

# Advice for Scholarly Editors of Australian Literature: “Just Push On”

PAUL EGGERT

## Speaking Personally ...

In July 2007 the tenth and last title of the Academy Editions of Australian Literature was launched at a literary conference in Brisbane with a speech from the novelist David Malouf, a response from the editor Jennifer Strauss, and, appropriately, some good red wine. The edition was the second and final volume of *The Collected Verse of Mary Gilmore*. At 850 pages the book was just as heavy (in every sense) as the other nine titles had been. We had cut no corners. We had begun work on the whole series in 1992, and the first volume appeared in 1996.<sup>1</sup> Harold Love, gravely ill, was not at the launch; but he had been there from the start of the project as a member of the Editorial Board—and indeed for some years before the start, as I shall explain. Accordingly, this essay has a historical cast and (for me, unavoidably as I write) a personal flavour. My focus is on the activity of scholarly editing in Australia, in particular that of the Academy Editions series, and the challenging intellectual and institutional context within which it functioned.

There were perhaps eighty people in attendance at the launch. Standing deliberately at the rear overlooking the proceedings, I felt for the first time as general editor a satisfying sense of completion, or near enough to completion, as of a promise fulfilled. I felt not just relief, as at the launches of the earlier volumes, but a quiet, untroubled pleasure. In the past at such occasions the pleasure I experienced was always tinged with anxiety.

Anxiety is something general editors have to live with, unless they are exceedingly lucky and have, say, a Bollingen Foundation to take financial and moral responsibility for seeing an important series of editions through. The anxiety I refer to is not so much the feeling that someone at the launch, or a reviewer perhaps, will open the volume and immediately find a typo. Rather, I mean the organisational anxieties that never seem to end: the anxiety that one of the commissioned editors might

<sup>1</sup> The Academy Editions of Australian Literature, all published by the University of Queensland Press, are: Henry Kingsley, *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn*, ed. Stanton Mellick, Patrick Morgan and Paul Eggert (1996); *The Journal of Annie Baxter Darwin 1858–1868*, ed. Lucy Frost (1998); Henry Handel Richardson, *Maurice Guest*, ed. Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele (1998); Marcus Clarke, *His Natural Life*, ed. Lurline Stewart (2001); Henry Handel Richardson, *The Getting of Wisdom*, ed. Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele (2001); Catherine Martin, *An Australian Girl*, ed. Rosemary Campbell (2002); *The Collected Verse of Mary Gilmore*, vol. 1, 1886–1929, ed. Jennifer Strauss (2004); *Australian Plays for the Colonial Stage 1834–1899*, ed. Richard Fotheringham (2006); Rolf Boldrewood, *Robbery Under Arms*, ed. Paul Eggert and Elizabeth Webby (2006); *The Collected Verse of Mary Gilmore*, vol. 2, 1930–1962, ed. Jennifer Strauss (2007).

stand on their dignity and cause an almighty fight because of a directive from the Editorial Board about some aspect of the editorial policy; *or* the anxiety that my copious marking-up of errors or imprecisions in, or requests for more work or for partial rewriting of, what an editor had just submitted for the second or third time might give mortal offence; *or* (as in the early years of the project) that some senior Aust. Lit. academics would take against the series because the Australian Academy of the Humanities had initiated it rather than the professional society charged with the promotion of the study of Australian literature. There was in fact some of this suspicion to contend with, and it emerged forcefully in a couple of the early reviews, but then fell away. Another potential problem was that the feminist 1980s and then the multi-culturalist 1990s had created the belief that scholarly editing enforces a canon, the acceptance of which involves an unholy alliance with other forms of political, gender and cultural power. I expected to get that reckless criticism and had my answer ready; but by 1996, when our first volume was published, the commentators had grown tired of saying it. On the other hand, by then there was some criticism that a couple of the works we had chosen to edit were not canonical enough. But none of this proved fatal.

