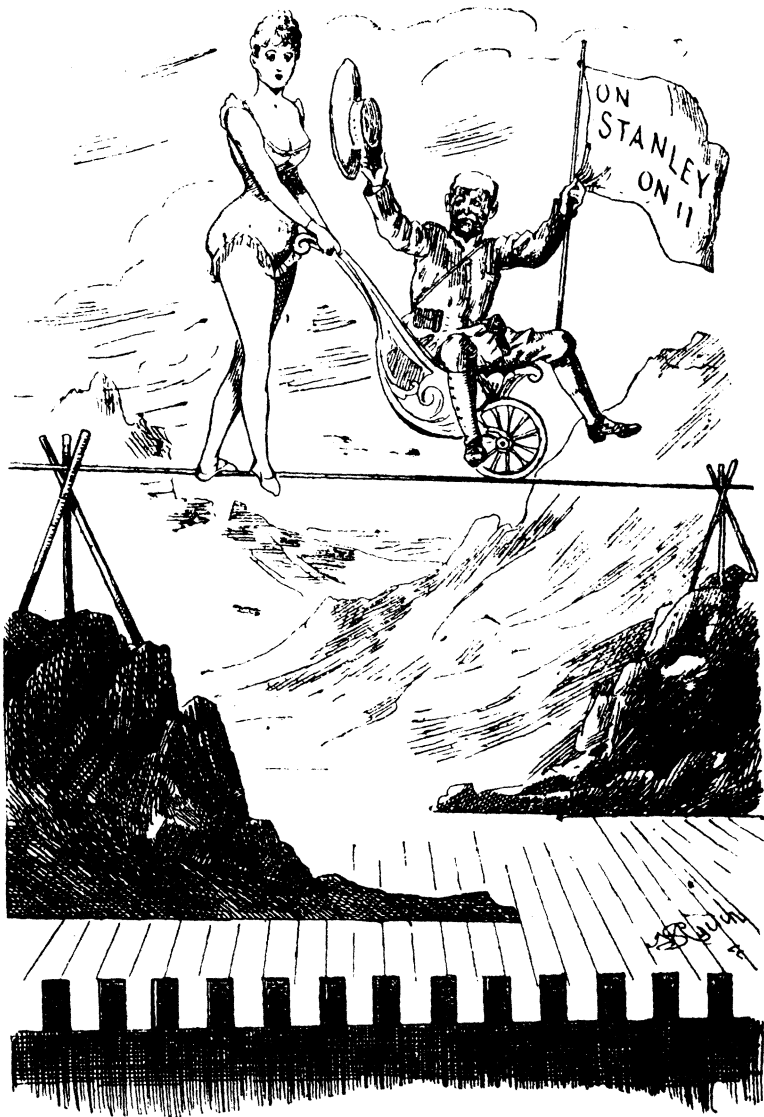
"Of all the sciences", Joseph Conrad once observed, "Geography finds its origin in action".<sup>28</sup> At no time did this claim appear more apposite than in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, when geographers were actively involved in the exploration and colonization of the non-European world. After 1880, with the advent of the "scramble for Africa", the acquisition of colonial territory — in addition to mere colonial influence — became the object of every European power. This new phase of imperialism placed new demands on geographers. Geographical knowledge came to be widely regarded as one of the tools of empire, enabling territories to be evaluated, boundaries to be drawn up, wars to be fought and peoples to be conquered. By the end of the nineteenth century, many of the leading fellows of the Royal Geographical Society of London were ready to proclaim the worldly virtues of their discipline, while elsewhere in Europe (especially in Berlin, Paris and Brussels) the relationship between geographical knowledge and colonial expansion attracted considerable interest.<sup>29</sup>

Although the history of geography is far from synonymous with the history of exploration, there is no doubting the stimulus

<sup>27</sup> *Autobiography of Henry M. Stanley*, ed. Stanley, *passim*; L. and I. Jones (eds.), *H. M. Stanley and Wales* (St. Asaph, 1972); R. Hall, *Stanley: An Adventurer Explored* (London, 1974).

<sup>28</sup> Conrad, "Geography and Some Explorers", p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> B. Hudson, "The New Geography and the New Imperialism, 1870-1918", *Antipode*, ix (1977), pp. 12-19. Hudson's important article needs to be revised in the light of recent work. See, for example, W. H. Schneider, "Geographical Reform and Municipal Imperialism in France, 1870-80", in J. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and the Natural World* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 90-116; M. Heffernan, "Bringing the Desert to Bloom: French Ambitions in the Sahara Desert during the Late Nineteenth Century", in D. Cosgrove and G. Petts (eds.), *Water, Engineering and Landscape* (London, 1990), pp. 94-114; S. Bederman, "The 1876 Brussels Geographical Conference", *Terrae incognitae*, xxi (1989), pp. 63-75; Driver, "Geography's Empire".



## HE CROSSES THE EQUATOR.

1. "He Crosses the Equator", from F. C. Burnand, *A New Light Thrown across the Keep It Quite Darkest Africa*, 6th edn. (London, 1891), p. 111.

that the mapping and naming of new territories gave to the development of modern geographical science. The Royal Geographical Society, founded in 1830, was the direct offspring of the Raleigh Travellers Club, an organization which combined the functions of scientific society and dining club. Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, the Geographical Society served as an information exchange for explorers, soldiers, administrators and natural scientists. Under its most active president during this period, Sir Roderick Murchison, the Society developed into one of the most fashionable of its kind in London, known particularly for its "African nights" devoted to discussions of the latest explorations, when (to quote one observer) "an immense audience thunders at the gate".<sup>30</sup> Leading fellows exercised considerable influence in the corridors of Whitehall, largely through informal channels and networks: it was Murchison, for example, who in 1866 secured John Kirk's appointment as a vice-consul in Zanzibar.<sup>31</sup> Following Murchison's death in 1871, colonial administrators and military men continued to play an important role in the affairs of the Society; conversely, influential fellows such as Bartle Frere, Harry Johnston and Halford Mackinder figure significantly in the history of British imperial policy.<sup>32</sup> At a more mundane level, the Society constituted a ready source of information for a range of government departments,<sup>33</sup> a service which was indirectly rewarded with the gift of an official subsidy (1854) and royal charter (1859). The Society thus occupied an important place on the map of imperial science. "By the late 1850s", a recent biographer of Murchison concludes, "the Royal Geographical Society more perfectly represented British expansionism in all its facets than any other institution in the nation".<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> B. H. Becker, *Scientific London* (London, 1874), p. 334. See also, in the archives of the Royal Geographical Society, London (hereafter R.G.S.), C. Markham, "Royal Geographical Society" (n.d.), p. 420; Bridges, "Europeans and East Africans", p. 226; Stafford, *Scientist of Empire*, pp. 21-2, 211-19.

<sup>31</sup> Stafford, *Scientist of Empire*, p. 181.

<sup>32</sup> F. Emery, "Geography and Imperialism: The Role of Sir Bartle Frere, 1815-1884", *Geograph. Jl.*, cl (1984), pp. 342-50; R. Oliver, *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa* (London, 1964); W. H. Parker, *Mackinder: Geography as an Aid to Statecraft* (Oxford, 1982).

