

**Places of Publication  
and the Australian Book Trade:  
A Study of Angus & Robertson's London Office,  
1938-1970**

By

Jason Donald Ensor

BA (UQ) Post Grad Dip Australian Studies (UQ) MA (UQ)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Humanities Research Institute and  
School of Media, Communications and Culture  
Murdoch University  
Perth, Western Australia

October 2010

## CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>		iv
<b>Statement of Originality</b>		v
<b>Acknowledgements</b>		iv
<b>Author's Note</b>		x
<b>Photo: The London Office Circa 1950s</b>		ix
1	Introduction	1
	Sample Documents	24
2	Is a Picture Worth 10,175 Australian Novels?	28
 <b>The Australian Book Trade, 1930 to the Second World War</b>		
3	Reprints, International Markets and Local Literary Taste	54
4	“The special preserve” of British publishers: Imported Titles and the Australian Book Trade, 1930	68
5	“A policy of splendid isolation”: Angus & Robertson (Sydney), British Publishers and the Politics of Co-operation, 1933 to the Second World War	101
 <b>Angus &amp; Robertson's London Office, Second World War to 1956</b>		
6	“We are just boys from the bush when it comes to publishing in London”: Angus & Robertson's London Office, Second World War to 1949	130
7	The Case of the “Bombshell Salesman”: Angus & Robertson's London Office, 1950 to 1952	159
8	“Too Australian to be any good in England”: Angus & Robertson's London Office, 1953 to 1956	191

## **Angus & Robertson's London Office, 1957-1970**

9	“Kicked to pieces”: Angus & Robertson's London Office, 1957 to 1961	216
10	“Re-assembling the pieces”: Angus & Robertson's London Office, 1962-1965	255
11	“Taking some of the sail off the ship”: Angus & Robertson's London Office, 1966-1970	289
12	Learning from a Distance (Conclusion): Angus & Robertson, Exports and Places of Publication	316
	<b>Appendixes A-E</b>	325
	<b>Bibliography</b>	374

## **ABSTRACT**

*Places of Publication* is a sustained study of the practice of Angus & Robertson's London office as publishers and exporters / importers, using a mixed-methods approach combining the statistical analysis of bibliographic data with an interpretative history of primary resource materials. Although this thesis is the fourth to interrogate the extensive Mitchell Library holdings of the Angus & Robertson archives, it is the first whose central concern is the company's production and distribution of Australian titles within the United Kingdom and further afield through its London office. Often indicated as worthy of further investigation, this is an area of history which to date has only been broadly scoped without reference to key (often restricted) archival volumes.

Exploring the premise that there are cultural and commercial links between books produced at home and books imported from overseas, this study examines whether an Australian publisher could avoid becoming subject to the same socio-economic forces that British publishers claimed underpinned their international trade. Indeed, within the historical context of a strong British presence in Australian publishing and bookselling across the course of the twentieth century, this thesis asks in what ways did Angus & Robertson replicate, challenge or transform the often highly-criticised commercial practices of British publishers in order to develop an export trade for Australian books in the United Kingdom?

## **STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and to the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Jason Donald Ensor

Date 22/10/2010

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is the product of four years research conducted at two different institutions, but its roots run deep into my professional past. I can think of two distinct periods in my life that influenced this project. The first occurred in the mid to late 1990s when, as a masters postgraduate student at the Australian Studies Centre, University of Queensland, I accepted the position of production editor from the centre's director, Richard Nile. Although space was limited in the tiny shared Brisbane office, tucked away in a corner of the Michie building next to the offices of *Hecate* and the *Bibliography of Australian Literature*, what I remember most was the terrific journey that led to the publication of each book and series issue. Overtaxed and often running on the smell of an oily rag, the Australian Studies Centre regularly produced editions of the *Journal of Australian Studies*, *Australian Cultural History*, *New Talents* and books in the UQP Australian Studies and Symposia Series. Needless to say, my contribution in typesetting involved a steep learning curve and was but one role in a team that included readers, guest editors, authors, the publisher and a member of UQP who calculated the placement of images in each publication using just a pencil, a ruler and some keen mathematical intuition. I was hooked on publishing and working for Richard from 1995-2000 at the Australian Studies Centre remains a period of employment against which all others have been subsequently measured.