There was, however, the ever-present possibility that the funding body's expectation of productivity would not be met and funding would be withdrawn, or that, with a changing presidency and Council membership, the priorities of the sponsoring body, the Australian Academy of the Humanities, might shift towards other scholarly projects before we could get the opportunity to finish the volumes. Similarly, there was the chance that the tripartite committee structure we set up to administer the Academy Editions series financially and editorially would itself become divided or dissatisfied. Or that the publisher, the University of Queensland Press, would pull out because of insufficient financial returns from sales. That was in fact a real and continuous risk. Both the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the Press deserve, indeed, our collective thanks for sticking with the series to the extent of ten expensive scholarly editions, all with high production values—something unprecedented in Australia. Another danger was whether our commissioned editors would last the distance. A few withdrew when they saw how much work was involved to achieve the required standards; this was understandable, as scholarly editions take too long to be compatible with satisfactory career progression in the post-Dawkins Australian university.

Much of my job was training the editors and then commenting on the successive drafts of their work. In the early years of the project I was assisted in this by a full-time research associate, Elizabeth Morrison, and in later years by a number of part-time research assistants and a typesetter—the same one (Caren Florance) who set Harold's Rochester edition for Oxford University Press. There was precious little tradition of scholarly editing to fall back on in Australia, other than in Old Icelandic, Old and Middle English, and some in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works. The study of Australian literature in the 1980s and 1990s was tracking the

gradual maturing towards appreciating the need for scholarly editing of its classics that the study of American literature had made in the 1960s. And we too would soon have our Lewis Mumford- and Edmund Wilson-style detractors. Their attack on the Modern Language Association's Center for Editing American Authors in the late 1960s became the stuff of legend. The fact that the Academy Editions series got through all of this, not unaffected but relatively unscathed, I now think of as a near-miracle—hence my sense of pleasurable relief at that book launch in 2007.

*Why*, I sometimes ask myself, is scholarly editing so frequently embattled or, if not, ignored? Think of the disputes in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when new editions and the attribution of authorship seemed culturally central. Or, jumping ahead, recall the disputes over Shakespeare-editing of the 1980s, the linked anti-Bardolatry movement, and then the performance-Shakespeare movement and the materialist-Shakespeare. The disputes continue into the present day. Witness also the not-so-funny fun-and-games that Hans Gabler had to endure for a decade after his genuinely groundbreaking edition of Joyce's *Ulysses* of 1984.

Editing of a scholarly kind (indeed, of any kind) may not be a sexy occupation; but it is always with us, and has been since the time of Zenodotus and Aristarchus at the great Library of Alexandria. Because editing responds, as it must and as best it can, to basic conditions of textual transmission over time, to the complexities of that transmission and to the slowly changing understanding of what works *are*—because editing thereby assumes a cultural responsibility to the past and to readers in the editor's present—it is fundamental. It goes on being with us. Any one of us can assist or hinder the activity; none of us can finally stop it. Scholarly editing will always return, different in each generation, a response to and reflection of empirical ways of thinking at the time.

Scholarly editing and especially theoretical reflections on it have the capacity to enlighten and modify cultural agendas, though only rarely to initiate them. Now, after the long era of post-'68 literary Theory, the field of textual studies is regaining some importance, partly because of its relevance to the rapidly emerging book-history movement and partly because the editorial theory movement of the 1980s and 1990s retained a healthy dose of empiricism. This meant that its ideas did not immediately date and it explains why, in relation to the recent, so-called empirical turn in literary studies, there appears to be a new audience for it.



When the Academy Editions series came to an end in 2007 there were two titles from our original planning left unfinished. I discussed one of them with Harold only three months before his death. Having been warned of his rapid deterioration by friends at Monash University, and having a pretext to fly to Melbourne, I drove from Tullamarine airport to his home. Finding him in some pain but yet glad of my visit, I mentioned a volume of high-resolution colour photocopies of Henry Lawson

manuscripts I had in the car. With evident pleasure, he immediately rose to the bait. Although he had not seen the text-documents before, his probing questions and equally telling suggestions about their evidence of the production methods that led to the publication of *While the Billy Boils* in 1896 showed me that Harold's text-critical powers, which I had seen many a time exercised at Editorial Board meetings, had not dimmed. He was clearly delighted that the good work would be continuing into the future. When the series had encountered trouble of the kinds I have described in its early years, his advice had been consistent and simple: "Just push on!" It was no different now.