<sup>33</sup> "The military and civil servants of Her Majesty well appreciate the value of the Society's map-room. No sooner does a squabble occur — in Ashanti, Abyssinia or Atchin — than Government departments make a rush to Savile Row, and lay their hands on all matter relating to that portion of the world which happens to be interesting for the moment": Becker, *Scientific London*, pp. 332-3.

<sup>34</sup> Stafford, *Scientist of Empire*, pp. 211-12.



*“Sensational Geography”*

The success of Stanley's mission to find Livingstone in 1871-2 contrasted with the fate of the Royal Geographical Society's most recent expeditions to Central Africa. Such was the astonishment at the news that Stanley, a mere reporter for the notorious *New York Herald*, had succeeded where the Society had failed, that the president, Sir Henry Rawlinson, cuttingly remarked that it must have been Livingstone who had discovered Stanley, and not the other way round.<sup>35</sup> When it became apparent that Stanley had not only achieved what he had claimed, but had also been entrusted with Livingstone's private journals and letters, the leading fellows of the Society were forced to accept what they had previously regarded as inconceivable. Hoping to make the best out of a bad situation, they invited Stanley to address the Geographical Section at the annual meeting of the British Association, to be held at Brighton in August 1872.

Stanley's appearance at the British Association attracted a crowd of around three thousand people to the Geographical Section. His lecture (“Discoveries at the North End of Lake Tanganyika”) began in typical style: “I consider myself in the light of a troubadour, to relate to you the tale of an old man who is tramping onward to discover the source of the Nile”.<sup>36</sup> Speaking in front of a huge map of Africa, Stanley went on to defend Livingstone's increasingly discredited theories about the river systems of Central Africa. He condemned all attempts (including those of Rawlinson and the African explorer, James Grant) to debate Livingstone's contention that the Lualaba river fed into the Nile as merely the speculations of armchair geographers; “this was not a question of theory”, he added, “but of fact”. Stanley was clearly taken aback at the cool reception he was given by the geographers. The chairman, Francis Galton, only increased his discomfort by pressing him on rumours about his true identity which had been circulating in the press (Stanley claimed to be an American, and made every attempt to hide the truth of his upbringing as a workhouse child in North Wales). In his concluding observations, Galton added insult to injury, with a distinctly

<sup>35</sup> *Proc. Roy. Geograph. Soc.*, xvi (1872), p. 241; British Lib., London (hereafter Brit. Lib.), Stanley MSS., RP 2435 (i), “Livingstone Expedition Journal”, 1 Aug. 1872.

<sup>36</sup> *The Times*, 17 Aug. 1872.

sour remark about the shortcomings of “sensational geography”.<sup>37</sup>

The Brighton meeting served to widen a growing rift between Stanley and the most influential of the geographers. Galton and others took exception to Stanley’s journalistic ways, while Stanley was furious at what he took to be their attempt to humiliate him. In a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, published on 28 August 1872, Stanley hit out at “all statements that I am not what I claim to be — an American; all gratuitous remarks such as ‘sensationalism’ as directed at me by that suave gentleman, Mr. Francis Galton”; and proceeded to describe Rawlinson’s comments on Livingstone’s theories as “wild, absurd and childish, to use the mildest terms”. At a dinner held a few days later, he continued the assault against those he was calling “the enemies of Livingstone”, singling out for particular criticism “Mr. Francis Galton, F.R.S., F.R.G.S., and God knows how many more letters to his name”.<sup>38</sup> In public the fellows of the Society were more circumspect, but in private their contempt for Stanley was plain. Clements Markham, a future president, described him as a “scoundrel” and a “blackguard”, while Horace Waller (who was later to edit Livingstone’s *Last Journals*) dismissed “Taffy” Stanley as “utterly unworthy of credence”.<sup>39</sup>

The controversies of 1872 turned on issues of social standing, scientific merit and moral legitimacy. As an outsider, Stanley quite simply lacked the credentials of either the gentleman or the scientist, and his assumed national identity (American) as well as his profession (reporter) provided ample grounds for the testy reception he was accorded by those later to be dubbed the “high priests of geographical orthodoxy”.<sup>40</sup> Galton was to complain that “Mr. Stanley had other interests than geography. He was essentially a journalist aiming at producing sensational articles”.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 17 Aug. 1872. On Livingstone’s (erroneous) theories about the Nile sources, see Jeal, *Livingstone*, pp. 323-6.

<sup>38</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 28 Aug. 1872; *Manchester Examiner*, 2 Sept. 1872; H. M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone* (London, 1872), pp. 468-71, 683-90.

<sup>39</sup> University College London (hereafter U.C.L.), Galton MSS., C. Markham to F. Galton, 29 Aug., 7 Sept. 1872; R.G.S., H. Waller to H. W. Bates, 9, 25 Oct. 1872.

<sup>40</sup> [S. Low], “Henry Morton Stanley”, *Dictionary of National Biography*, suppl. vol. (London, 1912), p. 387.

<sup>41</sup> F. Galton, *Memories of My Life*, 3rd edn. (London, 1909), p. 207. Another critic remarked that “Mr. Stanley may rest assured that he will win laurels as an explorer just in the degree in which he can forget he is a correspondent”: L. Oliphant, “African Explorers”, *North Amer. Rev.*, cxxiv (1877), p. 391.

Markham's defence of the geographical establishment was more blunt, at least in private: "Damn public estimation. The fellow has done no geography"!<sup>42</sup> Stanley's refusal publicly to acknowledge his illegitimacy and pauper childhood provided his critics with further ammunition; it is clear from their private correspondence that both Galton and William Carpenter (registrar of London University and president of the British Association in 1872) attempted to use the revelations about Stanley's birthplace and parentage to discredit him. Galton's growing reputation as a scientist of heredity<sup>43</sup> gave his obsession with Stanley's familial roots an added twist. Incensed by Stanley's denials, Carpenter attempted — through the foreign secretary — to prevent him from meeting the queen, fearing that this would firmly establish him in "the public mind".<sup>44</sup> But this extraordinary private campaign was unsuccessful, and Stanley's audience with the queen had precisely the effect Carpenter had feared. With the support of influential sections of the press, Stanley made it clear that nothing short of a Geographical Society medal would make amends for the way he had been treated. Much against the wishes of many fellows (including Markham, Waller and Grant), the Society eventually awarded Stanley its gold medal, in what seems primarily to have been a face-saving gesture.<sup>45</sup>

Style and status were not the only things at issue in 1872: what made the dispute such a bitter one was Stanley's claim to represent Livingstone. Even before he had set foot in London, Stanley was claiming that Livingstone had been virtually abandoned by his official sponsors. The débâcle of the Geographical Society's Livingstone Relief Expedition, which arrived in Zanzibar at precisely the moment when the world was learning of Stanley's success, only gave him further ammunition. Some of Stanley's fiercest criticisms were directed at Kirk, the botanist turned vice-consul at Zanzibar, who had originally accompanied Livingstone on his Zambesi expedition in 1858-63. Kirk, an influential figure among

<sup>42</sup> R.G.S., Markham, "Royal Geographical Society", p. 399.

