Selling Captain Riley, 1816–1859: How Did His 'Narrative' Become So Well Known?

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James Riley's extraordinary tale of shipwreck, enslavement, and liberation captivated many American readers in the nineteenth century and does so again in the twenty-first. Generally known by the spine title, *Capt. Riley's Narrative* (or *Riley's Narrative*), the book tells of peril on the high seas in 1815, of shipwreck on the northwest African coast, slavery in the Sahara, sale in mid-desert to an Arab merchant interested in ransoming Riley and four crewmen, and an arduous and perilous journey to freedom in Morocco.[1]

I owe a deep debt to the many good folk at the American Antiquarian Society (AAS) who over the years have advised me on what has been a nagging research hobby. I must mention in particular the friendly encouragement, generous advice, and positive help given to me there by the late Bill Gilmore-Lehne. More recently I have benefited hugely from the interest, advice, and detailed suggestions of James Green of the Library Company of Philadelphia, who drew my attention to many of the sources named below. I am also grateful for practical help and advice to Dean King, Joyce Alig, Richard Morgan, and an anonymous reviewer for this journal.

1. James Riley, *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig Commerce, Wrecked on the Western Coast of Africa, in the Month of August, 1815, With the Sufferings of her Surviving Officers and Crew, Who were Enslaved by the Wandering Arabs on the Great African Desart, or Zahahrah . . .* (New York: For the Author, by T. and W. Mercein, 1817). The tale has been intelligently, accurately, and sensitively retold in Dean King, *Skeletons on the Zahara: a True Story of Survival* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2004), which reached the top three on the *San Francisco Chronicle's* nonfiction bestsellers' list in 2005 and received the 2005 People's Choice Award for Non-fiction, given by the Library of Virginia and James River Writers. A television program based on the book was shown in the United States on the History Channel in October 2006.

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Recent cultural historians have emphasized its significance as 'the most important and influential of all American Barbary narratives,' and commonly regard it as one of the most widely known texts of the period between its publication in 1817 and the Civil War.[2] In 1851 two Ohio publishers claimed that probably no book 'ever published made so striking and permanent an impression upon the minds of those that read it,' and in 1860 Abraham Lincoln's campaign biography called it one of six books that had influenced him most deeply.[3]

How are we to explain its extraordinary reach and impact in the antebellum period?

The obvious answer is that Riley's book was a great bestseller: we are regularly told that one million copies had been sold in the United States by either 1851 or 1859. That figure is based on a claim by the publishers of the *Sequel to Riley's Narrative*, which his youngest son produced in 1851. They asserted that 'the Narrative . . . has been read by more than a *million* now living in these United States'—note *read*, not purchased—and that 'probably no book that was ever published, in this or any other country,

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The most widely available modern text in hard copy is unreliable, has an inaccurate introduction, and omits one-third of the original text: Gordon H. Evans, ed., *Sufferings in Africa: Captain Riley's Narrative* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1965), reprinted as *Sufferings in Africa: The Astonishing Account of a New England Sea Captain Enslaved by North African Arabs* (New York: The Lyons Press, 2000) and *Sufferings in Africa: The Amazing True Story of an Irish-American [sic] Enslaved in North Africa* (n.p.: The Long Riders' Guild Press, [c.2000]). More recently, an online version of the original, revised text of the 1850 edition has been made available as part of the Starpath's Antique Library http://www.starpath.com/catalog/books/1728.htm. An accurate reprint of the 1818 text (corrected by Riley) is being prepared by Dean King.

2. Robert J. Allison, review in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 57 (2000): 459–61, quotation at 460. See also, in particular, Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776–1815* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 210–25; Paul Baepler, 'The Barbary Captivity Narrative in Early America,' *Early American Literature* 30 (1995): 95–120; and Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1–58.

3. W. Willshire Riley, *Sequel to Riley's Narrative: Being a Sketch of the Interesting Incidents in the Life, Voyages and Travels of Capt. James Riley, From the Period of his Return to his Native Land after his Shipwreck, Captivity and Sufferings among the Arabs of the Desert, As Related in his Narrative, Until his Death* (Columbus. Ohio: George Brewster and Springfield, Ohio: A. R. Wright, 1851), iv; Gerald R. McMurtry, 'The Influence of Riley's Narrative upon Abraham Lincoln,' *Indiana Magazine of History* 30 (1934): 133–38; Douglas L. Wilson, *Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 55, 330.

obtained so extensive a circulation, in so short a period, as did that Narrative.'[4] But such claims were at best a guess, for what hard evidence did they (or do we) have of readership, any more than of the sales of books before 1850? If, in reality, only fifty thousand copies of the book (at most) were printed before the Civil War, how did Riley and his tale come to be so well known among the American public? And if the book was not readily available, what implication does that have for our understanding of the place of this text in the cultural history of the time? Does what has been said recently about its cultural significance, most notably about its impact on antislavery attitudes, really stand up?

That Captain Riley and his story were well known in antebellum America is undeniable. The notorious wizard of the smoke-filled lobby, Thurlow Weed, in his youth had a hand in the first printing of the *Narrative* in New York City in 1816. Many years later Weed recalled that Riley's 'work was a great success, keeping its author before the public for fifteen or twenty years.'[5] From the first appearance of the *Narrative*, the press regaled the public with stories and issues related to it. For example, some newspapers advocated that William Willshire, the British consul at Mogadore who had ransomed Riley and four of his men, should receive not merely the thanks of Congress but also a medal. Instead, it was announced in 1819 that a public meeting in New York had raised a subscription to present

4. W. W. Riley, *Sequel*, iv–v. The figure of one million is repeated in various works that use Riley: Baepler, 'Barbary Captivity Narrative,' 115, and *White Slaves, African Masters*, 2; Allison, *Crescent Obscured*, 220; Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Republic: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 93; Ann Fabian, *The Unvarnished Truth: Personal Narratives in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 192–93, n.64; Paul Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 239; Myra C. Glenn, 'Forging Manhood and Nationhood Together: American Sailors' Accounts of their Exploits, Sufferings, and Resistance in the Antebellum United States,' *American Nineteenth-Century History* 8 (2007): 35. The misuse of the one-million figure may be traced back to McMurtry, 'Influence of Riley's Narrative upon Lincoln,' 137.

5. 'Autobiography of Thurlow Weed,' in Harriet A. Weed and Thurlow Weed Barnes, eds., *Life of Thurlow Weed*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1883–84), 1: 58.

Willshire with a piece of commemorative plate.[6] In that same year newspapers widely reported how Riley, taking his family west on the National Road, had been robbed in the Alleghenies by a marauding gang of Irish laborers. Ought not American travellers be free from falling in with such 'Turks and Algerines?'[7] In 1824 it was newsworthy in the East that Riley had been elected a member of the Ohio General Assembly, and his letter recounting his attempt to found a settlement on the western margins of Ohio was widely reprinted in the belief that it was 'truly interesting' to discover how this 'man of noble fortitude, still struggling with difficulties,' was 'laboring to establish his future comfort and repose.'[8]

These news reports are striking because they often did not bother to explain who Riley was. He became simply 'Captain Riley *the Traveller*' in the New York *Daily Advertiser* in 1819, and 'the celebrated Captain Riley' in Cooperstown in 1824. When in 1818 a 'Mr. Byrnes' [Burns] tried to shoot a troublesome cat but accidentally killed a neighbor, he was identified in the press only as someone who had 'traversed the desert of Saharah with Captain Riley.' Another man who died at the age of twenty-nine in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1820 was described in Pennsylvania only as 'one of the companions in suffering with Captain Riley.'[9] Two 1833 references assume continuing familiarity with Riley, with a Newport, Rhode Island, newspaper describing him simply as

6. *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D. C.), September 5, 1817; *Farmer's Cabinet* (Amherst, N. H.), September 20, 1817; *American Beacon* (Norfolk, Va.), January 1, 1819; *National Standard* (Middlebury, Vt.), January 13, 1819. See also *Western Monitor* (Lexington, Ky.), July 12, 1817.

7. *Philadelphia Union* in, for example, *Essex Patriot* (Haverhill, Mass.), August 28, 1819, and *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, N. Y.), August 30, 1819.

8. *Commercial Gazette* (Boston), January 5, 1824; *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia) in *Newburyport Herald*, August 3, 1824. For Riley's sojourn in Ohio, 1819–26, see Joyce Alig, *Ohio's Last Frontiersman, Connecticut Mariner Captain James Riley* (Celina, Ohio: Mercer County Historical Society, 1997), 97–203; Donald J. Ratcliffe, 'The Strange Career of Captain Riley,' *Timeline* 3, no. 4 (1986): 36–49.

9. *New-York Daily Advertiser*, September 11, 1819; *Watch-Tower* (Cooperstown, N.Y.), August 31, 1824; *Pittsfield* (Mass.) *Sun*, December 2, 1818; *Village Record* (Westchester, Pa.), August 23, 1820.

'this celebrated voyager,' and the leading Washington newspaper, the *National Intelligencer*, mentioning in passing the useful contribution made to the cause of colonization in Liberia by Riley, whose name is 'so well known to the public.'[10] As late as 1835 people clustered around when Riley turned up in Washington salons and chatted about his adventures, and he continued to receive fan mail from the most unlikely places. As his son remarked in 1851, eleven years after Riley's death, 'No private citizen of this country, whose name has been altogether unattended by any official station to give him consequence in the opinion of the world, has made himself so extensively or so favorably known, as has Capt. Riley.'[11]

One indication of popular awareness was the rapid appearance of a whole sub-genre defined by its close relationship to the *Narrative*. In 1817 Archibald Robbins, a member of Riley's crew who had been redeemed from slavery in Africa nearly a year after Riley, published a short book extending Riley's account; its prospectus and title page carefully justified its publication by specific reference to the public's interest in Riley's story.[12] Similarly, an elderly sea captain, Judah Paddock, who had had a similar experience of captivity fifteen years earlier in the same part of Africa but had hesitated to commit his tale to print, was persuaded by Riley's friends to write up and publish his very different, but compatible, account in 1818.[13] Other, apparently far-distant, works added to the Riley canon: when the Frenchman Charles Cochelet, ancient

10. *Newport Mercury*, November 11, 1833; *National Intelligencer*, September 21, 1833.

