

SYDNEY AUCTION SALES IN THE 1840s

DURING THE EIGHTEEN-FORTIES sales by auction remained, as in the previous decades, the major method of bookselling in Australia.¹ There were, however, signs, particularly in Sydney, of the growing importance of the bookshops which were to take over the trade in later years. In the newer colonies books were still mostly sold by auction, as earlier in Sydney, where this had proved the most effective method given a fairly small, unstable population.

Some amusing and vivid pictures of auction sales in Sydney during the 1840s may be found in Godfrey Mundy's *Our Antipodes, or Residence and Rambles in the Australasian Colonies with a Glimpse of the Gold Fields* (1857). On 1 September 1846, soon after his arrival, he recorded:

The number of auctions daily going on in Sydney is quite extraordinary; not auctions for the purpose of selling off houses and effects of departed or departing persons — though these happen often enough, too often for one's belief in the permanent prosperity of the community — but for the disposal by wholesale of imported goods, or by retail of tradesmen's stock on hand. A stranger would almost suppose that the buyers and sellers of the colony were too idle to transact business without the intermediation of a paid agent. . . . The chief attendants at these public auctions are brokers and keepers of miscellaneous stores(p.9)

In another place he describes the notorious night auctions, banned later in the forties, and, from this, justifiably so:

The night auction was common when I first arrived in New South Wales. It seemed specially intended for the disposal of articles "that love the shade," and for the spoilation of the raw emigrant. The *locale* of the night auction was usually some small open stall. A ragged old pauper was seen and heard ringing a large bell opposite the door. A shabby, but sharp-looking salesman, leaning over a horse-shoe counter, under the light of the huge but clear and smoky lamp, arrested the passengers by a display of his wares. The idlers gradually curdled into a crowd. Delusive eloquence and a dim light did the rest. (p.101)

One imagines the 25 book auctions advertised in 1840, to be held by Messrs. Blackman, Yates, Lyons, Stubbs and the Australian Auction Company, were much more respectable affairs. Nearly 4300 volumes were listed for sale but, as always, the actual number available was probably higher, since full figures were often not given in the advertisements. Also, most auctioneers now issued catalogues, and so hardly ever listed all their works in the newspapers, as they had done earlier. Just over 400 of the 1840 volumes were works of imaginative literature, most of them being by popular authors like Scott and Shakespeare. Thus, on 1 January, Mr. Blackman listed in the *Commercial Journal*, for sale two

days later, many of the standard sets gracing the library shelves of this period: the *Waverley Novels* (48 vols.); Byron's *Works, with Life by Thomas Moore* (17 vols.); Crabbe's *Poems* (8 vols.); Boswell's *Johnson* (10 vols.); Milton's *Works* (6 vols.), "beautifully bound"; Hume and Smollett's *History of England* (10 vols.); Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (12 vols.) and Burns's *Works* (8 vols.).

1841 saw over twice as many volumes advertised for sale at 38 auctions, two particularly large collections being announced by Yates on 23 July and 17 August.² The first of these showed a new trend towards bulk importations, including 50 copies of Shakespeare's *Dramatic Works* and 50 of Burns's *Works*. Yates, who conducted most of the sales in the first half of this year, concentrated mainly on such evergreen and ever popular authors, though his "Superb Collection of BOOKS, many illustrated and in costly bindings", listed in the *Australasian Chronicle* on 29 June, featured modern writers like Ainsworth, Bulwer Lytton, Lady Blessington, Cooper, Dickens, Moore, Lockhart, Marryat, Hook and Scott. A very similar collection of authors appeared amongst the 500 volumes offered by Messrs. Moore and Heydon in their first auction sale, announced in the same paper on 14 October. These auctioneers, operating first together and later individually, dominated the Sydney book auction scene for several years. Perhaps they took over Yates's business, since his last apparent sale was held on 24 August. Their next sale, also including Dickens, Marryat and Ainsworth, received an extensive "puff" in the *Australian* for 28 October:

Moore and Heydon have an extensive Book Sale tomorrow evening. The catalogue embraces some of the leading works of our modern authors, as also, several important works on history, the arts, sciences, etc. etc. Persons disposed to form a useful library, should attend this sale. They are consigned from a principal house in the book trade in London, and must be sold for cash.