<sup>43</sup> Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, was the author of a celebrated account of *Hereditary Genius* (London, 1869). He subsequently became widely known as the father of eugenics.

<sup>44</sup> U.C.L., Galton MSS., W. B. Carpenter to F. Galton, 2, 8, 12 Sept. 1872.

<sup>45</sup> R.G.S., Markham, "Royal Geographical Society", p. 399; H. Waller to H. Bates, 25 Oct. 1872; D. W. Forrest, *Francis Galton* (London, 1974), pp. 117-19.



both geographers and the anti-slavery lobby in London,<sup>46</sup> was accused (by both Livingstone and Stanley) of failing to ensure the safety of supplies sent into the interior, and of sending slaves rather than freemen to transport the goods.<sup>47</sup> He strongly denied these allegations, and the foreign office had no hesitation in giving him their support; as one official put it, "I cannot help thinking that Mr. Stanley the American may for his own purposes have prejudiced Livingstone against Dr. Kirk and others who did their best to serve him at Zanzibar".<sup>48</sup> Waller (Kirk's brother-in-law) was similarly convinced that Stanley had turned Livingstone against Kirk. On hearing of Stanley's allegations, he wrote several letters to Livingstone imploring him to clear Kirk's name.<sup>49</sup> Waller was active within both the Anti-Slavery Society and the Royal Geographical Society; significantly, he was to figure prominently in subsequent controversies over Stanley's expeditions.<sup>50</sup>

For years after the débâcle of 1872, critics such as Waller continued to resent Stanley's attempts to appropriate Livingstone's reputation. If, as has recently been argued, Livingstone's most important legacy lay in the establishment of a myth to fit a new pattern of British influence in Africa,<sup>51</sup> it must be recognized that the myth-making process was fraught with conflict. As if to mark competing claims on his reputation, Stanley, Waller and Kirk all served as pall-bearers at Livingstone's funeral, held at Westminster Abbey in 1874. Prior to the ceremony, his body had lain in state for two days, surrounded by palms and lilies, in the Royal Geographical Society's council rooms at Savile Row.<sup>52</sup> In death, Livingstone had become a saint; small wonder, then, that the struggle to represent him was so fierce.

<sup>46</sup> Kirk later served as a vice-president of the Royal Geographical Society. See R. Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa* (London, 1939), pp. 38-61, 134-224; R.G.S., Markham, *Royal Geographical Society*, *passim*.

<sup>47</sup> Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 50184, fos. 174-5, D. Livingstone to A. Livingstone, 18 Nov. 1871; Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone*, pp. 12-16, 675-6.

<sup>48</sup> Public Record Office, London (hereafter P.R.O.), FO 84/1357, memorandum for Lord Granville, 29 July 1872.

<sup>49</sup> Rhodes House, Oxford (hereafter R.H.), Waller MSS., H. Waller to D. Livingstone, 12 Aug., 25 Nov. 1872.

<sup>50</sup> See below, pp. 159, 161; D. Helly, "Informed Opinion on Tropical Africa in Great Britain, 1860-1890", *African Affairs*, lxxviii (1969), pp. 196-7, 204-14; Helly, *Livingstone's Legacy*, *passim*.

<sup>51</sup> Helly, *Livingstone's Legacy*, pp. 26-7.

<sup>52</sup> A. Z. Fraser, *Livingstone and Newstead* (London, 1913), pp. 205-6.

*“Exploration by Warfare”*

In autumn 1872, influential sections of the press had moved decisively in Stanley's favour: “We cannot think without shame and indignation of the conduct of the Royal Geographical Society in this matter”, thundered *The Times* in November 1872.<sup>53</sup> While the award of a medal did something to heal the rift between Stanley and the geographers, relations were to remain strained for several years. Shortly before leaving Zanzibar on his self-styled “Anglo-American expedition” of 1874-7, Stanley contemptuously dismissed the arguments of leading British geographers as “squabbling about nothing”, complaining to a fellow journalist that “Sir Bartle's honey-sweetness palls on me. Rawlinson's indifference is too evident, Markham's intriguing makes me shudder, Baker's dogmatic, tenacious hold of wrong opinions wearies me — and so on”.<sup>54</sup> Ironically it was these very men who were to protect Stanley's reputation during a second controversy which erupted following the publication of his account of a violent incident at Bumbireh Island on Lake Victoria in August 1875, which reached the *Daily Telegraph* and the *New York Herald* a year later.

What most concerned Stanley's critics in 1876 was not the fact that he had used force; it was rather that, following a violent confrontation with the Bambireh, he had planned an act of cold-blooded revenge. Stanley appeared unapologetic for this. Indeed his dispatches appeared to revel in the violence which had taken place. The result of the first clash, he reported, was “fourteen dead and wounded with ball and buck-shot, which, although I should consider to be very dear payment for the robbery of eight ash oars and a drum, was barely equivalent in fair estimation to the intended massacre of ourselves”. The second clash, which Stanley intended as a punishment, was even more bloody: 280 men, armed with muskets and spears, approached Bumbireh in eighteen canoes, under the American and British flags. Having enticed the natives on to the shore, at least forty-two were slaughtered and many more injured, with Stanley's men suffering only a few bruises.<sup>55</sup> To his critics, Stanley's violence (against natives

<sup>53</sup> *The Times*, 15 Nov. 1872.

<sup>54</sup> Brit. Lib., Exported MSS., RP 1100, H. M. Stanley to J. R. Robinson, 11 Nov. 1874.

<sup>55</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 7, 10 Aug. 1876; H. M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (London, 1899), i, pp. 178-86, 228-9; Coupland, *Exploitation of East Africa*, pp. 324-9.

armed merely with stones and arrows) was excessive. In the words of the *Saturday Review*, "He has no concern with justice, no right to administer it; he comes with no sanction, no authority, no jurisdiction — nothing but explosive bullets and a copy of the *Daily Telegraph*".<sup>56</sup>

The response of the British government to these reports was unusually swift: the foreign secretary sent instructions to Stanley (via Kirk, now consul at Zanzibar), that the British flag was not to be used on his expedition.<sup>57</sup> The Royal Geographical Society found itself in a more delicate position: if they similarly disowned Stanley as merely the representative of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *New York Herald*, they would risk excluding themselves from any association with his achievements. Although Markham's *Geographical Magazine* declared that "knowledge is dearly bought at the cost of piratical proceedings of this nature",<sup>58</sup> it was becoming clear that Stanley's expedition would finally resolve the long-running dispute over the sources of the Nile. Grant, for example, had already described Stanley's exploration of Lake Victoria as "one of the most important and brilliant that has ever been made in central Africa, or indeed in any other country".<sup>59</sup>

There were, however, two fellows who were prepared to criticize Stanley quite openly: H. M. Hyndman and Sir Henry Yule. Hyndman at that time worked at the *Pall Mall Gazette*; he later became better known for his activities within the Social Democratic Federation. Yule, on the other hand, was at the height of his career; a historical geographer of Central Asia renowned for his translation of the works of Marco Polo, he is also remembered today for his co-authorship of *Hobson-Jobson*, a glossary of Indian words in colloquial use.<sup>60</sup> If Hyndman was responsible for the initial attack on Stanley (and the publicity it attracted in the *Gazette*<sup>61</sup> and elsewhere), Yule's support gave it credibility in

<sup>56</sup> *Saturday Rev.*, 16 Feb. 1878.