And yet of course, over those fifteen years of his service on the Board in dealing with the problems of editing Australian works, Harold was only going at half-pace. His real and absorbing—his *great*—contribution would lie elsewhere, in the text-critical and editorial study of seventeenth-century English literature, and it was coming into print in Harold's fifties and sixties in a trilogy of monographs that commenced with *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England*, published in 1993, took a different but related direction in *Attributing Authorship* (2002) and then continued in *English Clandestine Satire 1660–1702* (2004). These three books, together with his innovative editions of Rochester (1999) and, with Robert Hume, of Buckingham (2007) have established Harold's reputation as one of the finest literary scholars Australia has ever produced. Though this formidable productivity was happening in the very period during which he was serving on the Board, he scarcely mentioned it at its regular all-day meetings.

He evidently felt that there was no need. His intellectual curiosity about the unusual, indeed novel textual situations that the editors were uncovering was boundless. The exigencies of colonial book culture, once recognised as such, demanded new thinking and new editorial solutions. As I felt my way towards them, and tried to estimate their effects on the layout and evolving conventions of the editions, it was salutary to know I had an Editorial Board that would steer me away, if necessary, from the danger of eccentricity. Harold's capacity to shed light on a knotty problem by coming into the conversation from an unpredictable angle, sometimes in a theatrical voice or with a chuckling sense of merriment, lightened the mood as it often lit the way towards editorial or organisational solutions. His exceedingly tenacious memory (a capacity that he consciously cultivated and fostered all his life) surprised me on many occasions. *How* did he know that the solidly researched account of the Peninsular Wars in the Historical Background appendix to the Academy Edition of *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* had got one of its battles wrong when the editor's prose itself gave no hint of it? It was fixed. Thereafter I snapped to attention whenever Harold hinted at possible error in any explanatory note; this led to numerous corrections and many new annotations in the successive volumes.

Like most Australian academics in the 1990s and 2000s I sat through—and, as I became more senior, chaired—all too many morale-sapping institutional meetings;

this period was not a good one for the traditional humanities, and academics were quickly losing effective control of the institutions with which they had idealistically identified and previously thought of as their own. The gatherings of the Editorial Board (Harold, Virginia Blain, Chris Tiffin and Elizabeth Webby) were, on the contrary, meetings that I looked forward to, even though each one occasioned me of course a great deal of preparatory work. I valued them for their camaraderie, for the sense of our common purpose that they invariably recharged, and for their confirmation, clarification or adaptation of policies I had been implementing or would be seeking to implement over the coming months.

### Creating the Argument for Scholarly Editions of Australian Works

By giving me as much time as he could afford, and giving more with exceedingly good grace whenever I badgered him, Harold was playing his part in seeing through a project for which he had argued and agitated in the early 1980s. His first address to the Society as President was entitled “Standards for Scholarly Editions of Australian and New Zealand Writers,” and it appeared in the *BSANZ Bulletin* in 1981. In that address he proposed that a standing committee of the Society be established to deal with the issue of standards and their practical consequences. That committee’s “Report” (delivered at the Society’s AGM in August 1983 and published in 1984) was drafted by Harold and benefited from the commentary of Don McKenzie and Alan Brissenden. Predictably for those who knew Harold’s attitude towards sloppy scholarship and publishers’ editing, it pulls no punches, but largely because of what he believed was at stake:

Literature, more than anything else, holds the soul of a nation: the inner essence of its history, the distillation of its communal experiences, its profoundest thoughts, its most deeply experienced feelings, and the forms of language, unique to itself, through which it pursues an ever-renewed journey in search of self-understanding. The serious study of major literature is not an occupation for triflers. It requires a commitment commensurate with the value of what is to be gained. And yet it is—or could be—available to all for the price of a collection of paperbacks and the membership of a library. The concern of the present report is with the conditions under which the texts of the national literatures of Australia and New Zealand are currently available to the inhabitants of those nations and of other nations, conditions which fall a good deal short of the ideal.<sup>2</sup>