Though no mention is made of the particular house, publishers and booksellers like Henry Bohn and Edward Lumley were, as will be seen, later to form profitable connections with Australian auctioneers. Moore and Heydon held four other book auctions in November and December 1841, their evening sale of "Rare and Valuable Books", advertised in the *Free Press* of 23 November, including "Jane Austen's Novels in 1 vol.", certainly a valuable book and one still rare in Australia in the forties.

Samuel Lyons's "Classical Library", advertised in the *Free Press* on 18 September, contained Greek, Latin, Italian and Spanish as well as English works. The editor elsewhere referred to the "present difficulty of procuring Books of that description", a theme enlarged on in that day's *Australasian Chronicle*: "As it is seldom that book collectors can have an opportunity of gratifying their laudable penchant in this colony, there will no doubt be a great competition for some of these scarce works." Since no paper saw fit to publish an account of the actual sale, one must take it on trust that there were enough local collectors like

Nicol Drysdale Stenhouse to bid spiritedly for items by Homer, Montaigne, Descartes, Spinoza and Montesquieu.

Needless to say, those requiring less exotic fare by Cowper, Crabbe, Thomson, Goldsmith, Milton and so on, were, as usual, well catered for in this and the following year. In 1842, although only a few more auctions were held, many more books were advertised — over 32,000 volumes. Three extremely large sales were held towards the end of the year: Messrs. Howard and Watson offered 5000 volumes on 3 September; Moore and Heydon 10,000 on 23 and 30 September and 7 October; and Mr. Price another 10,000 on 7 and 14 December. While few details were given of the works for sale, it seems they were mainly by standard authors. Howard and Watson's advertisement referred to "School and Other Books" and mentioned Milton and Burns, whilst Price's included works obviously well adapted for school prize-givings and children's Christmas presents: Addison's *Works*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Pamela*, Byron's *Select Poetry*, Mrs. Helme's *St. Clair of the Isles* (1803), Mrs. Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* (1791), and Regina Roche's *Children of the Abbey* (1796). Sales of this type, fairly frequent in the forties, may have resulted from British publishers sending outdated stock to the colonies. Certainly, an increasingly apparent trend in this decade was for Sydney auctioneers to handle mainly eighteenth-century and earlier works, leaving the latest productions of Dickens, Lever, etc., to the booksellers proper.

In 1842, however, new novels were still prominent in auctions, especially in those of Moore and Heydon, who, up to their parting company in November, had held half the year's sales. On 24 February, for example, they advertised "A More Choice Collection of Books than even those comprised in their late series of Book Sales", including novels by Marryat, Dickens, Bulwer Lytton, Cooper and Samuel Lover. In March and April, they held a further series of weekly sales, again featuring these authors. The *Herald* commented on 4 March:

An important sale of books takes place this evening, at the Mart of Moore and Heydon . . . The catalogue contains works of great repute, embracing some standard Theological, Classical, and Historical Authors, as well as the usual shoal of light reading.

This disdain of fiction was not shared by the editor of the *Free Press*, who wrote on 31 March of a sale advertised that day:

We have glanced over the catalogue, which contains a great variety of works, many of which, particularly those of the novel class, are of first-rate description; as a proof of which we need only mention that the list comprises several of the best productions of the inimitable Boz. From our knowledge of the low figure at which many valuable works are frequently sold at these rooms, we would seriously advise the reading public to attend the sale.

The advertisement, headed "Sale of the most popular Books ever known in the Colony", interestingly listed mainly writers of imaginative literature:

Lord Broughton; Canning; Thomas Jefferson; M. Theirs, Ex-Minister of France; Colonel Napier; Lord Bacon; Lord Boling-

broke; Shakspeare [*sic*]; Sir Walter Scott; Dickens (Boz); Sir E.L. Bulwer; Cooper; Miss Austen; Mrs. Austin; Lady Montague [*sic*]; Smollett; Fielding; Goldsmith; Coleridge; Shelley; Pope; Mrs. Hemans; Burns; Washington Irving; Moore; Howitt; Milman; Keats; Newton; Ainsworth; Lady Blessington; Dr. Bird; St. Pierre.