11. Margaret Bayard Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society, 1800–1840*, ed. Gaillard Hunt (London, 1906), 367, 372; W.W. Riley, *Sequel*, 326, 383–86.

12. Archibald Robbins, *A Journal Comprising an Account of the Loss of the Brig Commerce, of Hartford (Con.) James Riley, Master, Upon the Western Coast of Africa, August 26th, 1815, Also of the Slavery and Sufferings of the Author and the Rest of the Crew, Upon the Desert of Zahara, in the Years 1815, 1816, 1817* . . . (Hartford: Printed by F.D. Bolles, 1817). An online copy of an 1818 Hartford edition may be purchased at <http://www.starpath.com/catalog/books/1738.htm.> Examples of the prospectus may be found in the *Southern Patriot* (Charleston, S. C.), August 1, 1817, and the Mount Vernon *Ohio Register*, from November 5, 1817, to January 7, 1818.

13. Judah Paddock, *A Narrative of the Shipwreck of the Ship Oswego, on the Coast of South Barbary: and of the Sufferings of the Master and the Crew while in Bondage among the Arabs* . . . (New York: James Riley, 1818).

paymaster-general in Catalonia, was shipwrecked, as Riley had been, near Cape Bajador in northwestern Africa and suffered captivity in the Sahara, his careful account not only supplemented Riley's but corrected it in detail as to persons and places. This book, published in London in 1822, simply took Riley as a reference point that all would recognize, while American newspapers welcomed the opportunity the new book provided 'of testing the account of each by the other.'[14]

As one consequence of this awareness, people and places were given names prominent in the *Narrative*. Riley named a town he founded in western Ohio in 1822 Willshire, honoring the British consul who had ransomed him from slavery, and in the same state an unrelated person named a township Mogadore, for the place in Morocco (now Essaouira) where Riley was ransomed. In 1820 one South Carolinian christened his son Sidi Hamet for Riley's master and protector in the Sahara, while in western New York in 1824 the Butterfield family named a child, who later became a well-known historian of the early West, Consul Willshire. These people and places remained for subsequent generations reminders of Riley's tale.[15]

Indeed, for some decades, Riley could be referred to in literary works with no explanation as to who he was or what he had done. In 1828 the Cincinnati-based writer Timothy Flint invoked Riley in the introduction to his novel *The Life and Adventures of Arthur Clenning*. He remarked that he had 'perceived in all parts of the western country how universally, and with what prodigious interest, the adventures of Captain Riley were read,' and for a time thought of producing a 'second edition' of Riley's life and adventures. Then by chance he had stumbled across Clenning's unpublished journals

14. Charles Cochelet, *Narrative of the Shipwreck of the Sophia, on the 30th May, 1819, on the Western Coast of Africa, and of the Captivity of a Part of the Crew in the Desert of Sahara* (London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co., 1822); Philadelphia *National Gazette*, August 19, 1820, and *Alexandria* (Va.) *Gazette*, August 28, 1820.

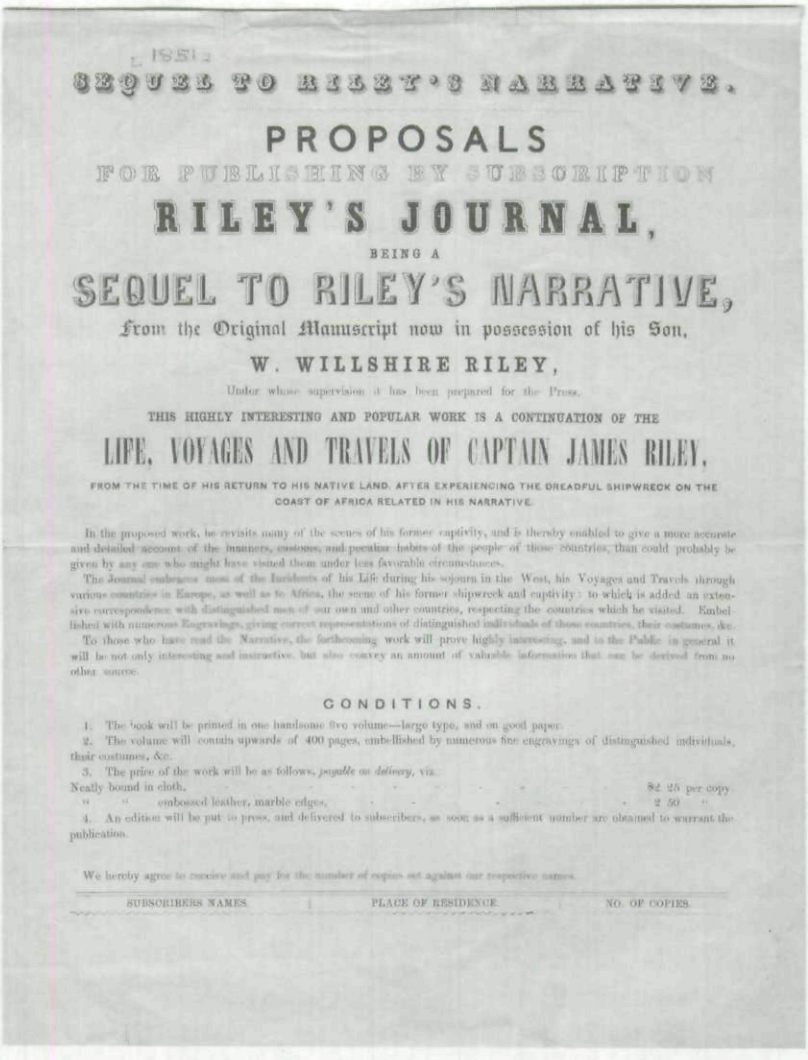
15. Elijah Brown to James Riley, Varennes, S.C., February 15, 1822, in W. W. Riley, *Sequel*, 387–88; for Butterfield (1824–99), see William Coyle, *Ohio Authors and Their Books, 1796–1950* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1962), 94.

and found them equally worth reading. So, by this fictional device Flint attempts to seduce readers into embarking on an incredible farrago of fabulous adventures. More casually, James Fenimore Cooper's novel *Homeward Bound* (1838) told how the Effinghams, on a voyage home from Europe, found their ship sailing ominously close to the northwest African coast. When the captain was finally confident that the ship was safe, he confessed that anyone following a more leeward course would indeed have been wrecked on that treacherous shore—and so 'plump up among the Mohammedans, beginning to reduce to a feather-weight, like Captain Riley, who came out with just his skin and bones, after a journey across the desert.' A quarter century later in *Cape Cod* (1864), Henry David Thoreau described walking across several miles of pure sand, with little vegetation visible, and 'many a time as we were traversing it we were reminded of "Riley's Narrative" of his captivity in the sands of Arabia, notwithstanding the cold.'[16] Accounts such as this indicate some of the ways in which Riley's book had become one of the most widely recognized stories of the antebellum period—as the advertisement for his son's 1851 *Sequel to Riley's Narrative* clearly assumed (Fig. 1).[17]

Yet it is far from clear that Riley gained this recognition because large numbers of his book were printed, even though more than twenty editions appeared in the United States between 1817 and 1859. Frank Luther Mott, in his historical study of American bestsellers, suggested that *Riley's Narrative* probably sold fewer

16. *The Life and Adventures of Arthur Clenning*, By the Author of 'Recollections of Ten Years in the Valley of the Mississippi' [Timothy Flint], 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Towar and Hogan, 1828), 1:9; J. Fenimore Cooper, *Homeward Bound*, 3 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1838), 2: 31–45, quotation on p.45; Henry D. Thoreau, *Cape Cod* (1864; reprint ed., 2 vols., Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1904), 2: 102. I owe the Cooper reference to the kindness of Wayne Franklin.

17. *Sequel to Riley's Narrative: Proposals for publishing by subscription Riley's Journal, Being a Sequel to Riley's Narrative* [Columbus, Ohio: s.n., 1851], broadsides, AAS; W. W. Riley, *Sequel*, iv–v, 326.



[1851]

SEQUEL TO RILEY'S NARRATIVE.

PROPOSALS

FOR PUBLISHING BY SUBSCRIPTION

RILEY'S JOURNAL,

BEING A

SEQUEL TO RILEY'S NARRATIVE,

From the Original Manuscript now in possession of his Son,

W. WILLSHIRE RILEY,

Under whose supervision it has been prepared for the Press.

THIS HIGHLY INTERESTING AND POPULAR WORK IS A CONTINUATION OF THE

LIFE, VOYAGES AND TRAVELS OF CAPTAIN JAMES RILEY,

FROM THE TIME OF HIS RETURN TO HIS NATIVE LAND, AFTER EXPERIENCING THE DREADFUL SHIPWRECK ON THE COAST OF AFRICA RELATED IN HIS NARRATIVE.

In the proposed work, he revisits many of the scenes of his former captivity, and is thereby enabled to give a more accurate and detailed account of the manners, customs, and peculiar habits of the people of those countries, than could probably be given by any one who might have visited them under less favorable circumstances.

The Journal embraces most of the Incidents of his Life during his sojourn in the West, his Voyages and Travels through various countries in Europe, as well as to Africa, the scene of his former shipwreck and captivity: to which is added an extensive correspondence with distinguished men of our own and other countries, respecting the countries which he visited. Embellished with numerous Engravings, giving correct representations of distinguished individuals of those countries, their costumes, &c.

To those who have read the Narrative, the forthcoming work will prove highly interesting, and to the Public in general it will be not only interesting and instructive, but also convey an amount of valuable information that can be derived from no other source.

CONDITIONS.

1. The book will be printed in one handsome five volume—large type, and on good paper.
2. The volume will contain upwards of 400 pages, embellished by numerous fine engravings of distinguished individuals, their costumes, &c.
3. The price of the work will be as follows, *payable on delivery*, viz.