After an explanation of how successive typesetting of classics inevitably leads to a gradual proliferation of unintended or unauthorised changes and a summary of the peculiar textual problems afflicting the published texts of works by Marcus Clarke, Henry Handel Richardson, Christopher Brennan, John Shaw Neilson and

<sup>2</sup> H. H. R. Love, “Report of the BSANZ Subcommittee on Standards for the Editing of Australian and New Zealand Literature,” *BSANZ Bulletin* 8 (1984): 1.

Katherine Mansfield, the report goes on to provide practical advice for would-be editors of works by Australasian writers.

Later that same year, in May 1984, Harold spoke at the Editing Texts conference in Canberra at the old Humanities Research Centre. It was the first paper I heard him give. He was taking aim at the present-day commercial publishers of Australian literature. Although he described the “aggressively nationalistic” policy of Angus & Robertson, the firm that had established literary publishing in Australia in the mid-1890s, as “wholly admirable ... the fact remains that the standards of quality control at A&R and their associated printers were never very high.” And he quipped that the journal *Poetry Australia*, given certain textual malfeasances in transmitting poets’ copy correctly, was evidently “organised rather along the lines of the Ruritanian navy with an editor, an associate editor, three contributing editors, a managing editor, and two consulting editors but apparently no proof reader.”<sup>3</sup>

This was another shot across the bows; and indeed there was something of a campaign brewing. The idea arose of approaching the Australian Academy of the Humanities (to which Harold would be elected as a Fellow in 1986) to sponsor a national scholarly-editing project. The Honorary Secretary of the Academy, John Hardy (at that time Professor of English at the Australian National University), set up an ad hoc committee at the end of 1983, convened by Wallace Kirsop, who was already a Fellow. In this way the BSANZ committee’s report, mentioned above and largely written by Harold, began to influence the Academy’s policy. So it was that both Hardy, for the Academy, and Harold—when serving as Acting Director for the second half of 1985 of the Monash Centre for Bibliographical and Textual Studies (which he had helped set up in 1981)—made complementary submissions to the Committee to Review Australian Studies in Tertiary Education (CRASTE). This review had been ordered in late 1984 by the Federal Government in the lead-up to the Australian bicentenary.

The CRASTE report appeared in 1987. Its “Recommendation 5b” was “that research grants bodies such as the Australian Research Grants Scheme give greater support to textual editing.” The recommendation recognised the fact that “The need for scholarly editions of major Australian works remains pressing.”<sup>4</sup> So, in turn, when John Mulvaney, the recently retired and energetic pre-historian and archaeologist, became Honorary Secretary in November 1989 and was looking to rejuvenate the Academy by committing its Council to sponsor an important long-term scholarly project, he found the case and the arguments for one already amply attested in the Academy’s files. Proposals for other projects had been put forward to the Academy

<sup>3</sup> Harold Love, “‘It makes me hate to see my work in print’: Current Texts of Australian Literature,” in *Editing Texts: Papers from a Conference at the Humanities Research Centre May 1984*, ed. J. C. Eade (Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, 1985), 78, 84.

<sup>4</sup> *Windows onto Worlds: Studying Australia at Tertiary Level* (Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 1987), 79, 78. The Report’s authors were Kay Daniels, Bruce Bennett and Humphrey McQueen.

in the preceding years, but Mulvaney judged Harold's to be of merit, consulted him on the matter and then sought to promote it.

I mention Harold's role in all of this in part to make the point that his emotional loyalties and affiliations were essentially for Australia in the present, while at the same time what was rapidly becoming his main intellectual project took him further backwards in time, and away. There was no contradiction for him in this, and it had the effect of putting him in constant contact with the highest overseas standards of literary scholarship. The dual orientation made him scathing of second-rate work—defended on the grounds that it served well enough here—when better, he knew, could be done.

