GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Walking along a Bergen street in 2012, I was startled to see the 'Dr. Livingstone Travellers' Café'. On investigation, it certainly referred to *that* Dr. Livingstone. Even in Norway, the name of Livingstone seemed to conjure up the notion of travel, not to mention solid food on a restricted budget. Such is the universality of the Livingstone 'brand'. It leads me to think that, although Justin Livingstone's essay in 'metabiography' is inevitably and properly restricted to Anglophone and mainly British (with one or two excursions into the Caribbean, South Africa and elsewhere) representations of the Livingstone life and reputation, it is almost certainly the case that another book could be constructed out of his profile in territories of the former British Empire, throughout Europe, and in other international settings. As in Bergen, Livingstone and journeys have become synonymous, well illustrated by advertisements from travel companies such as Voyages Jules Verne.

But it is a special pleasure for me to write the general editor's introduction to *this* book. When I came to consider Livingstone in the context of imperial propaganda over twenty years ago, it soon became apparent that the 'afterlife' was for me more interesting than the life itself (although the two cannot of course be entirely disconnected). For this afterlife was indeed extraordinary. I could think of few other historical figures who had been the subject of so many biographies, who had maintained a posthumous reputation over such a lengthy period, and whose name had been bent to so many causes, political and religious, social and scientific. As Justin Livingstone points out, it is indeed remarkable that the almost inevitable 'debunking' process only really began one hundred years after Livingstone's death. Lytton Strachey had dealt with more recently prominent personalities in 1918. The attack upon the reputation of T.E. Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia, had occurred a mere twenty years after his death with the publication of Richard Aldington's *Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Enquiry* in 1955. Yet, in 2013, the bicentennial of the birth of Livingstone, his prominence seems to have been re-established in a whole range of fields. His medical and scientific legacy has been seriously reviewed by some distinguished practitioners in these fields. And the respect in which he is held in many parts of Africa has been re-emphasised even as others have sought to attack or at the very least reinterpret his reputation and significance.

Biography is of course a highly attractive form. It is, as has often been pointed out, the nearest non-fictional form of writing to fiction itself.

GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

It is a story, re-created as an imaginative narrative, with a clearly linear form from birth (beginnings) through the life (achievements, failings, controversies, reputations) to the death (the climactic ending). It sweeps up, and often illuminates the lives of, an entire cast of characters drawn from both the obscure and the famous. Through the connections between the central figure and these other 'cast members', the subject's character and activities are developed and explored. It is also clearly related to the travel narrative since a life involves a journey from birth to death, with personality development, relationships with others (often including marriage and procreation), with the intellectual, spiritual, creative and emotional landscapes encountered en route. Invariably, there is also a strong element of visibility. A life is imaginatively envisioned through both text and images, through events, encounters and topographical contexts. Livingstone's life includes all of these aspects in heightened form, as well as constituting a genuine and highly dramatic travel narrative which, as in the Bergen café, has made his name synonymous with such journeying. But in addition to all of that, Livingstone's life carried on beyond the death at Ilala in Zambia. He became, in many senses, an ancestor figure, a patron saint, a touchstone, a court of appeal, also an object of abuse, to so many causes. His life is so closely connected to central issues of recent history, to 'exploration' (a term which has itself been subjected to much complex reconsiderations), to Christian missionary endeavour, to colonialism and imperialism, to race relations, to Western scientific and medical developments, to European cultural appropriation and proselytism throughout the world, to decolonisation, neo-colonialism and all sorts of intellectual processes, as well as the global political and social arrangements through which all of these are expressed.

Justin Livingstone's book considers many of these uses and abuses of Livingstone through the technique of 'metabiography'. Indeed, this book is so significant that it considerably develops this methodology as a key approach to the cultural, social and political embedding of biographical production. It contains much that is entirely new even in the apparently over-developed Livingstone biographical industry. We have here an analysis of Livingstone's book *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* which breaks new ground in considering the hand-written manuscript of the book, its relationship to the published version and the correspondence with the publisher through which it was formed for public consumption. There is an extensive analysis of the way in which the extraordinary death rites can be connected with Victorian concepts and 'production' of the drama and instrumentality of mourning. Moreover, the moulding of Livingstone's reputation is considered in terms of the imposition and development

GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

of late nineteenth-century imperialism as well as the emergence of a Scottish cultural and historical renaissance in the period. And, intriguingly, there is a highly original consideration of the ways in which Livingstone has indeed been considered in various forms of fiction and both didactic and satirical entertainment. Yet the Livingstone afterlife is so protean that much remains to be done. As well as the additional book I proposed in my opening paragraph, we can still explore the ways in which the name of Livingstone has been repeatedly invoked, often in wholly contrary causes, in so many controversies associated with empire and its demise in the twentieth century, with cultural and political issues in the United Kingdom in the same period, and in the identities formed in the Scottish diaspora throughout the world. But in all of these there can be no doubt at all that this book constitutes a key text which all future writers on Livingstone will have to take note of. It is indeed high time that we should junk that fateful reviewer's 'famous last word', 'definitive', but there are still books which define the current state of play. This is one of them.

John M. MacKenzie