Neatly bound in cloth, ... $2 25 per copy

" " embossed leather, marble edges, ... 2 50 "

4. An edition will be put to press, and delivered to subscribers, as soon as a sufficient number are obtained to warrant the publication.

We hereby agree to receive and pay for the number of copies set against our respective names.

SUBSCRIBERS NAMES.	PLACE OF RESIDENCE.	NO. OF COPIES.

Fig. 1. A subscription form for the proposed publication of the continuation of Riley's travels 'from the time of his return to his native land' based on a manuscript in the possession of his son, W. Willshire Riley. 'Sequel to Riley's Narrative. Proposals for publishing by subscription Riley's Journal, Being a Sequel to Riley's Narrative' [Columbus, O.: s.n., 1851], broadsides, American Antiquarian Society.

than seventy-five thousand copies between 1817 and 1945.[18] Mott's guess, however uncertain, is undoubtedly more realistic than the one-million figure because it is in line with the sort of print run common in the early nineteenth century. In the 1820s, for example, the nation's leading publishing house, Carey and Lea of Philadelphia, printed many popular novels and some leading British works, with an average run of between five hundred and one thousand copies. In 1835 William D. Ticknor of Boston published twelve titles, which together totaled only 12,500 copies; the largest run of any of these titles was just 2,000 copies. Indeed, print runs were limited by the local nature of markets prior to the expansion of railroads after 1845. George P. Putnam remarked in 1855 that twenty years earlier no one had 'imagined editions of... even the now common number of 10,000' (and even in the 1850s, most books still had much shorter print runs).[19]

Studies of the availability of books before 1850 have shown how difficult it was for contemporaries to find a copy of Riley's work. A random examination of advertisements in Ohio newspapers between 1817 and 1830 turned up remarkably few mentions of *Riley's Narrative* among the stocks delivered to local bookstores and general stores.[20] Three studies of Indiana sources—the records of

18. Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), esp. 6–11, 303–15. Using a methodology that is not easily followed, Mott listed those books that had made sufficient sales to qualify, and Riley's *Narrative* was not among them. Mott added, 'The investigator in the field of bestsellers learns to distrust the statement that a book "must have sold a million copies"' (9). Other attempts to determine the bestsellers of the past do not mention Riley's *Narrative* as a candidate either; see, for example, James D. Hart, *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950).

19. David Kaser, *Messrs. Carey and Lea of Philadelphia: A Study in the History of the Booktrade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), 42, 45–46, 50; W. S. Tryon, 'Book Distribution in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America, Illustrated by the Publishing Records of Ticknor and Fields, Boston,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 41 (1947): 212–13; George P. Putnam, Speech at New York Publishers Fair, 1855, quoted in Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3–4; see also 17, 55–59; and Zboray, 'The Transportation Revolution and Book Distribution Reconsidered,' *American Quarterly* 38 (1986): 53–71.

20. This is based on my own distracted observation while reading Ohio newspapers for their political delights. See also Peter Kaufmann, 'First Catalogue of Peter Kaufmann and Co.'s Circulating Library,' Ohio Historical Society, and Isaac N. Whiting, 'Catalogue of Valuable Books for Sale' (Columbus, Ohio, 1831).

books stocked by six general stores between 1821 and 1840, the inventories of more than five hundred private libraries between 1800 and 1850, and the records of bookstores between 1833 and 1850—reveal not a single copy of *Riley's Narrative*.[21] In the Windsor district of Vermont, where reading habits have been most closely studied, *Riley's Narrative* was not among the 114 books most commonly owned by private individuals between 1787 and 1830. The Reverend William Bentley of Salem, Massachusetts, who left an extraordinary library of four thousand volumes, did not, at the time of his death at the end of 1819, own a copy of Riley, in spite of his habit of buying newly published books and his considerable interest in the Islamic world of North Africa.[22] No Riley (or Robbins) is to be found in the library of the Worcester County Atheneum between 1830 and 1848, or the Brentwood, New Hampshire, Social Library between 1817 and 1850, or in many of the other libraries whose records are also to be found at the American Antiquarian Society.[23] In South Carolina, the venerable Charleston Library Society owned a copy of the original 1817 New York edition, but the reading database created for that state by Michael O'Brien—which includes such sources as private library catalogues, diaries that document reading, notes on contemporary articles, and the Savannah (Georgia) Library Society's borrowing ledgers in the 1820s—does not otherwise contain a single reference to Riley.[24]

21. Michael H. Harris, 'Books Stocked by Six General Stores, 1800–1850,' *Journal of Library History* 9 (1974): 66–72; 'Books on the Frontier: The Extent and Nature of Book Ownership in Southern Indiana, 1800–1850,' *Library Quarterly* 42 (1972): 416–30; 'Bookstores on the Southern Indiana Frontier, 1833–1850,' *American Book Collector* 23 (1973): 30–32; 'The General Store as an Outlet for the Books on the Southern [Indiana] Frontier, 1800–1850,' *Journal of Library History, Philosophy, and Comparative Librarianship* (July 1973): 124–32.

22. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life*, 64–67; William Bentley Papers, AAS. I owe this latter reference to Thomas Knoles. For Bentley, see Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700–1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 197–217.

23. Worcester County, Massachusetts, Atheneum, Records, 1830–48; Brentwood, New Hampshire, Social Library, 1809–50; anonymous, Notebook, 1837; John Edwards Godfrey, Library Catalogue, 1841; Midfield Unitarian Sunday School Library, 1858; Worcester, Massachusetts, Fraternity of Odd Fellows, Library Records, 1824–27, AAS.

24. *Catalogue of the Books Belonging to the Charleston Library Society* (Charleston, S. C.: A. E. Miller, 1926), 327. I am grateful to Michael O'Brien for this reference and for information about his database.

We do know that the book was frequently borrowed from some public libraries that owned it. Admittedly, among the male and female patrons of the New York Society Library, *Riley's Narrative* was not among the hundred most commonly borrowed books.[25] But in West Windsor, Vermont, between 1832 and 1867, the *Narrative* was among the top 20 percent of books borrowed, with some 31 percent of borrowing families taking the book out.[26] At the Farmers and Mechanicks Library in Washington County, New York, about one-third—perhaps as many as 40 percent—of its members borrowed it between 1817 and 1830.[27] Similarly we have evidence that some private copies were passed around many readers in a locality. A copy bought by Abraham Paxson from a book agent about 1818 'created quite a sensation in our neighbourhood' (probably in Pennsylvania) and became so worn that 'a few years later' it had to be rebound.[28] People did read the book—when they could get hold of it.

The publishing trade in the United States in the early nineteenth century was simply not well-equipped to supply large numbers of new American works. Most studies rightly emphasize the innovators, entrepreneurs, and bookseller-publishers, who were beginning to develop the business along more professional, commercial, and technologically advanced lines and reaching a more extensive market. But for many years after 1815, most books continued to be produced and marketed in more traditional ways.[29] The publishing business appears to have made huge advances between 1793 and 1806, but then fell victim to the difficulties that lasted from the time of Jefferson's Embargo to the end

25. Zboray, *A Fictive People*, 165, 166, 174–75.

26. I owe this evidence to Bill Gilmore-Lehne, who with typical generosity gave me a printout of his statistical analysis of the borrowings from this library. Author's conversation with Gilmore-Lehne, AAS, December 8, 1998.

27. Washington County, New York, Farmers and Mechanicks Library Records, 1816–68, AAS. I am grateful to Scott Casper for drawing this source to my attention.

28. 'History of this Volume,' inscribed in the copy of the 1818 edition now belonging to the Library Company of Philadelphia.

29. Rosalind Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

of the War of 1812. Despite technological advances, before the 1830s the industry still lacked a professional publishing apparatus and remained focused on essentially local markets. As we shall see, Riley's experience demonstrates the publishing trade's limitations in the late 1810s, and even the adoption of technological improvements and more commercial methods after 1825 did not necessarily lead to larger print runs or sales.

Soon after his return to the United States in 1816, Riley travelled to Washington to try to obtain reimbursement for those who had paid the ransom and a commitment by the government to ransom any other Americans shipwrecked and enslaved in the region of Morocco.[30] Telling his story to anyone who would listen, he was soon lionized in the fashionable company of the capital's salons, and Secretary of State (soon to be President) James Monroe and 'several distinguished members of Congress' urged him to publish an account of his experiences. In May, the press in New York and New England advertised that Captain Riley was proposing to publish an account of his adventures by subscription for 'the relief of the survivors who lost their all' and of the widows and orphans of those still missing in Africa. Riley had apparently 'committed the principal facts' of his adventures 'to writing in Mogadore, when every circumstance was fresh in my memory (which is naturally a retentive one,) and I then compared my own recollections with those of my ransomed companions.' Transforming these jottings into a full narrative, he took his manuscript to a New York printer, William A. Mercein. At that office Riley met Thurlow Weed, then a young journeyman printer, who, after reading the first chapter, told him it was 'carelessly written and needed revising.' According to Weed, Riley swallowed his annoyance and hired a school teacher to correct the spelling

30. Riley to James Monroe, Washington, April 16, 1820, Miscellaneous Letters, RG59 Records of the State Department, National Archives. I am grateful to Daniel Preston, editor of the Papers of James Monroe, for letting me see a copy of this letter.

and grammar.[31] More significantly, Riley persuaded a literary friend—the prominent New York intellectual Anthony Bleecker—to edit the text and advise him on any explanations that might be needed, organization, and matters of style. Some later accounts have claimed that Bleecker actually wrote the book on the basis of Riley's notes, but the surviving manuscript of the corrected text makes it clear that, whatever Bleecker's contribution (and Riley fulsomely recognized it in the early editions), the text that emerged was Riley's. Some of the final corrections are in his hand, and Bleecker had to plead for at least one significant tactical change. As a result of accepting such good advice, the published text was regarded by critics as correct and literate, as well as vigorous, forthright, and moving.[32]

The financial risks of publication were taken on by Riley rather than Mercein. Though some significant publishing enterprises existed, notably in Philadelphia, it was still common for authors to pay all of the printer's costs and thus become the publisher themselves.[33]

31. Riley, *Narrative* (New York, 1817), iii-iv; *Mercantile Advertiser* (New York), in *Connecticut Mirror* (Hartford), May 27, 1816; Weed and Barnes, 'Autobiography,' 58.