Given that in the 1980s, as well as his advocacy for the editing of Australian works, Harold wrote two books on Australian colonial culture, as well as editing a collection of documents on the Australian stage, he would have been the obvious choice as intellectual leader of the envisaged project. But by then the die, for Harold, had been cast elsewhere. During the 1980s his two-volume edition with Robert Jordan of *The Works of Thomas Southerne* was under way (published 1988), and his groundbreaking research that would lead to his *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (1993) was starting to take definite form in his mind. I suspect that his year in Cambridge as Munby Fellow in Bibliography in 1986 was the turning-point for Harold. I remember being amazed by his report on this work given in 1989 at the Editing in Australia conference at ADFA, which I had organised. His reconstruction, from the evidence of surviving manuscripts, of the conditions of publication in seventeenth-century scriptoria (which themselves, according to longstanding assumptions about the triumph of the printed book, should not have existed), and his postulation of what he called the rolling archetype from which the copyings were made, demonstrated the extraordinary power of text-critical and bibliographical analysis to recover the past. This can be entrancing to the adept; and when Harold had settled on his patch he proceeded to reconfigure it in the at-once creative and rigorous way that Kirsop has described.<sup>5</sup>

Harold's activism, together with that of his colleagues, helps explain why the professional society—the Association for the Study of Australian Literature—that one might have expected to be the enthusiastic promoter of what became the Academy Editions of Australian Literature series failed in this duty (failed, indeed, to conceive it *as* a duty) and watched senior academics within the Bibliographical Society, none of whom were specialists in Australian literature, lay the necessary groundwork. Behind this explanation lies a deeper one, which is also to some extent an exoneration: the historical fact and the consequences of the sharp postwar division of the kingdom of literary studies, here and overseas, between literary critics on the

<sup>5</sup> Wallace Kirsop, "Harold Halford Russell Love 1937–2007," *Script & Print* 30 (2006, issued 2007): 241–49.

one hand and literary scholars on the other.<sup>6</sup> Harold was a scholar, and it took a determined one unafraid of controversy to grasp the nettle.

### Editing during the Period of Literary Theory

It is widely said now that the moment of Theory is over. But theorising as such can never be. Theoretical reflections on our methodologies of literary and textual research will always be necessary and inevitable. Nevertheless it is possible to say, with some confidence, that the high Theory movement has now become, or is rapidly becoming, historical, even while having left its traces, in differing ways, on every reader of this article—no matter how bibliographically inclined, no matter whether welcoming of the new thinking or resistant to it. That's as it should be.

The decades of the Theory movement were not supportive ones for scholarly editors, who continued to need argued principles to justify their interventions in texts from the past. Editors mediate between documents and readers. If they are to eliminate the confusion for readers that indulgence of editors' own subjective preferences would create—choosing the variant reading from a source they happen to prefer one day, and from another the next—then editors need to appeal to a coherent principle of textual authority. But authority and power were at the epicentre of the post-structuralist earthquake and were the special target of postcolonialist theorising. The Theory movement as a result gave no practical help to editors; the beguiling consolation of post-structuralist paradox was unavailable to them. Worst of all, the Theory movement helped to alienate a generation of postgraduates who were encouraged to see and dismiss bibliography as a positivist technology from the benighted, pre-Theory past.

On the bright side, editors were being stimulated to think harder about what they were doing. This was happening anyway in response to the discovery of new textual situations, but the Theory movement lent it urgency. From the late 1980s editors developed ideas of text-in-process as against what they called textual product—a finalised reading text based on authorial intention. This had been their traditional quarry. The New Bibliography had spawned this natural cousin to the self-contained text, which was the relatively untroubled object of analysis of the New Criticism and other regimes of close reading until the 1970s. Thereafter, the traditional editorial aim was increasingly in trouble, especially during the 1980s and 1990s. It received energetic discussion in editorial circles.