<sup>57</sup> P.R.O., FO 84/1454, J. Kirk to H. M. Stanley, 11 Dec. 1876.

<sup>58</sup> "Mr. Stanley's Proceedings in the Lake Region of Central Africa", *Geograph. Mag.*, iii (1876), p. 247.

<sup>59</sup> J. A. Grant, "On Mr. H. M. Stanley's Exploration of Lake Victoria Nyanza", *Geograph. Mag.*, iii (1876), p. 25.

<sup>60</sup> H. M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (London, 1911); C. Trotter, *Memoir of Colonel Sir Henry Yule* (Edinburgh, 1891).

<sup>61</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* was subsequently to become a pioneer of the "new journalism". Some historians have suggested that the foundations of the new journalism were laid during the 1870s: see J. H. Wiener (ed.), *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (New York, 1988).

the eyes of many fellows, since he was both a medallist and a member of the council.<sup>62</sup> Hyndman first raised the issue of Stanley's dispatches at one of the Society's meetings in November 1876; but it was only with Yule's support that he was able to secure a more substantial discussion. Yule himself urged the Society not to associate themselves with Stanley's expeditions by giving him ovations. The word "ovation", he cleverly pointed out, "was etymologically connected with *ovis*, a sheep; and when people got upon lines of excessive glorification, they were very apt to follow one another like a flock of sheep, and not see all the puddles they came across".<sup>63</sup>

The Society's official response to these protests was orchestrated by Rawlinson and Rutherford Alcock, the newly appointed president. Rawlinson argued that there was little that could be done as Stanley was neither a fellow of the Society nor "even an Englishman"; in any case, the Society "was not established for the discussion of such subjects, which did not involve any principles of practical geography". Alcock followed Rawlinson in admitting the strength of feeling on Stanley's "apparently ruthless slaughter and violence" at Bumbireh; at the same time he insisted that "the Society had no right collectively to censure him" on the basis of "the hurried and sensational letters which had reached England".<sup>64</sup> This response was hardly a satisfactory one, since the Society was not slow to issue collective *congratulations* to explorers (English or otherwise) when they saw fit. As one critic put it, "It is impossible to contend that the Society can take credit only for the scientific achievements of its medallist . . . without passing some judgement upon the moral bearing of the acts".<sup>65</sup> Yet this was the position which the Society's council had apparently adopted. Their motives are not hard to discern: it is clear that they dreaded the recurrence of another public squabble, particularly at an ordinary meeting of the Society. Rawlinson had no time for such discussions: in a letter to Alcock, he dismissed

<sup>62</sup> Yule later became president of both the Hakluyt and the Royal Asiatic Societies, and a vice-president of the Royal Geographical Society: E. D. Morgan, "Sir Henry Yule", *Scot. Geograph. Mag.*, vi (1890), pp. 93-8.

<sup>63</sup> H. Yule and H. M. Hyndman, *Mr. Henry M. Stanley and the Royal Geographical Society* (London, 1878), p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 24; R.G.S., R. Alcock to H. W. Bates, 26 Oct. 1876.

<sup>65</sup> J. E. Ritchie, *The Life and Discoveries of David Livingstone*, 2 vols. (London, 1877), ii, p. 203.

Hyndman as “one of the irrepressible genus of question mongers, or monomaniacs, who will insist on ventilating a crotchet”.<sup>66</sup>

The issue of the Bumbireh slaughter was reopened on Stanley’s return to Britain in 1878, and the Geographical Society once more found itself at the centre of controversy. Several fellows took exception to the unqualified congratulations which were sent to Stanley, as well as to the council’s early promise of a public meeting in his honour at St. James’s Hall (attended by the prince of Wales), followed by a grand dinner at Willis’s Rooms. Yule himself immediately resigned from the council, insisting that Stanley had yet to justify his “chastisement” of the Bambireh.<sup>67</sup> However, the rest of his colleagues on the council remained silent. The African explorer and adventurer Sir Samuel Baker wrote privately to Edwin Arnold, the influential editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, assuring him that Stanley could count on the support of the most prominent fellows. Baker uncharitably dismissed the campaign against Stanley as the work of “envious, stay-at-home do nothings”: “The fact is that the Royal Geographical Society is now so enormous (containing upwards of *three thousand* members) that it is no longer an angelic body — there is an undercurrent of malice exhibited prominently by at least one member, which under the cloak of philanthropy would stab a great reputation”.<sup>68</sup> Despite these reassurances, Stanley thought it necessary to enter a lengthy defence of his actions in his speech at the Society’s grand dinner in February 1878: “What I have done at Bambireh and other places on the Victoria Nyanza and on the Kwango-Lualaba has been done to satisfy justice. Where I have failed to make peace Livingstone would have failed, and where I have made friendships with natives I made firmer and more lasting friendships than even Livingstone himself could have made”.<sup>69</sup> Such claims were bold indeed. Nevertheless, in their wake, the council of the Society effectively suspended further criticism. Furthermore the *Geographical Magazine* published a retraction of its earlier condemnation of the Bumbireh slaughter, declaring in March 1878 that it had done an “injustice to Mr. Stanley”.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> R.G.S., H. Rawlinson to R. Alcock, 14 Nov. 1876.

<sup>67</sup> U.C.L., Galton MSS., H. Yule to F. Galton, 27 Jan. 1878.

<sup>68</sup> Brit. Lib., Stanley MSS., RP 2435 (ii), S. Baker to E. Arnold, 20 Jan. 1878.

<sup>69</sup> Yule and Hyndman, *Henry M. Stanley*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>70</sup> “Mr. Stanley”, *Geograph. Mag.*, v (1878), p. 53.

Although the Geographical Society council was far more circumspect in 1876-8 than it had been in 1872, the issues raised by Stanley's second expedition were if anything more far-reaching than those highlighted by the first. In practical terms, critics pointed out, Stanley's violence would jeopardize the lives of the explorers and missionaries who followed him: as Yule put it in 1876, "How would the next Speke or Livingstone . . . fare upon the Lake?"<sup>71</sup> A similar line was taken by Kirk at Zanzibar, who was quick to interpret subsequent native hostility towards missionaries on Lake Victoria as the direct result of Stanley's violence towards the Bambireh.<sup>72</sup> The moral dimensions of "exploration by warfare" also attracted criticism. Galton, writing anonymously on Stanley's expedition in the *Edinburgh Review*, questioned "how far a private individual, travelling as a newspaper correspondent, has a right to assume such a warlike attitude, and to force his way through native tribes regardless of their rights, whatever those may be". Yet Galton failed to develop these remarks, as if they were not matters for scientific geographers. Stanley, he continued, had "dissected and laid bare the very heart of the great continent of Africa"; beside this achievement, "the death of a few hundred barbarians, ever ready to fight and kill, and many of whom are professed cannibals, will perhaps be regarded as a small matter".<sup>73</sup> Whether or not an irony was intended,<sup>74</sup> it is indicative of Galton's own attitudes towards exploration that his best-selling book, *The Art of Travel* (first published in 1855), was addressed to geographers and soldiers alike.<sup>75</sup> Its advice on the proper bearing of the traveller towards natives ("an air of showing more confidence to the savages than you really feel") was in some respects not far removed from the crude self-justi-

<sup>71</sup> Yule and Hyndman, *Henry M. Stanley*, pp. 20-1.