32. The manuscript is now at the New-York Historical Society, to which Riley presented it in February 1817. It is written in several hands, the main one apparently that of a professional amanuensis. Corrections are in more than one hand, but the most common and always final corrections appear to be in Riley's hand. Bound in with the text is a letter signed 'A.B.' (in Anthony Bleecker's hand) pleading with Riley to revise one passage which would give great offense to Jews. Riley asked Bleecker to rephrase the passage for him, but the final version of his account of North African Jews still aroused protests. Riley's *Narrative*, ms., 1817, New-York Historical Society; W.W. Riley, *Sequel*, 343–66.

For persisting claims that Bleecker wrote the *Narrative*, see John W. Francis, *Old New York; Or, Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years*, rev. ed. (New York: W.J. Middleton, 1866), 69; *Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography*, 6 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1887–89), 1: 291, 5: 255; Melatiah E. Dwight, 'Anthony Bleecker,' *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 34 (1903): 231–32; Smith, *First Forty Years*, 148n.; Robert P. Forbes, 'Slavery and the Meaning of America, 1819–1837,' (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1994), 85; and some Internet sites, e.g., <*http://www.wvu.edu /~lawfac/jelkins/lp-2001/bleecker.html*> and <*http//virtualmuseumofhistory.com/anneelizableecker*>.

33. William Charvat, 'The Condition of Authorship in 1820,' in Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800–1870* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968), 29–48; Rollo G. Silver, *The American Printer, 1787–1825* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 99–102, 106, 109–10; Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital*, 55–56. For the difficulties faced by would-be publishers, see James N. Green, 'From Printer to Publisher: Mathew Carey and the Origins of Nineteenth-Century Publishing,' in Michael Hackenberg, ed., *Getting Out the Books* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Center for the Book, 1987), 26–44.

Indeed, that could be the most profitable course. Printing costs amounted to about one-third of the price of a book, and discounts of about one-quarter had to be made to wholesalers and retailers, leaving the author-publisher with 40 percent of the retail price. This proportion could be increased if the author-publisher managed to deal directly with retailers. Riley recognized the advantages of dealing with a firm such as Carey and Son of Philadelphia—whom he considered 'the most active and feeling Booksellers in the United States & having the most extensive correspondence'—and he would have gladly had them 'take the entire agency for my work, but it is absolutely necessary in order to meet my payments there that I should sell in the Eastern states for ready money.' Thus his '-circumstances' obliged him to keep the work 'entirely in my own hands' and see to the selling himself, which some professional authors of his day—including both Irving and Cooper—still saw as much the most profitable way of proceeding.[34]

Riley's printers did perform one extraordinary service. An associate of the Merceins, Thomas Kirk, wrote to John Murray—the London publisher of Lord Byron, Jane Austen, and the Tory *Quarterly Review*—suggesting that the two firms circumvent the lack of an Anglo-American copyright agreement by exchanging printed sheets before competitors could get hold of them; Kirk also suggested that they start with Riley's book. Riley duly wrote to Murray, offering him the *Narrative* and Murray agreed. After the book was printed in New York, Riley certified his American copyright on October 3, 1816, but withheld the book from sale in the United States while he sent printed sheets to England.[35] Riley asked Murray to secure copyright in England, but apparently Murray could not; not that it mattered, because, as Cooper's

34. James Riley to M. Carey and Son, New York, August 20, 1817, Incoming Correspondence, 1789–1822, Records of Lea and Febinger, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. See also William Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America, 1790–1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), 38–60; Kaser, *Carey and Lea*, 76–80, 82–83.

35. Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray, with an Account of the Origin and Progress of the House, 1768–1843*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1891), 2: 26–28. Smiles's account reprints some of the letters but does not date them precisely. Thomas Kirk and Thomas R. Mercein published together from 1816 to 1820.

agent remarked five years later, once a British publisher gained 'a fair possession of the market, it will establish an *honorary* Copy Right, which will answer all the purposes of a *legal* one.' Murray swiftly produced the British edition and reputedly paid Riley £300 sterling, or about $1,500, which apparently represented about 'one-third of all the clear profits of the Volume.'[36] At the London catalogue price of £1.16s.0d. each, Murray must have sold about 1,250 copies.[37] Only when the British edition was assured did Riley release the book in New York in February 1817.[38]

It is not known how many copies were printed in that first edition in the United States. Riley's own financial resources were slender, as he had lost his capital twice: first when his ship and its cargo were confiscated by the French in 1808 (he did not gain compensation until 1836), and then when he lost the *Commerce* in 1815. Soon after his return he had petitioned in the Connecticut Superior Court for bankruptcy.[39] Presumably his influential friends may have lent him

36. John Miller to Benjamin N. Coles, June 15, 1822, reprinted in Robert E. Spiller and Philip C. Blackburn, eds., *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper* (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1934), appendix, 215; Caleb Atwater to Isaiah Thomas, July 24, 1819, Letters and Drawings of Caleb Atwater, 1818–1835, AAS. Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends*, 28, claims that Murray paid Riley 'half the profits of the sale,' but I prefer Atwater's figure of one-third, since that had been Kirk's original proposal and there was no reason why Murray should have been more generous. Atwater may have heard (or misheard) his version in conversation with Riley when he passed through Circleville, Ohio, where Atwater lived, in the summer of 1818. W.W. Riley, *Sequel*, 18.

37. This calculation owes much to James Green's advice and is based on the assumption that the total author-publisher profit (£900) was in the region of 40 percent of retail sales, making the total proceeds £2,250. Remarkably, Murray paid Riley more than Henry Carey would pay Sir Walter Scott for his *Life of Napoleon* in 1827. Kaser, *Carey and Lea*, 42. I do not know who arranged translation of Riley's *Narrative* into French and Dutch, leading to the publication of *Naufrage du Brigantine Americain le Commerce . . . publié par M. James Riley* (Paris: Le Normant, 1818) and *Verhall van het Verongelukken der Amerikaansche Brik De Koophandel, door Kapitein James Riley* (Dordrecht: Blussé en Van Braam, 1818–19).

38. The *Quarterly Review* (London) published its review of the *Narrative* in January 1817 in terms suggesting that the book had appeared in New York in 1816. *Quarterly Review*, 26 (January 1817): 287–321. One consequence of holding back publication in the United States until February 1817 has been that bibliographers have sometimes followed Murray in erroneously deducing the existence of an 1816 American edition. Many listings also refer to an 1813 edition, which is clearly impossible; the error arises because the third edition of 1818 printed the final '8' rather unevenly so that it can look like a '3'. See also *National Union Catalog: Pre-1956 Imprints* (hereafter *NUC*), 495: 279; Robert A. Gross, 'Reconstructing Early American Libraries: Concord, Massachusetts, 1795–1850,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 97 (1987): 369, 384.

39. Alig, *Ohio's Last Frontiersman*, 4–15; *Albany Daily Advertiser*, July 26, 1816.

some money, or Mercein may have done the printing on credit, encouraged by advance subscriptions. Either way, the print run was probably limited in order to see how well the book would sell, especially as it was a relatively lavish production.[40] The book contained several illustrations, mostly drawn by J. Carman and engraved by Alexander Anderson, as well as a fold-out map drawn by John H. Eddy in 1816 that must have been particularly expensive to produce. The volume was leather-bound and priced at $3.50. Riley did not have the text stereotyped, although that process had been introduced into the United States in 1811 and would have made reprints easier and cheaper. At the time stereotyping was still restricted primarily to religious works and school books, and because of its cost the process was not generally adopted until the late 1820s.[41]

Riley sold most of the first edition directly himself as retailer, initially trusting only 150 copies to booksellers. He did, however, accept an order from Carey and Son in Philadelphia—most probably Henry C., rather than his father Mathew—who ordered fifty copies, to be paid for in cash at ninety days. Riley had originally intended to send his last box of books to Charleston, but he diverted it to the Careys, who apparently accepted sixty-three copies altogether. By June 1817, after just four months, the first edition sold out.[42]

40. For the practice in Britain in the 1840s of limiting print runs in cases where the author paid the costs of production and wished to limit potential losses, see James A. Secord, *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 115, 123–24.

41. Stereotyping involved setting up the type specially (not using the letter press), pouring plaster of Paris over the type to create a mold, and then pouring regular type metal into the mold to make a casting. Blemishes in the plate that emerged had to be mended by cutting a hole and soldering in a piece of type. The plates were then packed in wooden boxes for future use. Michael Winship, 'Printing with Plates in the Nineteenth-Century United States,' *Printing History* 10 (1983):15–26. Stereotypes allowed printer-publishers to produce books 'without the labor of composition or the expense of standing type.' Silver, *American Printer*, 59–61. For the huge expense involved in the purchase of stereotyped plates by the Philadelphia Bible Society in 1812 and its consequences, see David Paul Nord, 'Free Grace, Free Books, Free Riders: The Economics of Religious Publishing in Early Nineteenth-Century America,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 106 (1996): 249–52.

42. James Riley to Carey and Son, New York, June 2, undated [received June 15], August 20, 1817, Incoming Correspondence, 1787–1822, Records of Lea and Febiger, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. See also M. Carey and Son, 'Bot of James Riley,' undated, Account Books for 1817, Mathew Carey Papers, AAS; New York *Commercial Advertiser*, May 12, 1817.