Many of the same authors also figured in Moore and Heydon's other 1842 sales and in those conducted by Moore alone in December. A 15 December notice of one of them contains the amusing sentence "The rooms will be well ventilated" — obviously a necessity on a muggy Sydney summer evening if a large crowd attended. Unfortunately, there is little more direct evidence as to the popularity of such sales, apart from the usual newspaper puffs about "considerable competition". The marked increase in the number of books imported does, however, argue for an active bevy of buyers and, perhaps, readers. The *Australian* evidently felt such a body existed, for on 10 August it begged

... to call the attention of the Literati of Sydney to the sale of books this evening by Mr. Stubbs. The collection is one of the best we have seen in this colony, comprising, among others, the works of Scott, Cooper, Dickens, Byron, Burns, Crabbe, Johnson, Goldsmith, Fielding, Mackenzie, a capital collection of histories, and a well selected assortment of general literature.

Again, one notes popular novelists in pride of place. Further proof of the novel's growing supremacy comes from the last auction held in 1842 — Heydon's first solo effort was a sale of "100 new novels" on 22 December.

1843 saw a reversal of the previous year's trend, with a much smaller number of volumes, close on 11,000, advertised for sale at 82 separate auctions. The severe depression which, following three years of expansion, set in around March 1843, probably was a factor in this. Large importations of books were scarcer, the biggest sales being 1000 volumes by Hebblewhite and Davy on 16 November and 800 by both Blackman and Mort on 24 September and 17 October respectively. On the other hand, the total number of sales was swelled by the auction of insolvent estates, a consequence of the depression. In general, literary works auctioned — slightly more than a quarter of the total in this year — were the mixture as before of standard authors and modern novelists. Amongst the latter, one finds the first appearances of titles and authors continuing popular throughout the decade: Henry Cockton's *Valentine Vox* (1840), W.J. Neale's *Paul Periwinkle or, the Press Gang* (1841), Thomas Miller's *Gideon Giles, the Roper* (1840), the anonymous *Charley Chalk; or, the Career of An Artist* (1840), Thackeray's *Comic Tales and Sketches* (1841), Lever's *Jack Hinton* (1843), Dickens's *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-41), Mrs. Trollope's *Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* (1840), Mrs. Ellis's *Family Secrets* (1841), the "Sam Slick" works, G.W.M. Reynolds's *Robert Macaire in England* (1840), *Carleton's Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830) and Victor Hugo's *The Slave King* (1833). Nearly all of these can be found in advertisements for the series of regular

“Thursday Evening King-Street Literary Sales” held by Heydon in April and May 1843. The delay between the publication of most of these works and their arrival in Sydney presumably indicates they were not ordered until word of their English popularity had reached Australia. Much shorter time gaps occurred towards the end of the decade, especially with guaranteed best-sellers like Dickens, where English agents seem to have immediately shipped off new books.

Heydon’s former partner, Moore, held opposition sales on Friday evenings, on 28 April 1843 offering “Three cases of second hand books, carefully collected in London”, including older but still popular titles like Smollett’s *Peregrine Pickle*, Miss Porter’s *Hungarian Brothers*, and Ossian’s and Milton’s *Poetical Works*. The man later to replace Heydon as the chief Sydney book auctioneer, though more famous in other capacities, Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, held his first sale in this year, advertising a private library of 400 volumes on 18 September, and a further 800 unspecified volumes six days later. Apart from one sale in 1844, however, he did not commence book auctioning in earnest until 1845.

In 1844, though only a few more auctions were held, nearly 20,000 volumes were advertised. Again, Heydon was the main auctioneer of invoices of new books, an advertisement in the *Weekly Register* for 2 March indicating “the celebrated publishing house of Fisher, Son and Co., Newgate-street, London” as one of his regular suppliers. His Thursday Evening Sales rolled on, seemingly unaffected by the depression, or increasing competition.

Among Heydon’s rivals, Moore continued his Friday night book sales, while on 22 May Tebbutt and Co. introduced their “Wednesday Regular Book Sales”. On 30 September P.J. Cregin appropriated Monday for his book night. Early in 1844 John Carfrae, formerly a Melbourne bookseller and auctioneer, conducted a “Grand Book Sale”, commencing on 16 January. This description of his goods comes from an advertisement for the final evening, in the *Australian* for 6 February:

An extensive assortment of recently published works in History, Biography, Theology, Poetry, etc. Nearly all this superb collection were published in 1841, 42 and 43. The Publishers have spared no expense in getting up these Books. The rich and varied bindings in Morocco, Russia, and Calf, with the light and fanciful cloth, are deservedly admired. Among the numerous authors . . . it is only necessary to mention the names of . . . Byron, Scott, Tannahill, Burns, Wordsworth, Pope, Shakespeare, Goldsmith and Dickens.