Editors were soon very early adopters of electronic editions, or at least the idea of them. From about 1989, editors began to speculate about how the electronic

<sup>6</sup>The *locus classicus* is the exchange between F. R. Leavis and F. W. Bateson in the early 1950s, conducted in the journals they edited: *Scrutiny* (Cambridge) and *Essays in Criticism* (Oxford). The essays (which are reprinted together with a "Rejoinder" by Leavis and a "Postscript" by Bateson in Leavis's *A Selection from Scrutiny*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968)) are, respectively: Bateson, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," *Essays in Criticism* 3 (1953): 1–27; and Leavis, "The Responsible Critic: Or the Function of Criticism at Any Time," *Scrutiny* 19 (1952–53): 162–83.



medium might solve their new theoretical dilemmas. Textual instability has always been in the forefront of editors' minds; the awareness was not born with post-structuralism (although the term meant something different there). For editors, it flowed from the varying inscriptions of texts in physical documents, not from a new post-structuralist theory of textuality now unanchored in authorship. Editors could never blithely assume that the text of the work being commented upon was self-identical. The documents they were working with typically forbade that easy assumption of New Criticism. In this situation, the electronic medium seemed like a godsend. The capaciousness of the medium, its capacity to embrace both textual transcription and documentary image, seemed potentially to offer a way of avoiding the partial and hierarchical reporting imposed by the codex critical edition. And, let's not forget, *hierarchial* was a derogatory term in the theoretical discourse of the 1980s.

Editors began to nominate sources of textual authority other than the author (for example, the authority of historical readerships, or the authority residing in the genetic history of the text's composition, revision and production). The upshot of this has been far less allegiance amongst editors than there used to be towards the notion of the ideal text of a work, defined as the text of final authorial intention that was typically corrupted in transmission. This new pluralism represented a marked shift in thinking, and the design of editions had gradually to change with it.

The Academy Editions series came out of this new moment of editorial self-awareness. It was the first big English-language editorial project to start its operations needing to face up to the challenge of the changed climate in editorial theory. Some Australian reviewers, coming from different backgrounds, didn't realise this and were prepared to settle for lower standards; and there was some misapprehension at first when a couple of them mistook the Academy Editions' obvious research role as reference books for that of a cheap reprint series intended for classroom use.<sup>7</sup> That misapprehension seems to have died the death, and I am pleased that, as of mid-2008, the Academy Editions text of *Maurice Guest* is being used in the new print-on-demand Classics Library series of the revived Sydney University Press. The Copyright Agency Limited is funding the series.

In practice, of course, the various Academy Editions, like all scholarly editions, grew out of intensive empirical research into the different versions of the works being edited: first of all identifying them bibliographically, then comparing their texts very carefully (much of which was computer-assisted) and then researching the

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion, see my essay "Why Critical Editing Matters: Responsible Texts and Australian Reviewers" in a special issue of *English Studies in Canada* devoted to scholarly editing: 27 (2001): 179–204. Other essays of mine referred to are "The Bibliographic Life of an Australian Classic: *Robbery Under Arms*," *Script & Print* 29 (2005): 73–92 and "The Literary Work of a Readership: *The Boy in the Bush* in Australia 1924–1926," *BSANZ Bulletin* 12 (1988): 149–66. My *Securing the Past: Conservation in Art, Architecture and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) extends the discussion of many of the points mentioned in the present essay—see chapters 7–10.

available archives to sort out the reasons why the texts changed, who was involved and what their motivations may have been, as well as linking all of these considerations to historical shifts in the conditions of authorship, literary taste and cultural climate. Editors needed the notion of the *work* to describe the boundaries of all the textual variation they were discovering and exploring.

The author was an agent in this textual variation, usually but not always the most important one. Richard Fotheringham's edition of two versions of a colonial pantomime in his Academy Edition *Australian Plays for the Colonial Stage 1834–1899* (2006) put that assumption into question straight away. But whatever approach to textual authority each editor proposed, it had to be tested as best we could against the history of the work's composition, revision and multiple productions. The history of the texts of the work in every case had to be *established*. It was never a matter of taking an earlier commentator's word for it. It meant coming face to face with the documentary evidence.