The second edition, complete with corrections and some corroborating materials, was published in Hartford, Connecticut—in the region that most of his crew had come from—in August 1817.[43] Riley printed 4,000 copies for sale at $3.00 and kept the whole stock 'entirely in my own hands.' Needing cash to settle bills in New England, he sold at least two thousand copies through four 'travelling agents' who signed up cash subscribers in the area. He sold very few copies to booksellers, and none on commission. But he made an exception again of Carey and Son, who initially ordered 250 copies and then added another 250 more, an unusually large order for the firm. Ever concerned about territorial advantage, the Careys secured Riley's promise to sell to no one else in Philadelphia and to sell in the South only on terms less advantageous to the purchaser. By November Carey & Son regretted the size of their purchase, as they found sales of the second edition 'far more slow & dull than we calculated on.' As James Secord has remarked about the more developed market of early Victorian Britain, 'Even successful books were rarely fashionable for longer than a few months.'[44]

In 1818 Riley briefly became a professional publisher himself when he had 3,000 copies of Paddock's *Narrative* printed, giving 300 of them to Paddock. In September Riley produced a third edition of his own *Narrative* in New York, adding Paddock's *Narrative* as a lengthy appendix, at no extra cost to the purchaser. Riley sold this third edition to the New York firm of Collins and Company, who tried to sell 500 copies to Carey and Son, with

43. Hartford was a significant publishing center, at least as important as Boston before 1830, but its market was restricted to southern New England. Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America*, 19, 23, 27–29. For an example of an author who moved around the country in 1813–16 having his book published in each area he visited, see the preface to Michael Smith, *A Complete History of the Late American War with Great-Britain and Her Allies*, 6th ed. rev., iv, and *A Narrative of the Author's Sufferings in Canada with his Family, and a Journey to Virginia and Kentucky*, 275–83, bound together (Lexington, Ky.: printed for the author by F. Bradford, Jr., 1816).

44. Riley to Carey and Co., New York, August 20, 27, September 9, 19, 1817, Incoming Correspondence, 1787–1822; Carey and Son to Riley, November 4 , 1817, Letterbooks, 1789–1822, Records of Lea and Febiger; Secord, *Victorian Sensation*, 35.

whom they had a settled business relationship; the Careys, however, bought only seventy-one. For some reason, Riley almost immediately bought the edition back from Collins and Company. (Except for those retained as a cash purchase) and offered Carey 2,000 copies on very preferential terms. Although Riley declared that he would not be publishing another edition in octavo 'at least for some years to come,' Carey bought just 100 copies of the third edition and 100 of the separate Paddock volume. In 1819 Collins and Company tried to persuade Carey to take some Rileys in return for other works, pleading in July that, in return for '20 or 25 copies of Simpson's Algebra, we would give you *Riley's Narrative*—which we *bot* of Capt Riley.'[45]

Riley's Narrative may thus have been a looming bestseller in the middle months of 1817, but popular interest quickly waned. The publishing arrangements ensured that only a relatively few books were actually printed, and their circulation was restricted mainly to parts of the northeastern states; even there, four months after publication in New York, no copy of the book had yet reached Concord, New Hampshire. A few copies did reach Cincinnati, where the firm of Phillips and Speer ordered six copies from Carey in 1817 as part of a larger book order. Beyond that, the book was difficult to get hold of in distant parts, and little effort was made to arrange for its printing elsewhere. The two editions that appeared in the West were direct consequences of Riley moving to Ohio. In 1820 he and his family spent the winter in Chillicothe, where a slightly abbreviated version appeared, at half the price of former editions. Riley visited with Henry Clay in

45. Riley to Carey and Son, New York, September 23, 25, 30, October 7, 1818; Collins and Co. to M. Carey and Son, New York, September 10, October 7, December 17, 1818, July 28, 1819, Incoming Correspondence, 1787–1822, Records of Lea and Febiger. See also M. Carey and Son, Bot of James Riley, receipted October 7, 1818, Account Books for 1818, Mathew Carey Papers, AAS. Riley's confusing arrangements with Collins and Co. in 1818 resulted in two versions of the third edition, according to WorldCat: one published and sold by Collins, the other published by James Riley. Both versions had the same printer, J. and E. Sanderson of Elizabeth-town, N.J, and probably used the same printed sheets. I have not seen a copy of the former, but WorldCat reports six library copies, compared with thirty-three published by Riley.

Lexington, Kentucky, in 1823, and a local edition was printed there. These editions are now fairly rare, which may suggest that far fewer copies were printed than in the editions of 1817–18. By the mid-1820s, Cincinnati was already becoming the real center for Western book publishing, but no edition of Riley was ever published there.[46]

Through these years Riley extended the circulation of his book by soliciting subscriptions. Subscription schemes had been common in the eighteenth century as a means of securing finance or promises to purchase in advance of publication, and they would become important again in the later nineteenth century as a technique for identifying remote customers at little cost to the publisher. But the practice had run into difficulties in the early decades of the nineteenth century, partly because people were unwilling to pay in advance for wares of unknown quality. Moreover, as Carey and Son warned a potential author in 1817, the practice of paying agents to secure advance subscriptions had been 'almost entirely abandoned by the Booksellers,' because after publication 'not more than half of them can be found.' Riley may have run into that problem with his first edition, for he complained in 1817 that two 'booksellers' (subscription agents, perhaps?) had swindled him of $1,000, but he still used agents to sell the second edition in New England after publication and even tried to secure advance subscriptions elsewhere for the third. Again, in 1819–20, the printers of the Chillicothe edition advertised for advance

46. *New Hampshire Patriot* (Concord), reprinted in the *North Star* (Danville, Vt.), June 6, 1817; Walter Sutton, *The Western Book Trade: Cincinnati as a Nineteenth-Century Publishing and Book-Trade Center* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1961), esp. 49–50. A full list of these early editions of Riley's *Narrative* follows:

1817: New York: For the Author, by T. and W. Mercein
1817: (2d edition), Hartford: The Author
1817: London, England: John Murray
1818: 3d edition, New York: Published and Sold by Collins and Co.
1818: 3d edition, New York: Published by the Author
1818: Paris: Le Normant (translated into French by M. Peltier)
1818–19: Dordrecht: Blussé en Van Braam (translated into Dutch)
1820: Chillicothe, O.: Published for the Author by Bailhache and Scott, Printers
1823: Lexington, Ky.: Published for the Author, William Gibbes Hunt, Printer

subscriptions through some Ohio newspapers, but they probably did not enjoy great success because of the severe depression that struck the state in those years.[47] These marketing techniques would be developed more systematically in the decades that followed, not only by Henry Carey in Philadelphia, but also by publishers such as Silas Andrus, who would make Hartford, Connecticut, a major publishing center.[48] In the difficult economic conditions that persisted between 1819 and 1823, though, even direct selling could not boost sales or justify further reprintings.

When Riley produced his revised edition of the *Narrative* in 1828, he moved beyond the piecemeal, amateurish, and stressful ways of 1817–18 and sold the edition to the experienced and well-located printer-publisher, Silas Andrus. In 1818 he had taken over publication of the supplementary narrative written by Archibald Robbins after it had been successfully issued in Hartford and Rochester, New York and he must also have bought plates that had been stereotyped in New York earlier—one of the first instances in which a book that was neither religious nor educational was stereotyped. He then reprinted it—for sale at one dollar a copy—at least eighteen times between 1818 and 1826.[49] Robbins's version proved,

47. M. Carey and Son to Capt. J. M. O'Conner, Philadelphia, July 10, 1817, Mathew Carey Papers, AAS; Riley to Carey and Son, New York, August 20, 1817, Incoming Correspondence, 178–1822, Records of Lea and Febiger. For the third edition, see Leesburg (Va.) *Genius of Liberty*, April 7, 1818, and Hudson (N.Y.) *Northern Whig*, July 28, 1818; for an example of the Ohio advertisement, *Delaware Gazette and Religious Informer*, July 22, 1819.

48. Kaser, *Carey and Lea*, 30–34; Stowe-Day Foundation, *Hartford as a Publishing Center in the Nineteenth Century* (Hartford: Stowe-Day Foundation, 1971). Most studies of subscription publishing after 1790 concentrate on the years after 1830, e.g., Michael Hackenberg, 'The Subscription Publishing Network in Nineteenth-Century America,' in *Getting Out the Books*, 45–75. Advance subscriptions to Robbins's journal were sought in the press nationwide in 1817, with an offer to editors of a free copy if they advertised the subscription scheme. Examples may be seen in the Mount Vernon *Ohio Register*, November 5, 1817 (reprinted weekly through January 7, 1818), and *Southern Patriot*, August 1, 1817 (repeated for a month).

49. Archibald Robbins, *A Journal Comprising an Account of the Loss of the Brig Commerce, of Hartford (Con.) James Riley, Master, Upon the Western Coast of Africa, August 26th, 1815*. It appeared in the following editions over the next decade:

1817: Hartford: printed by F. D. Bolles

1818: Rochester, N.Y.: E. Peck and Co. (N. Y.: stereotyped by C. Starr)

to all intents and purposes, as popular as Riley's much longer account; it was also borrowed more frequently than Riley's from the Farmers and Mechanicks Library of Washington County, New York, in the late 1820s.[50]

Andrus took over the printing and distribution of Riley's revised version in 1828, and immediately stereotyped the text.[51] This new edition used a smaller type and more cramped (and thus cheaper) format than the earlier editions. The Andrus family firm, under various names, then used the stereotype plates to keep the book in print, reprinting it about every two or three years between 1829 and 1852; ten editions appeared in twelve years between 1841 and 1852, in a variety of bindings. Every edition between 1829 and 1859 carries the same pagination and blemishes, which bespeak the use of the same stereotyped plates. Even the New York editions published by Robinson and Franklin in 1839 and by Leavitt and Allen in 1859 came from those plates, on each occasion presumably purchased from Andrus.[52] But despite the commitment of

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1818: Hartford: 3d ed., Silas Andrus, (N.Y.: stereotyped by C. Starr)
1818: Hartford: 4th ed., Silas Andrus, (N.Y.: stereotyped by C. Starr)
1818: Hartford: 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, editions
And so on until 18th edition in 1826
According to the *NUC*, Andrus continued to reprint Robbins eleven more times down to 1851.