<sup>72</sup> P.R.O., FO 84/1514, J. Kirk to Derby, 19 Feb. 1878. On this occasion, Kirk's allegations were dismissed by an official as "mere gossip, unsupported by any evidence".

<sup>73</sup> [F Galton], "Stanley's Discoveries and the Future of Africa", *Edinburgh Rev.*, cxlvii (1878), pp. 167, 171; Forrest, *Francis Galton*, p. 120.

<sup>74</sup> A humanitarian critique would certainly have been out of character, given Galton's consistently negative observations on the indigenous peoples of southern Africa: see R. E. Fancher, "Francis Galton's African Ethnography and its Role in the Development of his Psychology", *Brit. Jl. Hist. Science*, xvi (1983), pp. 67-79.

<sup>75</sup> F. Galton, *The Art of Travel*, 2nd edn. (London, 1856), pp. iii-iv; F. Galton, *Arts of Campaigning: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at Aldershot* (London, 1855).

fications of Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* ("the savage only respects force, power, boldness and decision").<sup>76</sup>

### III

#### STANLEY AND THE VOICE OF EXETER HALL

The moral implications of Stanley's expeditions were taken very seriously by those pressure groups associated with Exeter Hall, the home of some of Britain's most influential philanthropic societies. The concerns of Exeter Hall were far from parochial; indeed, according to one observer writing in 1869, "the voice of Exeter Hall is heard over all the earth": "Exeter Hall has a fame. Since its erection, about 1831, no other place in the world has attracted such crowds of social renovators, moral philosophers, philanthropists and Christians. Of late years, almost every great measure for the amelioration of the condition of the human family has had there its inception, its progress and its triumph".<sup>77</sup>

Exeter Hall lay at the heart of a constellation of moral campaigns, from the ragged-schools movement to missionary work overseas. Two societies within its orbit took an active part in the controversies over Stanley's expeditions, especially after 1876: the Aborigines Protection Society and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>78</sup> Both these societies were concerned with matters of morality: the interest of the former lay in the welfare of indigenous peoples outside Europe, while the latter campaigned on the specific issue of slavery. Both co-ordinated worldwide networks of information, their journals — the *Colonial Intelligencer and Aborigines' Friend* and the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* — regularly reporting on developments in every continent. Both also stressed the sanctity of supposedly universal principles of freedom, humanity and justice. The Anti-Slavery Society repres-

<sup>76</sup> Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, i, p. 216.

<sup>77</sup> W. McDonnell, *Exeter Hall: A Theological Romance*, 10th edn. (Boston, 1885), p. 3. It should be emphasized that "Exeter Hall" had both a real and a symbolic existence: the term was used simultaneously, as here, to refer both to a building off the Strand in fashionable London, and to a broader movement of philanthropic concern.

<sup>78</sup> The former was established in 1837, and the latter (hereafter referred to as the Anti-Slavery Society) in 1839: A. M. and E. H. Kass, *Perfecting the World: The Life and Times of Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, 1798-1866* (Orlando, 1988), pp. 270-1; H. Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery, 1833-1870* (Columbia, 1972), pp. 65-6. A broader reassessment of the relationship and differences between the two societies before their merger in 1909 is overdue.

ented its case as an appeal to the fraternity of the human family: in the words of its motto (placed in the mouth of the subjugated slave) "Am I not a man and a brother?". The Aborigines Protection Society similarly combined ethical concern and moral paternalism: its founding aim was "to assist in protecting the defenceless and promoting the advancement of uncivilised tribes".<sup>79</sup> The literature of both societies expressed a characteristic ambivalence towards British influence overseas. On the one hand, there was condemnation of the effects of much European contact in the Americas, Australasia, the Far East and Africa, where "British enterprise and British valour have unhappily proved the means of scattering misery and devastation over many a fair portion of the globe".<sup>80</sup> On the other, however, there was a conviction that Britain could reclaim her moral virtue by espousing the values of "legitimate commerce" in place of exploitation, and civilization instead of barbarism.

Although they were remarkably critical of certain aspects of European expansion (especially where slaves, guns and alcohol were concerned), the campaigners of Exeter Hall shared many of the preconceptions of their day. Generally insisting on the indivisibility of the "human family" (in opposition to the polygenism associated with more virulent strains of racial theory), they nevertheless drew on a common currency of racial stereotypes, often making unfavourable contrasts between the Negro, the Arab and the European. Moreover, as historians of anti-slavery have pointed out, the quest for abolition of the slave trade was not entirely disinterested; indeed it was frequently used to justify the extension of British influence, as at Zanzibar in 1873. "Among colonial nations", David Davis argues, "Britain led the way in assimilating anti-slavery to an imperial self-image, linking humanitarianism in the most subtle ways to strategic and commercial interests".<sup>81</sup> Thus one of the most important moral justifications offered in Europe for the "scramble for Africa" was that it would secure the extinction of the "Arab slave trade" throughout Africa.<sup>82</sup> In its stead, there was to be "legitimate commerce", a slogan pop-

<sup>79</sup> Aborigines Protection Society, *First Annual Report* (London, 1838), p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> D. B. Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (Oxford, 1984), p. 285. See also Helly, *Livingstone's Legacy*, pp. 1-16, 45-8.

<sup>82</sup> This is not to suggest that there was unanimity on the role of Islam: see T. Prashch, "Which God for Africa? The Islamic-Christian Missionary Debate in Late-Victorian England", *Victorian Studies*, xxxiii (1989), pp. 51-73.



ularized by Exeter Hall in the 1830s and plagiarized by the advocates of the new imperialism in the 1880s. In 1890 (the year of Stanley's return from the Emin Pasha expedition) the Scottish explorer Joseph Thomson dismissed "legitimate commerce" as "magic words which give such an attractive glamour to whatever can creep under their shelter — words which have too often blinded a gullible public to the most shameful and criminal transactions".<sup>83</sup> What had begun as a catch-all solution to the problem of the slave trade ended as a justification for colonial exploitation; free trade, but on European terms.<sup>84</sup>

The campaigners of Exeter Hall were favourite subjects for those who would caricature mid-Victorian philanthropy: *Punch*, for example, claimed that "with many of the worthy people of Exeter Hall, distance is essential to love".<sup>85</sup> Although one can overstate the significance of such complaints, Exeter Hall certainly faced a number of substantial challenges to its moral authority. Its faith in the possibility of moral progress was to be severely tested by the social and philosophical sea-changes of the mid-nineteenth century. Its scientific aspirations remained largely unfulfilled, as the new science of anthropology developed in a form heavily influenced by new racial theories. The popular support for its campaigns dwindled, under the impact of broader changes in the nature of British politics and society.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, though they sapped its strength, these changes did not disarm Exeter Hall entirely. Between 1839 and 1909 the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Societies functioned as little theatres of humanitarian concern, designed to stage the moral dramas of empire.