Again, one sees mainly familiar figures, even if perhaps dressed more grandly than usual. A further “Important Sale”, to take place on 30 and 31 July, was, according to Messrs. Davidson and Rudd, the auctioneers, “The MOST PERFECT LIBRARY ever Offered to the Public in this Colony”. They certainly believed in their books sufficiently to advertise them in the earliest provincial paper, the

Hawkesbury Courier, on 25 July, as well as in the Sydney media. Whatever a perfect library may be, Davidson and Rudd's was better balanced than most book auctions, containing a good proportion of Greek, Latin and French authors, the usual histories, biographies and theological works, new works by Dickens, Lever, Bulwer Lytton, Washington Irving and others, some early pieces of Australiana such as Breton's *Excursions in New South Wales* (1833), and a colonial rarity in Ben Jonson's *Works*. The *Australian* for 30 July rightly referred to it as "The most important sale of books which has taken place for some years in this colony". At over 1000 volumes, it was the second largest collection advertised in 1844, and contained more serious literature than most others of this period.

Another interesting feature of 1844 sales is the occasional inclusion of a large number of copies of popular titles, presumably designed for the owners of bookstalls and the smaller booksellers. On 24 February, Carfrae offered no less than 82 copies of Burns's *Poems and Songs*, besides two dozen each of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Paul and Virginia*. One of the earliest book auction catalogues included in the Mitchell Library's valuable 1840s collection, for a sale by Heydon on 15 November 1844, also lists a dozen copies of each of *The Sonnets of Shakespeare*, Mrs. Hemans's *Poems*, Watt's *Songs*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *The Adventures of Philip Quarll* (1823) and 26 of *The Crimes of London*. As bookstall owners were again the most likely purchasers, one has here some guide to the reading of the working and lower middle classes, whose tastes are unfortunately not recorded in many other places.

Although fewer book auctions were held in 1845, the number of volumes advertised increased by over 3000. Again, certain auctioneers held regular weekly sales, Heydon retaining Thursday evenings, Moore Fridays, and John Carfrae taking Tuesdays. On 24 January, for example, Moore advertised his "Friday Evening Regular Book Sale" of that day — "1000 Books, cheap editions, 500 Children's Books". It is from about this time that publishers and booksellers really began to cater for the masses by offering works for a few shillings instead of a few guineas. Another of Moore's advertisements, for 18 July, showed him again determined to advance Sydney culturally; he had "a room entirely devoted for the Sale of Books and Works connected with fine arts". In general, the books available here and in other places were much as before, with perhaps rather more of the standard authors and fewer of the latest productions of popular novelists. There were, however, still advertisements like that for one of Heydon's Thursday sales in the *Sentinel* for 8 January, which blazoned out "AMERICAN NOTES, by DICKENS, 2 vols." On 17 November, too, John Carfrae offered "*The Mysteries of Paris*, London, 1845 — a most extraordinary book", the first title by Sue advertised in Australia.

Several auction catalogues for 1845 survive in the Mitchell Library collection, one for a sale by John G. Cohen on 14 July showing Fisher, Son and Co. still availing themselves of the Australian market. Their "most modern Publications, Embellished with Engravings, by the first artists, bound in a superior

manner” included a few, at least, whose contents were as good as their covers: Dickens’s *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Sketches by Boz* and *The Pickwick Papers*, besides six lots of Scott’s *Works*. Others, however, show popular taste at its most sentimental: four lots of *Edward the Orphan* and Mrs. Sherwood’s *Children of the Abbey*, three of Prest’s famous *Fatherless Fanny*, and so on. Another sidelight on the mid-century Australian book trade is given by a catalogue issued by T.S. Mort for a sale on 26 November 1845. This contains several lots called “The Bushman’s Library”, consisting of such well-trying works as Goldsmith’s *Citizen of the World*, *Vicar of Wakefield* and *Poems and Plays*; Isaac Walton’s *Lives*; Scott’s *Lady of the Lake*, *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Marmion*; St. Pierre’s *Paul and Virginia*; Johnson’s *Rasselas*; Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*; Thomson’s *The Seasons*; Homer’s *Iliad*; and other poetry by Burns, Crabbe, Gray, Collins, Milton, Kirke White, Beattie, Southey and Thomas Campbell, besides equally popular standard works on theology, biography and voyages. Apart from its exclusion of Shakespeare, this collection included all the major standard authors of the period and one would be interested to know how many bushmen actually purchased the 22 lots offered for sale. One would also like to know whether the idea for these “Bushman’s Libraries” had come from Mort or the publishers — probably from Mort since single copies of some titles (which do, indeed, recur in nearly every one of Mort’s 1840s catalogues) were also listed. This, therefore, suggests some support for the evidence of Alexander Harris and others as to the popularity of reading in the bush.