50. Washington County, New York, Farmers and Mechanicks Library Records, 1816–68, AAS. Mott, *Golden Multitudes*, 317, calculated that Robbins sold more copies than Riley, but he appears to have been influenced by the greater number of editions produced of Robbins. As we shall see, the logic is not infallible.

51. James Riley, *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig Commerce, Wrecked on the Western Coast of Africa, in the Month of August, 1815. . . Revised, and his Life continued, by the Author, in January, 1828* (Hartford: Silas Andrus, 1828). The editions of 1828 are slightly problematical. WorldCat reports that thirty-seven libraries have copies, twenty-eight published by Andrus and Judd and nine by Silas Andrus. The evidence of other publications suggests that the partnership of Andrus and Judd did not come together until 1832, and the *NUC*, perhaps for that reason, queries that particular 1828 edition. In the Silas Andrus editions that I have seen, the final figure in the date of publication is blurred, but probably is an '8'; the undoubted 1829 and 1831 editions were published by Silas Andrus.

52. Curiously, the title page of this revised version advertised an appendix, which it did not in fact contain, continuing Riley's life up to 1828, and continued to advertise—and omit—it right down to 1859, even after it had appeared (as revised by James Riley in 1833), in W. W. Riley, *Sequel*, 18–28. For brief accounts of Riley's later life, see Ratcliffe, 'Strange Career of Captain Riley,' 36–49, and Ratcliffe, 'Riley, James,' in John A. Garraty

the Andrus house to *Riley's Narrative*, it appears that the publisher never reprinted it in unusually large numbers.

Too often we think of technological advance as a means of broadening the market and so boosting sales and print runs, but the invention of stereotyping merely saved a publisher from printing too many copies at any one time. Before its introduction, Mathew Carey had recognized the importance of not printing too many copies, but the desire to insure that enough copies were printed before the type was broken up often tempted him to print far more copies than he needed. Silas Andrus, almost from the first adoption of stereotyping, employed the tactic of short print runs. He produced eight editions of Robbins in the first year, 1818, but as Keith Huntress has remarked, 'Either the editions must have been very small, or the publisher hoped that indications of a large sale would result in one.'[53] In Riley's case, after 1828 it seems that possession of stereotyped plates meant that the publishers could print just enough copies to meet continuing demand, confident that they could always print more if demand increased or stocks ran down. The proprietors never bothered to renew their copyright, but presumably possession of the plates

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and Mark C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography*, 20 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18: 516–17.

Some of the reprinted editions are very rare, as for example, those of 1841, 1844, 1845, and 1848, and in one putative case (1834), no library holding is known. A study of most of these editions in several libraries, supplemented by the *NUC* and WorldCat, results in this synopsis of the revised editions:

1828: Hartford: Andrus and Judd (?)
1828, 1829, 1831: Hartford: Silas Andrus
1833 (and 1834?): Hartford: Andrus and Judd
1836: Hartford: Judd, Loomis and Co.
1839: New York: Robinson and Franklin
1841, 1843: Hartford: William Andrus
1844, 1845, 1846, 1847, 1848, 1850, 1851, 1852: Hartford: S. Andrus and Son
1859: New York: Leavitt and Allen

53. Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital*, 52; Keith Huntress, *Narrative of Shipwrecks* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1974), 232. William Shade has pointed out the fallacy involved in trying to gain an impression of the distribution and relative influence of particular works by counting reprints: see Shade, 'Commentary,' in Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher, eds., *Beyond The Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 398.

gave them sufficient control.[54] Certainly no one thought it worth setting up the type again to produce an entirely new edition of Riley—unlike a popular anthology of shipwreck tales that some publishers continued to print in defiance of one another's copyright.[55] And Riley apparently was never reprinted in a cheap 'railway' edition in the 1850s, as part of a series such as Routledge's 'Railway Library' or 'Putnam's Railway Classics'.[56]

The evidence of wholesale book marketing seems to confirm that the print runs of the revised *Narrative* were small. In the late 1820s book auctions were developed in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston—followed by Cincinnati in 1838—which were designed to sell spare stock for jobbers and booksellers to supply to distant stores. At the major sale held twice a year in New York, the participating publishers had to announce in advance in the official catalogue how many of each title they wished to sell, and only books advertised were to be sold at the auctions. The house of Andrus advertised the *Narrative* on each occasion in the New York catalogue—no one else did—but only twenty-five or fifty copies in 1829–30, rising to two or three hundred copies in 1836 and early 1837. Following the Panic of 1837, the firm of Andrus, Judd, and Franklin faced severe financial difficulties and by 1840 had been placed in the hands of mortgagees, who appear to have put up all of the spare stock that year; in the case of the *Narrative*, 159 copies. Both the

54. The later, antebellum editions all relied on the copyright taken out for the revised edition in January 1828, which was due to expire in 1842, though the 1831 law extended future copyright terms to twenty-eight years. See Alice D. Schreyer, 'Copyright and Books in Nineteenth-Century America,' in Hackenberg, ed., *Getting Out the Books*, 121–36.

55. *The Mariner's Library or Voyager's Companion, Containing Narratives of the Most Popular Voyages from the Time of Columbus to the Present Day* (Boston: Lilly, Wait, Colman and Holden, 1833) was reprinted with the slightest of amendments as *The Book of Shipwrecks, and Narratives of Maritime Discoveries and the Most Popular Voyages* (Boston: Charles Gaylord, 1836). Two decades later, two ostensibly original works appeared with separate new copyright statements. *A Home on the Deep: or, the Mariner's Trials on the Dark Blue Sea* (Boston: Higgins, Bradley, and Dayton, 1857) was in fact a reprint of the 1833 *Mariner's Library*, while *Ocean Scenes, or, the Perils and Beauties of the Deep* (New York: George A. Leavitt, 1852, and Leavitt and Allen, 1857) tacitly reprints the 1836 version.

56. Kevin J. Hayes, 'Railway Reading,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 106 (1996): 301–26.

newly created firm of William Andrus and its successor in 1844—Silas Andrus and Son—usually offered 200 copies of Riley at sales held between 1843 and 1847, as the table shows. Given that the New York sales occurred twice yearly and that Andrus may also have been offering books at the other trade sales and marketing by other means, these figures could mean that he was selling as many as two thousand copies in some years, but—as the table makes clear—not consistently every year. To put these figures in perspective, Andrus always put far more copies of *Pilgrim's Progress* into the auctions at the New York trade sales and on some occasions even more copies of *Lord Chesterfield's Letters to His Son* than *Riley's Narrative*. The truth was that American publishing was still geared essentially to printing Bibles, primers, spellers, arithmetic books, a few popular American novels, and to reprinting English works—both classics and pirated, modern works—and these were the books that sold in thousands at the auctions.[57]

Everything thus comports with the conclusion that the number of copies of *Riley's Narrative* that were printed, let alone sold, were not out of scale with other books of the period. The largest editions were probably those of 1817–18, but there is no reason to think that the first or third edition exceeded the 4,000 copies of the second. The two Western editions, at a guess, were probably

57. Based on the collection of trade catalogues at AAS (1829–30, 1839–47) and the Library Company of Philadelphia (1835–37). See especially, *Third Boston Trade Sale: Catalogue of Books to be Sold to Booksellers Only, on Tuesday, July 21, 1829* (Boston, 1829), 5; *First Day's Catalogue, Second New York Trade Sale, April, 1830: Catalogue of Books to be sold with reserve in Lots to suit the Trade, Tuesday, April 6, 1830* (New York, 1830); James E. Cooly, *First Catalogue, New York Trade Sale, 1835: Catalogue of Books, Stationery, Plates, Binders' Stock, and to be sold without reserve, Sept. 8, 1836* (New York: William Osborn, 1836), 6; Bangs, Richards and Holt, *Thirtieth New-York Trade Sale: Catalogue of Books, Stereotype Plates, etc, August 26, 1839* (New York: William Osborn, 1839), 8; Bangs, Richards and Platt, *Catalogue of the 34th New-York Trade Sale, August 30, 1841* (New York: William Osborn, 1841). For these sales, see Clarence S. Brigham, 'History of Book Auctions in America,' in George L. McKay, comp., *American Book Auction Catalogues, 1713–1904: A Union List* (New York: New York Public Library, 1937), 1–37; Michael Winship, 'Getting the Books Out: Trade Sales, Parcel Sales, and Book Fairs in the Nineteenth-Century United States,' in Hackenberg, ed., *Getting Out the Books*, 4–25. The rules printed on the inside cover of many catalogues state that no books will be sold that are not in the catalogue, quantities will not be increased, and all books will be sold.

COPIES OF RILEY'S 'NARRATIVE' OFFERED FOR SALE AT TRADE SALES, 1829–1847

Sale	Date	Number	
3d Boston	July 1829	50	
2d New York	April 1830	25	
22d New York	September 1835	30	
23d New York	March 1836	200	
24th New York	September 1836	300	
25th New York	March 1837	200	
26th New York	October 1837	—	Not present
30th New York	August 1839	50	
32d New York	August 1840	159	Mortgagees
33d New York	March 1841	200	
34th New York	August 1841	50	
37th New York	March 1843	200	
38th New York	August 1843	200	
39th New York	March 1844	100	
41st New York	March 1845	200	
42d New York	August 1845	250	
44th New York	August 1846	200	
46th New York	August 1847	200	

much smaller—say no more than one thousand copies each—making fourteen thousand at most for 1817–23. As for the revised edition of 1828, it may be compared with the popular anthologies of shipwrecks edited by Charles Ellms. His *Shipwrecks and Disasters of the Seas*, which sold very well in the late 1830s, had a reprint in 1841 of just two thousand copies; the sequel, *Tragedy of the Seas*, began with four thousand copies in 1841 and had three reprints of one thousand copies each over the next six years.[58] All considered, it is not out of proportion to suggest that Andrus usually reprinted no more than one thousand—or at most—two thousand copies, though the 1859 New York edition—coming

58. Charles Ellms to Carey and Hart, Boston, December 25, 1839, March 25, 1841, March 26, 1842, Ellms to George W. Gorton, Boston, September 6, 1848, Charles Ellms, Business Records, 1833–51, AAS.

after a gap of seven years—may have been rather larger. In that case the eighteen or so revised editions of 1828–59 probably totaled no more than thirty thousand copies. Thus we might guess that about forty-four thousand copies of Riley were printed in the United States between 1817 and 1859. Let us say, with optimistic generosity, fifty thousand—but certainly not a million.