#### *The Bible and the Blunderbuss*

The representatives of Exeter Hall maintained that the progress of geographical exploration and the spread of colonial influence only heightened the significance of their activities. The opening up of Central Africa after 1850 carried with it dangers of further

<sup>83</sup> J. Thomson, "The Results of European Intercourse with the African", *Contemporary Rev.* (Mar. 1890), p. 345.

<sup>84</sup> Curtin, *Image of Africa*, pp. 428-9; Cairns, *Prelude to Imperialism*, pp. 147-8, 238-40.

<sup>85</sup> "Exeter Hall Pets", *Punch*, vi (1844), p. 240.

<sup>86</sup> Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, pp. 240-5; B. Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa* (London, 1968), pp. 18-34; Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, p. 228.

repression and inhumanity, unless it was carefully watched.<sup>87</sup> Among African explorers, Baker, for example, came in for particular criticism in the pages of the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*. Baker's low estimation of the indigenous population of Central Africa ("a hopeless race of savages") was matched by a ruthless approach to "civilization": "the musket and the bayonet", he insisted, were necessary "precursors of permanent trade in savage countries".<sup>88</sup> After one particularly bloody episode during Baker's expedition to equatorial Africa in 1872, the *Reporter* remarked: "No doubt vengeance has been inflicted, at whatever cost, upon the provoking enemies of geographical exploration; but it may be questioned whether the way of violence is the most effectual one, even to that end".<sup>89</sup>

Although Exeter Hall congratulated Stanley on his return from Central Africa in 1872, its journals were fiercely critical of his treatment of the Bambireh in 1875: a special joint committee representing the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Societies urged the foreign office that "the murderous acts of retaliation he committed were unworthy of a man who went to Africa professedly as a pioneer of civilisation".<sup>90</sup> On Stanley's return to Europe in 1878, Exeter Hall renewed its attack. In an article headed "Geography and Massacre", the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* criticized the Royal Geographical Society for honouring Stanley with a formal reception, complaining that principles of justice and morality had been sacrificed for a "reckless passion for geographical discovery".<sup>91</sup> There were precedents for such disputes. In 1867 the Society's president, Murchison, had been one of the strongest supporters of Governor Eyre, the object of Exeter Hall's wrath following his suppression of the Jamaican insurrection; and, in 1875, the *Reporter* had taken particular exception to an article by Markham in the *Geographical Magazine*, which had painted a rather rosy picture of the condition of Chinese labourers in Peru.<sup>92</sup> However, it would be wrong to represent the geographers and

<sup>87</sup> *Colonial Intelligencer*, i (1874-8), p. 42.

<sup>88</sup> Cairns, *Prelude to Imperialism*, pp. 204-6.

<sup>89</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 1 Apr. 1873, p. 130.

<sup>90</sup> *Colonial Intelligencer*, i (1874-8), p. 357. Cf. *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 1 Oct. 1872, pp. 68-9.

<sup>91</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (Feb. 1878), p. 7. Cf. *Colonial Intelligencer*, i (1874-8), pp. 453-4.

<sup>92</sup> Semmel, *Governor Eyre Controversy*, pp. 116-17; *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 1 Sept. 1875, pp. 183-5; C. Markham, "From China to Peru", *Geograph. Mag.*, i (1874), pp. 367-70.

the philanthropists as two entirely separate constituencies. Thomas Hodgkin (1798-1866), the founder of the Aborigines Protection Society, held influential office in the Royal Geographical Society for fourteen years, as either honorary secretary or foreign secretary.<sup>93</sup> In the 1870s, when Stanley's methods were being debated, several of Hodgkin's associates continued to be active in the Society. Although Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, son of the great anti-slavery campaigner, distanced himself from the Stanley affair,<sup>94</sup> other fellows, such as the Conservative M.P. Robert Fowler (a treasurer of the Aborigines Protection Society) refused to "whitewash Stanley". In a letter to the Society's secretary, Fowler insisted that Stanley's "heartless butchery of unfortunate natives has brought dishonour on the British flag and must have rendered the course of future travellers more perilous and difficult".<sup>95</sup>

Perhaps the most important intermediary between the Geographical Society and Exeter Hall was Waller, who was also an influential figure within the Anti-Slavery Society. A critic of Stanley in 1872, Waller condemned Stanley's methods in both 1876-8 and 1890-1. Waller was probably instrumental in securing an official inquiry into missionary reports concerning Stanley's treatment of native populations. The investigation into these allegations was conducted by none other than his brother-in-law Kirk. Stanley was charged with excessive violence, wanton destruction, the selling of labourers into slavery, the sexual exploitation of native women and the plundering of villages for ivory and canoes. Kirk's report to the foreign office (which was never published) held nothing back: "if the story of this expedition were known it would stand in the annals of African discovery unequalled for the reckless use of power that modern weapons placed in his hands over natives who never before heard a gun fired".<sup>96</sup>

Throughout the controversies of 1876-8, Stanley's Exeter Hall

<sup>93</sup> Kass and Kass, *Perfecting the World*, pp. 454-5, 507.

<sup>94</sup> R.H., Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Societies MSS. (hereafter A.-S., A.P.S.), MS. C127/132-3, T. F. Buxton to F. Chesson, 28 Nov. 1877, 26 Jan. 1878; Yule and Hyndman, *Henry M. Stanley*, p. 41.

<sup>95</sup> R.H., A.-S., A.P.S., MS. C134/88, R. N. Fowler to F. Chesson, 5 Feb. 1878; C153/194, R. N. Fowler to H. W. Bates, 29 Jan. 1878; J. Flynn, *Sir Robert N. Fowler, M.P.: A Memoir* (London, 1893), pp. 73-6.

<sup>96</sup> P.R.O., FO 84/1514, J. Kirk to Derby, 1 May 1878; R.H., A.-S., A.P.S., MS. G2, J. Farler to A. Buzacott, 28 Dec. 1877.

adversaries exploited the gulf between his claims to high moral purpose and the “policy of terrorism and revenge” apparently adopted towards the Bambireh; as one critic put it, “The blunderbuss may be an admirable weapon, and the Bible is a noble element in civilisation. But when the two are combined, the effect is a little incongruous”.<sup>97</sup> Stanley, meanwhile, ridiculed any suggestion that expeditions could proceed without any thought of defensive preparations.<sup>98</sup> At the same time he claimed the moral credentials proper to a close ally of Livingstone, the saint of the British anti-slavery movement. In 1884 and 1885 he appeared at large anti-slavery meetings in Manchester and London, sharing platforms with leading figures from Exeter Hall.<sup>99</sup> Stanley’s involvement in the anti-slavery movement at this time must be seen in the context of deliberations at the Berlin Congress which resulted in the establishment of the “Congo Free State” under King Leopold’s authority. For both Stanley and the Anti-Slavery Society associated themselves with the principle of legitimate commerce; and, more specifically, both opposed the extension of Portuguese sovereignty in the area of the Congo. Given the lofty philanthropic tone which surrounded the Congo Free State, it is perhaps unsurprising that the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* should welcome Stanley’s account of its foundation, published in 1885.<sup>100</sup>

### *The “Congo Atrocities”*

Exeter Hall was initially quite willing to associate itself with Stanley’s last expedition (1887-90), the ostensible purpose of which was the relief of Emin Pasha, then under threat from the Mahdist movement following the collapse of Egyptian authority in the Sudan. On his return to London in 1890, Stanley was given a hero’s welcome. Scientists, politicians, monarchs and philanthropists showered their congratulations upon him at countless banquets and receptions, including those of the Royal Geographical Society (held in the Albert Hall) and the London Chamber

<sup>97</sup> Ritchie, *David Livingstone*, ii, pp. 191, 197.