Over 21,500 volumes were listed for sale in 1846 at 63 book auctions. Since nine auction catalogues for this year survive in the Mitchell Library, this total gives a truer idea than usual of the actual number of books offered. As an example of the underestimation that results from using advertisement figures alone, the notice for a sale by Cohen on 11 March 1846, published in the *Australian* four days earlier, listed 42 volumes, whilst the catalogue for the same sale lists 416. This was another collection of Fisher, Son and Co.’s “Select Works”, mostly “beautifully illustrated”, and including a large number of *Drawing-Room Scrap Books for 1846*, besides many other picture books and a few copies of evergreens like Young’s *Night Thoughts*, *Pamela*, *Fatherless Fanny* and Milton’s *Poems*.

The largest 1846 sales of new books were held by T.S. Mort, who offered 2000 volumes on 15 and 16 January and a further 1000 on 28 and 29 October, catalogues for both being in the Mitchell Library. In the earlier sale, besides the usual standards such as *Paradise Lost*, Cowper’s *Poems*, Young’s *Night Thoughts*, the works of Goldsmith and Shakespeare, and novels by Dickens, Lever, Miller, Marryat, Cockton, Ainsworth and Cooper, there was a large number of older novels from the eighteen-twenties and earlier. Typical of these were C.B. Brown’s *Wieland* (1810); L.S. Stanhope’s *The Bandit’s Bride* (1807); David Carly’s *Secrets of the Castle* (1806) and Francis Lathom’s *Polish Bandit* (1824), with other equally exciting Gothic and adventure tales by Misses Roche and Porter, Mesdames Ward and Radcliffe, and many others. Possibly it was felt that the colonies provided a readier market for this highly-coloured fiction. The

remainder trade seems also to have been responsible for some very strange bookfellows found in catalogue lots. One of the most striking of these is Lot 4 in another of Mort's catalogues, for 3 March 1846; "Family Cookery, Milton's Poetical Works, in 2 vols., Life of Jesus, and Dickson on Poultry." — obviously designed either for the bookstall owner or the beginner book collector who wished to satisfy both material and spiritual demands without delay!

Although in 1847 there were still at least 59 book auctions held in Sydney, the number of volumes listed had dropped to about 16,500, and this again despite the augmenting of numbers from several surviving complete catalogues. About ten auctioneers were now active in the book trade, the most frequent and largest sales continuing to be those held by Mort — over 1000 volumes on 16 April and 2500 on 14 December. These included mainly works by well-established authors, often in multiple copies. The April catalogue, for example, listed two dozen copies of a five-volume Shakespeare, the same of Burns's *Works*, and 50 of Cowper's *Poems* in two volumes. Moore was again the next most voluminous seller after Mort, with nearly 2000 volumes for auction on 29 November. Once more, it is noticeable that the largest sales held by both men took place near Christmas. Moore's catalogues usually included more modern works than Mort's: on 26 February he offered Lover's *Treasure Trove*, James's *The Commissioner*, Sue's *The Wandering Jew*, and Lever's *Charles O'Malley*, all current best-sellers in both England and Australia, extolled as "Just imported and the latest editions published". In contrast, a rare and intriguing item figured in Moore's sale for 1 October: "Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments, under the hand and seal of Shakespeare, including the Tragedy of King Lear, from the original MSS.", William Henry Ireland's forgery, printed in 1795.