At that level, though, the *Narrative* compared favorably with many other American books of the age. It was certainly a 'steady seller' in the years before *Uncle Tom's Cabin* produced the first real 'best-seller.'[59] Yet if fewer than fifty thousand books were printed before 1860, how can they have reached a nationwide audience and made Riley's adventure so well known? Was every copy read by twenty people, so enabling it to reach one million readers? What, in this age, made readers aware of the substance of a publishing sensation?

The answer is that Riley's story became renowned in the United States essentially because of the coverage it received in the press in 1816 and 1817. Since 1792, the cheap and effective distribution of mail and newspapers had encouraged the establishment of hundreds of local newspapers—many serving very small populations—which filled their pages by copying news items from other newspapers with which they exchanged. Thanks to this 'communications revolution,' by 1815 news flowed around the country as quickly as the mail carriers could ride, and the same news, literary excerpts, and political commentaries regularly appeared in otherwise completely independent newspapers all over the country.[60]

The first news of Riley's shipwreck, enslavement, and ransoming arrived in January 1816 and was widely reprinted in the newspapers of seaboard cities at a time when 'the public sensitivity [was] awakened' by an unusual number of shipwrecks being

59. Michael Winship, '"The Greatest Book of Its Kind": A Publishing History of "Uncle Tom's Cabin,"' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 109 (1999): 309–32.

60. Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Jeffrey L. Pasley, *'The Tyranny of Printers': Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001).

reported.[61] In March 1816, shortly after arriving home, Riley wrote a long letter to the New York *Mercantile Advertiser* giving an account of his adventures. Within days it was reprinted in full in Hartford, Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia, Richmond—and at least twenty other places—under the title 'Captain Riley's Narrative.'[62] Thus Riley's story was becoming widely known nearly a year before he published the book; even the title by which it became known was established in advance. Public awareness was thus created even before Riley published his book. It had the potential to become a great American bestseller, but would not because the publishing industry lacked the venture capital and distribution networks essential for sales in such volume. A 'bestseller' was simply beyond the practice or even the imagination of the time.

Once the book appeared in February 1817, newspapers printed and reprinted some highly favorable reviews. A particularly laudatory one appeared in the Charleston *Southern Patriot* in April, and, like those in the *New York Evening Post* and the *National Register*, was soon reprinted elsewhere. Long, appreciative discursive essays appeared in Philadelphia's *Analectic Magazine* and (by Jared Sparks) in the influential *North American Review*, as well as in the influential British reviews.[63] Many newspapers published extensive excerpts from the *Narrative* in the months after its first publication; some papers ran a series of lengthy excerpts for several weeks, while others dipped into the *Narrative* to reprint stories

61. *Baltimore Patriot*, January 12, 20, 1816; *Connecticut Courant*, January 22, 1816, quoting New York *Gazette*, January 18, 1816; *Richmond Enquirer*, January 25, 1816; *Washington City Weekly Gazette*, January 27, 1816.

62. Riley's letter to the New York *Mercantile Advertiser* was dated New York, March 18, 1816, and was reprinted in, among others, *Connecticut Courant*, March 26, 1816, *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, March 22, 1816, *Washington City Weekly Gazette*, March 30, 1816, *Richmond Enquirer*, March 30, 1816; Philadelphia *Aurora General Advertiser*, April. 1, 1816.

63. The review in the *New York Evening Post*, February 13, 19, 1817 was reprinted in the Danville (Vt.) *North Star*, May 2, 1817; that in the *Southern Patriot*, April 26, 1817 was reprinted in the *Connecticut Courant*, August 5, 1817; see also *Scioto Gazette* (Chillicothe, O.), June 17, 1817, and *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), July 5, 1817. For the major review articles, see *Analectic Magazine* (April 1817): 314–48; *North American Review and Miscellaneous Journal* 4, no. 15 (September 1817): 389–409; William Cushing, *Index to the North American Review, Vols. 1–125 (1815–77)* (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson, 1878), 93, 146. The London *Quarterly Review* was published also in New York: see *New-York Daily Advertiser*, August 30, 1817.

and observations relative to Jewish or Islamic life in North Africa. Most of these excerpts came from other papers or through correspondents rather than from the book itself.[64]

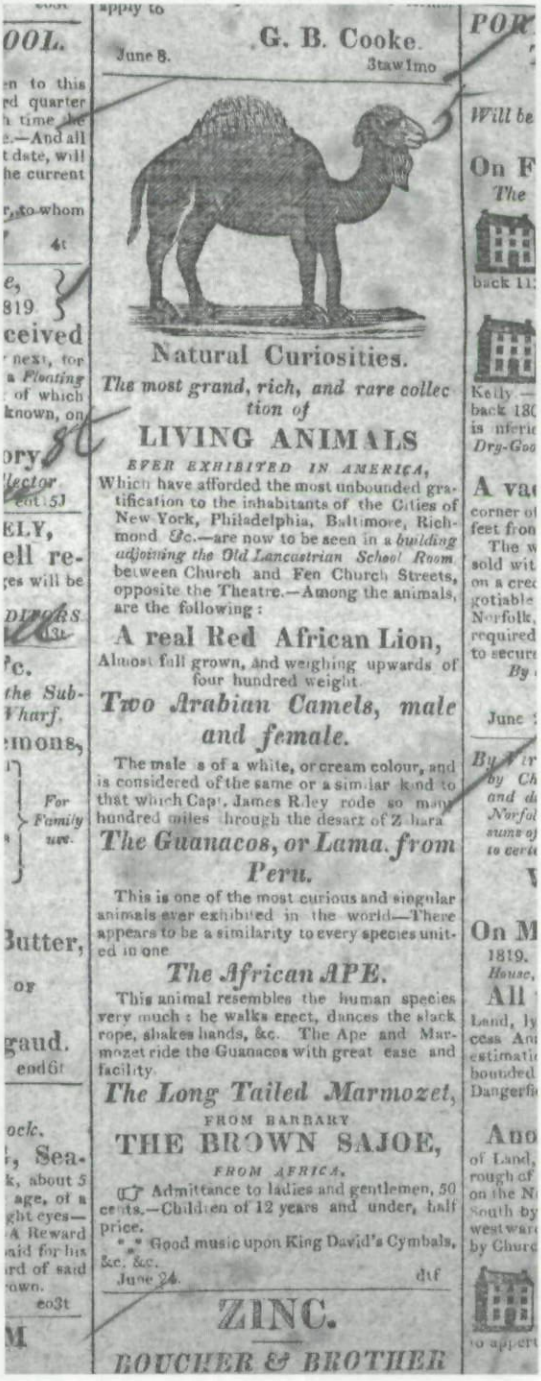
Interest in Riley's extraordinary tale—and a willingness to believe it—were heightened by news of the ransom of other members of the crew, William Porter in October 1816 and then, with more public notice, Archibald Robbins in March 1817.[65] By the time Robbins returned to the United States at the end of May, he found the story was already 'known throughout the United States,' and he could scarcely resist the pressure to tell what had happened to those whom Riley had had to leave behind. In New York Governor DeWitt Clinton, who certified his high opinion of Riley's veracity, agreed that the *Narrative* had 'excited uncommon interest.' By September 1817, *Niles Weekly Register* could report that 'almost everyone has heard of the sufferings and marvelous escape of our countryman, Captain Riley.'[66]

The appearance and republication of various associated works also provided a means of discovering Riley's tale without reading the original opus. Robbins' much-reprinted version, in particular, offered a brief, if inferior, account of a longer but essentially similar ordeal. Riley was even flattered by impersonators. Most notably, in 1820 the *Narrative* of Eliza Bradley appeared, purporting to be an account of a similar captivity by the pious wife of a shipwrecked

64. Excerpts appeared in the *New York Evening Post*, February 21 through March 19, 1817, and were copied in the *Connecticut Courant*, March 11 through April 1, 1817; Danville, Vt., *North Star*, May 2-July 18, 1817, copying from the Concord, *New Hampshire Patriot*, which in turn copied from the *Analectic Magazine*; *Franklin Herald* (Greenfield, Mass.), March 25 through May 20, 1817. For examples of one-off excerpts illustrating North African life, see *Southern Patriot*, March 31, April 25, 1817; *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 1, 28, 1817; *Washington Whig* (Bridgeton, N.J.), May 12, 1817; *Scioto Gazette*, June 24, 1817, and, reprinting an Eastern paper, Chillicothe *Supporter*, June 17, 1817; *American Star* (Petersburg, Va.), July 7, 1817. See also *New-York Courier*, April 3, 1817, and Portsmouth (N. H.) *People's Advocate*, May 17, 1817.

65. Riley, *Narrative*, 2d ed. (Hartford, 1817), 'Postscript,' 449–55, xi–xxiii; New York *Commercial Advertiser*, April 23, 1817; *Southern Patriot*, May 2, 1817. Riley's mate, George Williams, was ransomed and returned to New York in December 1819; the four others were never heard of again. *Litchfield Republican* (Conn.), December 13, 1819.

66. Robbins, *Journal* (Hartford, 1817), v; Clinton's certificate, October 29, 1817, in Riley, *Narrative* (New York, 1818); *Niles Weekly Register* 13 (September, 20, 1817): 50.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June 8. G. B. Cooke.

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Natural Curiosities.