<sup>98</sup> In 1878 Stanley was said to have challenged the “Exeter Hall Party” to mount a trans-African expedition armed only with “seven tons of Bibles, four tons of Prayer-books, any number of surplices, and a church organ into the bargain”: *Colonial Intelligence*, i (1874-8), p. 455.

<sup>99</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 5 Nov. 1884, pp. 203-21; *ibid.* (July-Aug. 1885), pp. 417-35.

<sup>100</sup> Stanley, *Congo and the Founding of its Free State*; *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 20 June 1885, pp. 401-6. See also Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, pp. 305-6.

of Commerce. A committee of Americans resident in Britain, organized by Henry Wellcome, presented Stanley with a trophy depicting the African continent superimposed on an American flag.<sup>101</sup> Yet this spirit of triumphalism was not to last. At the very moment of Stanley's return, leading figures in the Anti-Slavery Society were expressing concern at reports of the transportation of unfree labourers from Zanzibar to the Congo. Waller, Stanley's old adversary, had no doubts that this was nothing less than "winked-at slavery"; as he privately declared in January 1890, "The raw slave life is dragged from Nyassaland, worked upon in the Zanzibar mill and exported in British steamers to the Congo, there to be used up as Stanley used it up".<sup>102</sup> It was as a result of Waller's pressure that Alfred Pease (a sympathetic M.P.) was asked to raise the issue in the House of Commons. Stanley's reaction was typical: stung by the criticism, he launched a violent counter-attack on "Quakerism, Peace Societies . . . and namby-pamby journalism". This had the effect of widening the growing gulf between Stanley and the anti-slavery campaigners; the *Reporter* began to publish more critical pieces on labour in the Congo, largely at the instigation of Waller.<sup>103</sup>

In the course of 1890, further revelations about the Emin Pasha expedition irreparably damaged Stanley's reputation at Exeter Hall. Following the publication of Stanley's *In Darkest Africa*, several conflicting accounts of the expedition appeared, questioning the integrity and judgement of its leader: one of his assistants, for example, complained that Stanley "has no more philanthropy than my boot".<sup>104</sup> Particular attention was paid to the experiences of the ill-fated rear column, whose men were left to starve at Yambuya. The Anti-Slavery Society, meanwhile, attributed many of the failures of the expedition to Stanley's co-operation with Hamid Ibn Muhammad, the slave-trader known to Europe as Tippoo Tib, who had been asked to supply the rear

<sup>101</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 2 June 1890; Wellcome Foundation, London, Wellcome Archives, H. S. Wellcome Letter Book 2, H. Wellcome to W. Curtis, 20 Mar. 1890; Brit. Lib., Stanley MSS., RP 2435 (ii), "Emin Pasha Relief Expedition Papers".

<sup>102</sup> R.H., A.-S., A.P.S., MS. C69, H. Waller to C. H. Allen, 21 Jan. 1890. Cf. H. Waller, *Ivory, Apes and Peacocks: An African Contemplation* (London, 1891).

<sup>103</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (May-June 1890), pp. 81-8; R.H., A.-S., A.P.S., Anti-Slavery Society Minute Book, 2 May, 6 June, 4 July 1890.

<sup>104</sup> J. Bierman, *Dark Safari: The Life behind the Legend of Henry Morton Stanley* (London, 1991), p. 325.

column on the Lower Congo.<sup>105</sup> The Aborigines Protection Society, free from any involvement in the expedition from the start, broadened the attack to consider its overall spirit and purpose. It condemned not only the employment of Tippoo Tib, but also the use of virtual slaves as soldiers, the floggings inflicted on the journey up the Congo, the slaughter of natives and the burning of their villages.<sup>106</sup> A well-attended meeting at the Westminster Palace Hotel in December 1890 gave further stimulus to the campaign over the “Congo atrocities”, as they were now being called. The meeting, chaired by Fowler (a Conservative critic of Stanley in 1878) heard loud condemnations of what was widely regarded as a military expedition rather than a journey of exploration. Only one speaker — Wellcome — spoke in Stanley’s defence, arguing that the employment of slaves and flogging of miscreants was unexceptional among African explorers, including Livingstone himself. Wellcome insisted that “Stanley never killed natives if he could buy peace . . . Far from being a heartless murderer [he had exercised] masterful self-control and justice”.<sup>107</sup>

The charges against Stanley were developed in a substantial tract published in 1891 by Henry Fox Bourne, the secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, entitled *The Other Side of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition*. Not content with the now routine allegations of “wanton slaughtering and village-burning”, Fox-Bourne asserted (as historians have since argued) that the covert functions of Stanley’s expedition included the acquisition of territory for the British East Africa Company (which, through William Mackinnon, Stanley’s chief sponsor, became closely associated with the expedition), and the extension of Leopold’s influence in Central Africa, which required negotiations with Tippoo Tib.<sup>108</sup> This vision of his “empire-making errand” was shared by many others; indeed, not for the first time, Stanley was described as a

<sup>105</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (Jan.-Feb. 1891), pp. 12, 36; R.H., A.-S., A.P.S., MS. C98, H. Waller to E. Sturge, 13 Nov. 1890; W. Samarin, *The Black Man’s Burden: African Colonial Labour on the Congo and Ubangi Rivers, 1880-1900* (Boulder, Colo., 1989), pp. 103-4.

<sup>106</sup> *Aborigines’ Friend* (Dec. 1890), pp. 89-100.

<sup>107</sup> R.G.S., Stanley MSS., 10/2, [H. Wellcome], “Draft Notes in Defence of Mr. Stanley”; *Aborigines’ Friend* (Apr. 1891), pp. 155-64. Wellcome’s speech challenged widely held assumptions about the relationship between Livingstone and his African “faithfuls”. In editing Livingstone’s *Last Journals*, Waller had expunged references to his physical punishment of servants and porters: Helly, *Livingstone’s Legacy*, pp. 163-73.

<sup>108</sup> H. R. Fox Bourne, *The Other Side of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition* (London, 1891), pp. 45-6, 75. See also R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 212-25; Smith, *Emin Pasha Relief Expedition*.