In a rather different vein, an advertisement in the *Morning Chronicle* of 3 July 1847, for a sale by J.K. Heydon, gave further examples of the range of literature available even in the colonies at this period. Besides a large number of English works, mainly eighteenth-century, like Smollett's *Works* in six volumes, poetry by Swift, Gay, Goldsmith, Blair, Dryden and Collins, and a rarity in Wycherley's *Dramatic Works*, this "Choice Library" included 25 Greek and Latin works, two of them published in the sixteenth century, and several in French and Italian. Also of interest in this year is evidence of British publishers' growing involvement in the Australian market. On 6 April Cohen advertised in the *Australian* three cases of books "from the Celebrated House of James Duffy, Dublin", appropriately including Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*. Another publisher whose catalogues became increasingly prominent was Edward Lumley of London: Samuel Lyons announced an auction of books from Lumley in the *Australian* on 29 October 1847. No figures were given, but, going by Lumley's later surviving catalogues, it would have been an extensive sale.

One of these, listing about 2000 volumes, to be sold again by Lyons on 6 September 1848, can be found in the Mitchell Library. Lumley evidently sent his catalogues out with his books, leaving it to his Australian agents to fill in the

auctioneer's name and the date of sale in the blank space left above "Sydney, 1848". Other catalogues from Lumley in the Mitchell Library collection were sent to Port Fairy and Launceston in 1848 and 1849 respectively. All these catalogues bear on the title page a device of a stork feeding its young and the encouraging note:

N.B. When confined by illness, a wet day, or depressed in spirits, what better companion than a book? and when we consider that before printing was invented hundreds of pounds were willingly given for a work in manuscript, *difficult to read*, which work, with all the improvements of succeeding centuries, can now be had for a few shillings, is not this a reason for purchasing, more especially at the present sale?

In addition, before Lot 1, Lumley further exhorted "The Book-buyers and Booksellers attending this sale, that a little more liberality would not be thrown away. It will be easily seen that there are no RESERVE PRICES." Bibliographically, his catalogues were much more complete than those produced locally, with author and date of publication usually given as well as title. There were also frequent additional inducements such as original publication prices, descriptive commendations like "a beautiful specimen of Baskerville's celebrated printing", "multitude of plates" and so on, and even some early examples of selective quoting from eminent critics. Thus Coleridge's "of all writings most purely English. Most perfect plot ever planned; how charming, how wholesome Fielding is" is reproduced for *Tom Jones*, perhaps to give the lie to those damning it as immoral, whilst Pope's "most noble and spirited translation in any language" touts for Dryden's *Virgil*. As can be seen, Lumley tended to offer the best-sellers of the past rather than the present — it is highly possible he was concerned with shifting surplus and otherwise unsaleable books off to the colonies. About a quarter of his stock were literary works, the same average proportion found in book auctions throughout the 'forties, the others, as he describes them, "Works on Religion, Fine Arts, Medicine, Law, Architecture, Biography, Travels, Education, Natural History, etc.". Amongst the literature were a few recent novels by Cooper, George Sand, Eugene Sue, Frederika Bremer and others, and two reprints of earlier authors in Carew's *Poetical Works* (1845) and Herick's *Works* (2 vols., 1844), the latter described as "one of the most beautiful of Old English Poets, combining playful gaiety of Anacreon and tender sweetness of Catullus."

Overall, nearly 31,000 volumes were listed for sale in 1848, more than in any other year except 1842, although the actual number of sales continued to decline. This is partly the result of more complete auction catalogues surviving for 1848 — thirteen — than for any other year in the decade. Again the disparity between the number of volumes listed in catalogues and newspaper advertisements can be seen in, for example, Mort's sale for 13 April: 3000 as against 150. Multiple copies of many works — such as "thirteen dozen and three" of Maria Edgeworth's *Stories for Children* and 44 dozen of *Instructive Stories* — partly account for this discrepancy. As well as large numbers of other children's books, the catalogue

listed mainly school texts and novels; 18 copies of Mrs. Sherwood's *Monk of Cimies* (1839) and several each by Lever, Sue, Carleton, Martineau, Ainsworth and so on. There were also seven copies of Scott's *Prose and Poetry*, two of Pope's *Works* and 24 of Cowper's. Another most interesting feature was the inclusion of six copies of Alexander Harris's *Settlers and Convicts* (1847), besides one of Mrs. Vidal's *Tales for the Bush* (1845) and 43 of an untraced work entitled *America and Australia*. At the opposite pole, the catalogue opened with over 100 volumes of French works, mainly by authors like Voltaire, Rousseau, Racine, Molière, and the Countess de Genlis, but including even some French translations of Scott's novels!