The most grand, rich, and rare collection of

LIVING ANIMALS

EVER EXHIBITED IN AMERICA,

Which have afforded the most unbounded gratification to the inhabitants of the Cities of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond &c.—are now to be seen in a *building adjoining the Old Lancastrian School Room* between Church and Fen Church Streets, opposite the Theatre.—Among the animals, are the following:

A real Red African Lion,

Almost full grown, and weighing upwards of four hundred weight.

Two Arabian Camels, male and female.

The male is of a white, or cream colour, and is considered of the same or a similar kind to that which Capt. James Riley rode so many hundred miles through the desart of Zahara.

The Guanacos, or Lama, from Peru.

This is one of the most curious and singular animals ever exhibited in the world—There appears to be a similarity to every species united in one.

The African APE.

This animal resembles the human species very much: he walks erect, dances the slack rope, shakes hands, &c. The Ape and Marmozet ride the Guanacos with great ease and facility.

The Long Tailed Marmozet,

FROM BARBARY

THE BROWN SAJOE,

FROM AFRICA.

☞ Admittance to ladies and gentlemen, 50 cents.—Children of 12 years and under, half price.

*** Good music upon King David's Cymbals, &c. &c.

June 24. dtf

ZINC.

BOUCHER & BROTHER

Fig. 2. A newspaper advertisement for a travelling exhibition of living animals, illustrated with a camel. Its puff about the pair of Arabian camels indicates that the 'male is considered of the same or a similar kind to that which Capt. James Riley, rode on many hundred miles through the desert of Zahara.' This advertisement from *American Beacon* (Norfolk, Va.), June 29, 1819, is identical to one published in the *Baltimore Patriot* on December 19, 1818. The *Patriot* also published a slight variant on December 22, 1818.

English sea captain, who had become separated from her husband and was ultimately saved from a fate worse than death by William Willshire in Mogadore. There is no independent evidence that Eliza Bradley (or her ship) ever existed. Whole paragraphs were lifted from *Riley's Narrative*, and it has been suggested that the very choice of her husband's name—Captain James Bradley—may have been a deliberate attempt to make careless readers think that she was Riley's wife. But her slightly titillating account—could she escape with her virtue intact?—served to reinforce awareness of the basic storyline.[67]

In later years, Riley's story was also published in abbreviated form in popular anthologies of seafaring tales and shipwrecks. There was a long tradition, well established in Britain, of producing such anthologies, often to produce a deliberate effect. Riley began to appear in anthologies in 1828 in Britain,[68] and after 1833 in the United States. In one respect, most of the anthologized excerpts retained an emphasis common in the newspaper accounts of 1816–17. They continued to focus on the excitement of Riley's shipwreck, his first confrontation with natives on the shore, and his devastating experience of captivity and slavery. This was particularly true of *The Mariner's Library or Voyager's Companion*, the first American compilation to include Riley; this anthology, which continued to be reprinted into the 1850s, was borrowed much more frequently between 1832 and 1867 from the West Windsor library in Vermont than either Riley or Robbins.[69]

67. Eliza Bradley, *An Authentic Narrative of the Shipwreck and Sufferings of Mrs. Eliza Bradley: Wife of Capt. James Bradley, of Liverpool, Commander of the Ship Sally, which was wrecked on the coast of Barbary, in June 1818. Written by Herself* (Boston: George Clark, 1821). Bradley's *Narrative* also went through many American editions, nearly all published in New England: 1820, 1821, 1823 (Boston); 1824 and 1826 (Exeter, N.H.); 1829 (Concord, N.H.); 1832 (Boston); 1835 and 1837 (Ithaca, N.Y.); and 1848 (Lowell, Mass.). There were no British editions, although the preface claimed the book had been much praised in England. For the spurious nature of the book, see Keith Huntress, *A Checklist of Narratives of Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979), 110. I owe the speculation about the heroine's name to an e-mail communication from Dean King.

68. William Adams, ed., *The Modern Voyager and Traveller through Europe, Asia, Africa, South America*, vol.1, *Africa* (London: Henry Fisher, Son, and P. Jackson, 1818), 165–99.

69. *The Mariner's Library or Voyager's Companion; The Book of Shipwrecks, and Narratives*

In addition, many editors who chose to include a version of the *Narrative* had an editorial line that they wished to convey, often slightly twisting Riley's tale into something other than the original *Narrative*. Whereas the newspaper excerpts and reviews of 1817 had shown particular interest in Riley's account of African geography and his portrayals of Islamic and Jewish life, the anthologies of 1833 onwards tended to emphasize the civic, moral, and religious significance of the adventure. For example, out of twenty-four stories included by Epes Sargent in his 1842 anthology, *American Adventure by Land and Sea*, to show how the individual enterprise and fortitude of Americans could overcome all difficulties, five were taken from *Riley's Narrative*. The central truth, this entrepreneurial Whig insisted, was that 'Providence helps those who help themselves.'[70]

More commonly, however, the oft-reprinted versions expressed a conventional religious admiration for passive, Calvinistic resignation to the will of Providence. They followed the standard theme of shipwreck stories: those souls who reach safety are those who trust in the Lord, throw themselves on His mercy, and maintain their faith through all trials. In an anthology Charles Ellms produced in 1836, which continued to be reprinted as late as 1856, he portrayed Riley as achieving spiritual greatness through his acceptance of the hardships heaped on him, which virtually transformed him into a Moses, leading his people (all four of them) to the Promised Land. Yet Ellms himself had no apparent religious agenda: he also published slightly smutty almanacs, as well as the salacious *Pirates Own Book* of 1837. His sole concern, as his correspondence attests, was to produce works that would appeal to the reading public, in a

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of Maritime Discoveries and the Most Popular Voyages; A Home on the Deep: or, the Mariner's Trials on the Dark Blue Sea. All have the identical excerpt from Riley at pages 315–18.

70. [Epes Sargent], *American Adventure by Land and Sea, Being Remarkable Instances of Enterprise and Fortitude Among Americans*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1842), 1: 3–4; 2: 100–161. Anthologies that reprinted or summarized parts of the *Narrative* are listed in Huntress, *Checklist of Narratives of Shipwrecks*, 119–20, 131, 138, 145, 161–62, 170–72.

continuing series of maritime compilations that did not subsequently use Riley's account.[71]

Interestingly, in view of all that has been claimed for Riley as an antislavery spokesman, the anthologies played down the slavery theme and none used Riley to press an abolitionist agenda. Admittedly, his concluding blast against slavery in the United States was quoted in one anthology published by the American Anti-slavery Society, but this was a blandly general treatise quoting a broad range of supposed antislavery luminaries, including James Monroe, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson![72] Riley's blast was in fact followed immediately in the last paragraph of the *Narrative*—omitted from modern editions—by a carefully worded passage deliberately qualifying his antislavery message by expressing his respect for private property and his doubts about the fitness of African Americans for freedom. Riley's brand of antislavery led him in the 1830s to favor colonization, not abolitionism, and no abolitionist seems to have valued the *Narrative* as a transforming read. On the other hand, by ignoring abolitionist demands for immediate action, Riley was in tune with most of his potential audience.[73]

More significant than the anthologies, perhaps, was the transformation of the *Narrative* into children's books, with conscious educational purposes. In 1830 Samuel Goodrich produced *The Tales of Peter Parley about Africa*, the third volume in a series of geographical and historical readers for children; and about one-third of this volume was devoted to Riley's story. Then in 1832

71. Charles Ellms, comp., *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea, or Historical Narratives of the Most Noted Calamities, and Providential Deliverances from Fire and Famine on the Ocean* (Boston: S. N. Dickinson, 1836, and New York: I. J. Rowe [Rouse], 1860), 13–51. See also Ellms, ed., *The Pirates Own Book, or Authentic Narratives of the Lives, Exploits, and Executions of the Most Celebrated Sea Robbers* (New York: A. and C. B. Edwards, and Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait, and Co., 1840); *Robinson Crusoe's Own Book* (Boston: William C. Perry, 1842), and *The Tragedy of the Seas; Or, Sorrow on the Ocean, Lake and River* (Philadelphia: W. A. Leary, and Boston: W. J. Reynolds, 1848). AAS has Ellms's Business Records, 1833–51.

72. [Julius Rubens Ames], 'Liberty' (New York: American Anti-slavery Society, 1837), 34, Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University.

73. For the qualified nature of Riley's antislavery views, see Donald J. Ratcliffe, 'Captain James Riley and Antislavery Sentiment in Ohio, 1819–1824,' *Ohio History* 81 (1972): 76–94.

Goodrich began a new series of Peter Parley books for children that were adapted from popular adult books, and he chose as number one in the series *The Story of Captain Riley, and His Adventures in Africa*. The Peter Parley books were hugely popular and widely reprinted; by the mid-1850s, one hundred and seventy separate titles had sold seven million copies, or an average of more than forty thousand each.[74] Riley was probably better known among the generation born a decade or more after his adventure than among those who had been so struck by the newspaper accounts printed in 1816–17.

This raises questions about the nature of communication in the early republic that cultural historians need to consider. Riley's book is obviously important in itself, for what it tells about his outlook and perceptions, as well as his expectations of his audience. But any judgments about the cultural impact of his story must be influenced by the hard facts of circulation, availability, and readership. It is likely that most people knew about his account through his original letter in the press and through newspaper excerpts, anthologies, and the children's editions—all of them much-abbreviated versions that omitted much that seems significant to modern cultural historians. In other words, the text usually studied today was not the text actually read by most antebellum readers. Historians interested in explaining Riley's popular appeal should perhaps pay some attention to what contemporary editors thought was appropriate for—or wanted by—contemporary readers and to the meaning that editors gave to Riley's extraordinary tale. But these are matters for another occasion.

74. [Samuel Griswold Goodrich], *The Tales of Peter Parley about Africa* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, and Carter and Hendee, 1830); Peter Parley, *The Story of Captain Riley, and his Adventures in Africa* (Boston, 1832); S. G. Goodrich, *Recollections of a Lifetime, or Men and Things I Have Seen*, 2 vols. (New York and Auburn: Miller, Orton and Co., 1857): 2: 284.