3. Frontispiece to D. J. Nicoll, *Stanley's Exploits: or Civilising Africa* (Aberdeen, 1890).

(Photo: by kind permission of the British Library, London)

*conquistador*.<sup>109</sup> Radical liberals, socialists and anarchists, including Hyndman, William Morris and David Nicoll, portrayed Stanley's "empire-making errand" in economic as well as moral and political terms.<sup>110</sup> (See Plate 3.) Such charges were to become part

<sup>109</sup> C. Chaillé-Long, *L'Égypte et ses provinces perdues* (Paris, 1892), pp. 4, 199-234; *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (Feb. 1878), p. 7.

<sup>110</sup> H. M. Hyndman, *General Booth's Book Refuted* (London, 1890), p. 4; W. Morris, *News from Nowhere*, in *Collected Works of William Morris*, 24 vols. (London, 1910-15), xvi, pp. 94-5; D. J. Nicoll, *Stanley's Exploits: or Civilising Africa* (Aberdeen, 1890).

of the standard armoury of critics of the new imperialism during the next two decades. Leopold's Congo state provided them with the paradigm case of a system of imperialism based on the appropriation of land and labour through powers of monopoly.<sup>111</sup>

By the time Fox Bourne published his indictment of Leopold's State, *Civilisation in Congoland*, in 1903, a much broader campaign was underway to draw public attention to the situation in Central Africa, through the work of the Congo Reform Association and the writings of Edmund Morel, such as *The Congo Slave State* (1903) and *Red Rubber* (1906). At the start of 1890, however, Leopold's Congo state had the official sanction of the international community (at the Berlin and Brussels conferences, for example),<sup>112</sup> as well as the support of the anti-slavery lobby. It was the campaign against Stanley's "Congo atrocities" in 1890 which marked the turning-point in English liberalism's attitude towards Leopold's state. The Aborigines Protection and Anti-Slavery Societies were increasingly to argue that slavery, though ostensibly outlawed in the Congo, was being practised under another name; and that beneath its cover of a "civilizing" mission, Leopold's state was becoming a "vast field of havoc and spoliation".<sup>113</sup>

#### IV CONCLUSIONS

You may say that by our commercial relations with African tribes we must surely have let in light. I reply, if it be so, it is the blaze of the burning village, or the flash of the Winchester rifle — at best it is the glare from the smoke-stack of the Congo steamer bearing away tons upon tons of ivory.<sup>114</sup>

This paper has been concerned with some of the controversies surrounding probably the most controversial explorer of his age. For many of his critics, Stanley was the symbol of a new, brash approach to exploration. Within the geographical establishment,

<sup>111</sup> Samarin, *Black Man's Burden*, pp. 41-60; J. Stengers and J. Vansina, "King Leopold's Congo, 1886-1908", in R. Oliver and G. Sanderson (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vi (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 315-58.

<sup>112</sup> S. Cooke, *Britain and the Congo Question, 1885-1913* (New York, 1968), pp. 22-5. Nevertheless the British foreign office was aware as early as 1884 of allegations concerning the involvement of Leopold's agents in the business of slavery: see Oliver, *Sir Harry Johnston*, pp. 47-9.

<sup>113</sup> H. R. Fox Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland* (London, 1903), p. 303. On Morel, see Porter, *Critics of Empire*, pp. 254-90.

<sup>114</sup> Waller, *Ivory, Apes and Peacocks*, p. 88.



his style was clearly seen as a threat: it promised a popular, commercial and “sensational” geography. For Exeter Hall, his methods amounted to nothing less than “exploration by warfare”, betraying a frame of mind which inspired the worst excesses of the new imperialism of the 1880s and 1890s. Stanley’s geographical and philanthropic critics converged at one point, the symbolic centre of so many contemporary debates over exploration and empire: the myth of Livingstone. To them, Stanley was everything that Livingstone was not. If Livingstone’s tact and moderation had left behind him “a track of light where the white man who follows . . . is in perfect safety”, Stanley had surrounded himself with “an atmosphere of terror created by the free use of fire and the sword”. Where Livingstone brought light, Stanley brought corruption; as one critic put it in 1878, “he, in fact, will act as a dark shadow to throw up the brightness of Livingstone’s fame”.<sup>115</sup> Even Stanley himself played on the distinction between his methods and Livingstone’s: “Each man has his own way. His, I think, had its defects, though the old man, personally, has been almost Christ-like for goodness, patience, and self-sacrifice. The selfish and wooden-headed world requires mastering, as well as loving charity; for man is a composite of the spiritual and earthly”.<sup>116</sup> It is tempting to paint this contrast on a broader canvas, as the difference between two styles of cultural imperialism. Stanley’s famous encounter with Livingstone at Ujiji in 1871 might thus be seen as a moment of transition: the old imperialism giving way to the new. At the same time, Stanley’s methods of exploration seem to blur so profoundly the distinction between geography and warfare as to make it almost unrecognizable; as has been well observed, all his expeditions were “invasions . . . designed to overcome resistance, whether from the terrain or from its inhabitants, and to come back with a trophy”.<sup>117</sup> While Stanley’s missions were not directly controlled by political interests (aside from his work for Leopold), he was not slow to associate them with the advancement of strategic interests — the British in East Africa and the Sudan, the Belgians in the Congo, and even the Americans in Zanzibar. The sheer variety of the political claims on Stanley suggests that he did not represent the

<sup>115</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (Nov. 1878), pp. 118-19.

<sup>116</sup> *Autobiography of Henry M. Stanley*, ed. Stanley, p. 295.

<sup>117</sup> *The Diary of A. J. Mounteney Jephson, Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, 1887-1889*, ed. D. Middleton (Cambridge, 1969), p. 8.

interests of any empire in particular: he was instead a pioneer of the new imperialism in general. Like Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, perhaps, “all Europe contributed” to his making.<sup>118</sup>

If Stanley was a popular symbol of the new imperialism, the sheer scale of contemporary controversy over his expeditions suggests that the motives and methods of European expansion were far more vigorously debated than has frequently been suggested. During the 1870s, as we have seen, the Royal Geographical Society found itself at the centre of a storm over Stanley’s treatment of the indigenous populations of Central Africa: while the most influential of its fellows attempted to minimize the intrusion of “politics” into their proceedings, some insisted that the charges against Stanley raised fundamental questions of principle. This was certainly the position of Exeter Hall, whose condemnation of “exploration by warfare” found some echoes even within the Society itself. By 1890, however, the contours of controversy had changed shape: the Geographical Society, for example, appears to have played little part in the controversies surrounding the Emin Pasha expedition. Elsewhere, questions over Stanley’s role in the Congo were setting in motion a campaign that would pave the way for a broader critique of imperialism. While this would culminate in new theories and a new politics, it also articulated a continuing concern with the moral dimensions of European expansion. For even at the height of geography’s colonial past, there were those who refused the easy equation between exploration and progress. The critical response to Stanley’s expeditions suggests an altogether different perspective. “Exploration under these conditions is, in fact, exploration plus buccaneering”, warned the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1878, “and though the map may be improved and enlarged by the process, the cause of civilisation is not a gainer thereby, but a loser”.<sup>119</sup>

*Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London* Felix Driver

<sup>118</sup> J. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. R. Kimbrough (New York, 1988), p. 50.

<sup>119</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 Feb. 1878.

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### [Footnotes]

<sup>19</sup> **Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent**

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