The remaining 14 sales held by Mort in 1848 — he continued to be the major Sydney book auctioneer — were not as memorable as this one, being the usual mixture of modern novels and standard works, on the literary side. The catalogue for one of 2 May announced

... a Miscellaneous Collection of New and Choice Works, Many of them highly Illustrated, and in the first style of binding:- comprising the Works of Sir Walter Scott, Shakespeare, Cowper, Goldsmith, Countess of Blessington, Cooper, Johnson, Eugene Sue, James, Dumas, Lever, Miss Martineau, Russell, Lister, &c. &c. &c.

As reflected in the order of these authors, three-quarters of the works listed were imaginative literature, including many by other popular figures like Carleton, Mrs. Trollope, Ainsworth and Burns. There were also numerous older novels of the fashionable life or Gothic variety: H.J. Coates's *Lucis Carey; or, the Mysterious Female of Mora's Dell. An Historical Tale. By the Author of "The Weird Woman"* (1831); Innes Hoole's *Scenes at Brighton* (1821) and *Society and Solitude* (1821); Francis Lathom's *Fashionable Mysteries* (1828) and the anonymous *The Phantom, or, Mysteries of the Castle: A Tale of Other Times* (1825). These were offered in lots of eight or nine titles, all no doubt eminently suitable for circulating libraries or bookstalls.

Two others of Mort's 1848 catalogues list works sent

... from the Celebrated House of Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden, Comprehending Works on Fine Arts, Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Heraldry [*sic*], Antiquities, Natural History, Medicine, Surgery, Mathematics, Mechanics, Natural Philosophy, Theology, Miscellaneous English Literature, Education, Poetry, Law, Novels, &c. &c. &c. Just Landed, ex Ganges.

In contrast to the usual pattern, the advertisement for the first sale on 7 and 8 September, in the *Sydney Daily Advertiser* of 5 September, mentions 8000 volumes, though only just over 2300 are listed in the catalogue. As may be gathered from the catalogue title, a smaller proportion, though still nearly half, were works of imaginative literature, by the usual popular authors. The second sale, held on 3 and 4 October, with an identically worded catalogue title-page and

similar stock, had been advertised on 2 October as consisting of 300,000 volumes, though again fewer were actually listed in the catalogue. Perhaps the initial importation from Bohn had been of 8000 volumes. Shakespeare was particularly well represented in this sale, with three copies of his *Plays*, 13 of his *Plays and Poems*, three of his so-called *Autobiographical Poems* and four of Valpy's 15-volume *Pictorial Shakespeare*. There were also two copies each of three "Shakspeare Novels" by Robert Folkestone Williams: *Secret Passion* (3 vols., 1844), *Youth of Shakspeare* (3 vols., 1839) and *Shakspeare and his Friend* (3 vols., 1838); evidently a liking for embroidery on the few bardic facts was not confined to the present.

The other most active book auctioneers in 1848 were George Lloyd, Cohen and, as before, Moore, who advertised on 16 February, "Six hundred volumes of new books, . . . all the new books of the day, — being the peoples' cheap editions". Cohen also specialised in modern works, a catalogue of 800 volumes for sale on 25 August including novels by Ainsworth, W.J. Neale, Bulwer Lytton, Carleton, Horace Smith, Mrs. Gore and Eugene Sue. Two others of particular interest because of their authors' connections with Australia were Charles Rowcroft's *Fanny the Little Milliner* (1846) and Mary Lemman Grimstone's *Woman's Love* (1832). Both authors were fairly popular in early Australia, going by book advertisements; seven other copies of *Woman's Love* were listed by various auctioneers and booksellers in Sydney and Melbourne, along with 13 of *Character, or, Jew and Gentile* (1833), also for sale in Geelong and Bathurst, and three of *Louisa Egerton; or, Castle Herbert. A Tale from Real Life* (1830) in Maitland, Geelong and Brisbane. *Fanny* was the most frequently advertised of Rowcroft's novels before 1850, 18 copies appearing in Sydney, Melbourne and Bathurst, including four in the Cohen catalogue. Only four copies of *Tales of the Colonies* (1843) were listed, all but one in Sydney, besides one each of his *The Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land* (1846), *The Triumphs of Woman: A Christmas Story* (1847) and *Chronicles of the Fleet Prison from the Papers of the late Alfred Seedy, Esq.* (1847), in Melbourne, Sydney and Launceston respectively.