### **Text History and Book History**

This commitment to hard empirical research has various effects. I will deal with two. The *first* is something that is not obvious to users of the editions: that every entry in a textual apparatus is in effect a test of the editor's historical analysis. Put yourself in the editor's shoes. Because the chronology of the versions is frequently unclear or misleading, and because you sometimes have to record the texts of versions that are not extant but have been inferred from other evidence, and because you can mistake which text or combination of texts was used as copy for the next one in the chain of copying and typesetting, your apparatus, which has to be as economical as possible, will collapse in confusion if you have got your analysis wrong. In other words, there is a continuous feedback loop between the rationale for the editorial approach on the one hand and the text and apparatus on the other. It follows then that editions constitute an *argument* about the text's production. They first argue the case discursively and then embody it textually, with a supporting apparatus that allows the reader to contest the editor's conclusions and working method at every point. Not everyone notices that. This opening up to the reader of the work's textual instability through the apparatus affords literary-critical and other insights. The explanatory notes make an allied contribution. They support the reading text on the one hand while also unpacking it into its biographical and cultural contexts on the other.

There was an important *second* consequence of the pluralist editorial orientation that the Academy Editions series put into effect. I approach it via some stock-in-trade generalisations of recent editorial theory. The material embodiment of the work in a document necessarily changes it, not only textually. For a classic, each successive embodiment begs the question of the effect on successive generations of readers of the page layout, illustrations, images on dustjackets and paperback covers, even the pricing, the paper quality and binding. These material embodiments of the

work act, cumulatively, as a cultural index over time, since every one of them involves complex decision-making influenced by the prevailing cultural climate but mediated by the traditions of the trade.

In other words, a book-history perspective soon opens up questions about how a classic work, though under the same title, attracts different meanings into the orbit of its passage through time. The *Robbery Under Arms* serialised twice in Montreal in 1901–2, a few years after it had appeared in its third edition in cheap sixpenny format and some fourteen years after it had appeared in luxury three-volume format and then as a one-volume Colonial, was not *quite* the same work as readers in Australia or Britain read. The Montreal text was *not*, for a start, for it received a thorough bowdlerising. More subtly, the act of serialising gave the novel a new meaning during the Anglo-Boer War, when the francophile Prime Minister of Canada, Sir Wilfred Laurier, was reluctant to send troops to help Britain. A potent tale about strapping colonial lads such as Dick and Jim Marston from the Australian colonies, which *had* sent troops to South Africa, had a political lesson to enforce, and the anglophile Hugh Graham's stable of *Star* newspapers in Montreal were the right ones to do it. On another level, the study of editions and their dustjackets showed me that this same Empire classic enjoyed a second phase of its bibliographic life after World War II, a phase quite distinct from its first, long one. The novel was obviously serving as an answer to a changed cultural situation. I discussed this at length in an article in these pages in 2005.

I first saw the need for a much broadened ambit for bibliographical enquiry twenty years ago: the need to understand works in terms of their reception, or receptions, not only of their initiating or surviving textual witnesses. The pluralist editorial methodology of recent years has been encouraging editors down this path, and the new forms of postwar French book history are at last having their effects on the anglophone world. Certainly the Academy Editions provide readers with most of the necessary information, although I must admit I was not nearly as clear about the need for it when we started the series as I soon became, just when, in fact, we were getting the first title *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* ready for production; it was Elizabeth Morrison, a historian by training, who provided the spark. This book-historical obligation for modern works was not normal beforehand, as for instance with the Cambridge Works of D. H. Lawrence, a series for which I had worked. Editions had been focused on text history, not book history, especially for editions or printings with which the author had not been involved or that came after his or her death. In the Academy Editions we learnt to respect both text-historical and book-historical obligations, while acknowledging that there is a limit to the amount of information that a single volume can encompass.

What all newcomer scholarly editors soon learn, if they don't know it already, is that one needs bibliographical terminology and bibliographical distinctions if the textual transmission of a work is to be analysed over time. And one needs archival information, which one has to dig for. One needs to learn a lot more about the

book trade, and, especially for Australian works, what the consequences were for authors and their texts of being on the receiving end of a cosy Imperial arrangement for profitable book distribution from London. One route to this understanding is paying attention to the cost of books and to their formats.