The advertisement for Cohen's final 1848 sale, on 28 December, throws further light on the practice of reauctioning lots unclaimed by their purchasers. "At the risk of the former purchaser, J. Driscoll, Livery Stable Keeper, Pitt-Street", Cohen offered copies of *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Guy Mannering*, besides "One plated toast rack, Two parrots and cage"! Here is another small crumb of evidence on the reading tastes of the less educated section of the population — as always, Scott and Dickens. It will also be remembered that the source of much of the other evidence on this, Alexander Harris, was able to make his "first deal in books" under similar circumstances of a buyer failing to claim his lot.³

Probably partly because of a further major depression which cursed the colonists in 1848, there was a marked fall in the number of books listed for auction in Sydney in 1849. Only 45 sales were advertised, disposing of just over 10,000

volumes. The most sales, 13, were held by Moore, mainly small collections of one or two hundred volumes whose titles were not listed in the advertisements. One for 22 June, however, did mention Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and *Don Quixote*. A similar concentration on older works can be seen in most of the other auction advertisements giving titles. A sale by Lloyd, one of eleven in this year, on 5 June, also included *Don Quixote*, besides Richardson's *Works* in 18 volumes; one by Lyons on 24 July listed works by Smollett, Sterne, Burns and Johnson; whilst Mort's for 10 July featured "a superior edition of Beaumont and Fletcher" besides the plays of Massinger and Ford. Mort's three 1849 auction catalogues are not especially interesting. The first, for a 15 January sale, contained several sets of the *Parlour Library* and *Parlour Novelist* and a quantity of older novels like Miss Porter's *Scottish Chiefs* and Mrs. Helme's *St. Clair of the Isles*. An invoice of books from "the celebrated house of Fisher, Son and Co.", to be sold by Mort on 26 March, was stocked, on the literary side, with equally uninspired works. The final surviving catalogue of "New and Valuable Books" for sale on 30 April typifies the remainder of Mort's 1849 sales, at least as they appear in newspaper advertisements. Besides such old favourites as *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *Paul and Virginia*, *Rasselas* and the poems of Kirke White, Scott, Cowper, Pope, Milton, Crabbe, Burns and Byron, the catalogue included recent works by Harriet Martineau, Sue, Bulwer Lytton, Lever, Ainsworth, William Howitt, James, Gleig, Carleton, Reynolds, Marryat, Dumas, Bremer, and Henry Cockton. Many of these authors reappeared in the largest book auction conducted in 1849 — by Mort on 21 and 22 December — "About 3000 VOLUMES, comprising the best assortment of Books ever imported into this market". Appropriately enough, this further consignment from Henry Bohn was headed "CHRISTMAS PRESENTS"; one imagines the greatest competition being aroused for such celebrated new novels as *Dombey and Son* and *Vanity Fair*. Six other works by Dickens were listed, including his recent *The Haunted Man*, with Thackeray also represented by his *Book of Snobs*. *Dombey and Son* had previously appeared in block letters at the bottom of an advertisement for a sale by Lloyd on 17 December. Presumably also timed for the Christmas market, this collection from "an eminent London Bookseller" contained, in addition, *Vanity Fair*, Samuel Warren's *Now and Then* (1848) and Macaulay's *History of England* (1849), as well as other modern novels by Dickens, Scott, Bulwer Lytton, Carleton, Lockhart, Michael Scott, Gleig and Miss Bremer.

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¹ Brief accounts of bookselling prior to 1840 can be found in Elizabeth Webby, "English Literature in Early Australia: 1820-1829", *Southerly* 27 (1967), 266-285, and "English Literature in Early Australia: 1830-1839", *Southerly* 36 (1976), 73-87. "English Literature in Early Australia: 1840-1849", *Southerly* 36 (1976), 200-222, 299-317, deals only with the literary works most frequently advertised in this period. See also Elizabeth Webby, "A Checklist of Early Australian Booksellers' and Auctioneers' Catalogues and Advertisements: 1800-1849" *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin* 3 (1978), 123-148, 4 (1979), 33-62, 95-150 and Wallace Kirsop, "Consignment Sales and Britain's Nineteenth-Century Colonial Book Trade", in Library Association of Australia, *Proceedings of the 19th Biennial Conference held in Tasmania, August 1977*, (Hobart, 1977), pp.90-106.

² Unless otherwise stated, Sydney book advertisements appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

³ See *Settlers and Convicts, 1847* (1954), pp.90-91.

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