I was on this path on the day that I last saw Harold with the Lawson manuscripts. I could only tell him of my initial hunches from having recently begun work on the Angus & Robertson Ledgers in the Mitchell Library. This was for an edition of Henry Lawson's collection of short stories of 1896, *While the Billy Boils*, which Elizabeth Webby and I are editing. I have since followed up with some painstaking work on these highly detailed Ledgers, and performed some calculations that I report now.

The report may have more effect if I put it in the form of a quiz. Who was the more important literary figure in the 1890s in Australia: the little-remembered poet Edward Dyson or Henry Lawson? The automatic answer is "Henry Lawson, of course!" And indeed, the Ledgers back this up, if one judges in terms of sales and payments to the two authors. So I ratchet-up the question. Who was the more important author for 1890s Australia: Rolf Boldrewood or Henry Lawson? Why, once again, "Lawson, of course!"—the fine new realist talent, the democratic voice of the Outback and of the down-and-out in the city. In 1896 he came into his own with two very well-received volumes: *In the Days When the World Was Wide* (verse) and *While the Billy Boils* (short stories); and both went through numerous impressions and reprintings in rearranged formats for the rest of the decade. In comparison, Boldrewood's best days as a writer of prose fiction (the early 1880s) were long gone, though he did continue to publish through the 1890s.

That's a standard literary-historical answer. But does the book-historical evidence confirm it? If one compares the sales of *While the Billy Boils*, as I have for the seven years from 1896 to 1903, with sales of *Robbery Under Arms* from when it first appeared in one-volume book form in 1889 for the seven years to 1896, a clear conclusion emerges: judged by sales and therefore the extent of his readership, Boldrewood was far, far more influential than Lawson in the 1890s—if not on other new writers perhaps, then on forming or confirming the tastes of the general readership. This does not fit the radical nationalist story of the critical 1890s decade in Australia, nor the 1970s feminist rewriting of the story. But it seems to be true.

The disproportion between the two writers only gets steeper as we reach the end of the decade. Lawson's notorious conclusion in his 1899 essay "Pursuing Literature' in Australia" was that the Australian writer "whose talents have been recognized" ought to get to London as soon as he can, "go steerage, stow away, swim, and seek London ... rather than stay in Australia till his genius turned to gall, or beer."<sup>8</sup> For this outburst, Lawson copped a good deal of flak in the *Bulletin* for months afterwards. Sad to say, I fear he was right. Boldrewood's income for the seven years

<sup>8</sup> Henry Lawson, "Pursuing Literature' in Australia," *Bulletin*, 21 January 1899, Red Page.

after the appearance of his novel in one-volume format in 1889 (which is the point at which the novel became successful), when compared to the seven years after the publication of *While the Billy Boils*, netted him 66 times more income than Lawson. This is only partly explained by the better terms that Boldrewood was able to extract from his publisher in London than Lawson could from Angus & Robertson in Sydney. Boldrewood's far greater success depended on the sales and distribution capacities of his well-placed Imperial publisher Macmillan.<sup>9</sup>

Probably we would find, if we dug down further into the archives of several British publishers, that Marcus Clarke and even Henry Kingsley were more influential than Lawson in the 1890s too. When Joseph Furphy famously complained in chapter 4 of *Such Is Life* (1901) about the influence of Kingsley's kind of fictional Romance in *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* he was probably talking about a present-day fact, not of a novel from 1859. If so, this is almost certainly a factor of cheap book distribution.

Book history generates its own paradoxes, and they are usually empirical ones. They double back around on our traditional literary-historical ones, and they weave in and out of the bibliographical analysis of textual history and varying formats. Whatever else they do, scholarly editions open up the successive phases of the life of works.

*University of New South Wales, Canberra*

<sup>9</sup> Boldrewood's sales figures for *Robbery Under Arms* and his income are reported in the Academy Edition, ed. Eggert and Webby, at lxxi and lxx n127. The figures and other considerations that need to contextualise the sales and income information for Lawson will be reported in the forthcoming edition of *While the Billy Boils*.