In the decade after I completed my masters degree in Australian studies, a circuitous path led me back to the field of publishing and across the Nullarbor Plain to Perth. From 2000-2006 I worked in Brisbane as a sole trader building online business management software for Queensland arts organisations. Michael Peterson introduced me to the professional side of the Woodford Folk Festival and through its director, Bill Hauritz, I met my future partner Rana who was his executive assistant at the time. In working with the festival and other culturally important organisations, I learnt much about the different, seemingly incompatible affordances between arts and information technology development. This period solidified my interest in work at the intersection of humanities and computing but I had no forum through which to explore it further. When the business started to overwhelm all waking hours in early January 2006, I received sage advice from Rana that reshaped my career. We took the difficult decision to close the business and I accepted Richard's invitation to complete a PhD on the Australian book trade at Curtin University of Technology, Perth. After six years, I was returning to my publishing roots.

So, we packed up our lives in Brisbane and over eight days drove from one side of Australia to the other in a little two-door red Barina. Rana and I assumed that we would both continue along our path of working in the arts and humanities sector. It is fair to say that we didn't plan to arrive in Perth pregnant with our first son Xavier William (our second son Felix Milton followed in 2008, just seventeen months after Xavier's birth). I vividly remember the moment we first found out, caught between the old world we had left behind in Queensland and the new world we were yet to explore in Western Australia. A half day after we had arrived in Perth, temporarily housed in a Motor Inn at the edge of the city until we organised rental accommodation and I enrolled in my studies, the pregnancy test glowed positive and I subsequently had a fit of hysterical laughter which lasted fifteen minutes. My anxiety seemed to centre on the fact that as a student again in my mid-thirties I was about to support a family on an arts scholarship. This was in retrospect a naïve response. For while it is true that only one person can research and write a dissertation, it nevertheless takes an entire community to author a PhD.

I have been very fortunate that my work has benefitted from the generous support of friends and family. For the many valuable discussions, comments and advice regarding my studies, I am grateful to Glen McWilliams (whose talks inspired the idea behind chapter two), Gina McWilliams (who also fed me during my various trips to Sydney and provided keen legal acumen regarding the discovery of import licensing notices), Katherine Bode, Nicholas Birns, Carol Hetherington, Shef Rogers, Tim Coronel, Paul Genoni, Ivor Indyk, Kevin Mark, Drew Whitehead for providing me with a temporary home whenever I visited Brisbane (and for the virtually-based diversions), Kevin Price, Quintin Hughes, Natasha Buzzacott, Joanne Jones, Leigh Dale, Glenda Larke Noramly (for an extended discussion regarding Australian reading habits in the early twentieth century), Paul Arthur, John Yiannakis, Tim Dolin, Lisa Dempster (for inviting me to host a digital session at the 2010 Emerging Writers Festival), Laurie Steed (for allowing me to wax on about Australian literature and Twitter on the SPUNC forum), Per Henningsgaard, Iva Polak, Will Smithwick (who would host a small wine bar tour of Perth following the completion of every substantial writing milestone) and Ida Smithwick. For the interstate visits which pulled me away from studies and vitally reconnected me to the world beyond the screen, I owe special thanks to Chris Neilson, Francis Smithwick (who sadly passed away just weeks before the completion of this project), Robyn and Phillip Simpson, and Andrew Gilbert and Brian J. Funk. When I wore my serious writing face for most of 2010 in our home office, I thank

Cathy Johnston and Ian Vandeklashorst, David and Lynda Thomas, and especially Erica and Joe Mahon, and Will and Ida Smithwick, for their help looking after Rana and the boys.

During the early Curtin University phase of research before my transfer to Murdoch University, the feedback I received from Tim Dolin demonstrated, among other things, that my method of linking large-scale quantitative analysis to a literary-historical case-study was not as well developed as I had thought and the structure of the thesis is stronger because of Tim. For enabling access to the restricted second collection of the Angus & Robertson archives filed at the State Library of New South Wales, I am grateful to Arthur Easton, Jennifer Broomshead, Rosie Block, Harper Collins and Helen Benacek. Arthur Easton in particular made the process of retrieving and digitising 18,000 documents less cumbersome than it should have been. As a long-serving curator of the Angus & Robertson archives, his passing away is an incalculable loss for Australian researchers.

Financially, this project has been supported at various stages by a Curtin University of Technology Postgraduate Scholarship (2006), an Australian Postgraduate Award (2007-2010), an Australian Literary Cultures, Australian Intellectual Cultures and Western Australian culture and History Top-Up Award (2007-2010), an Association for the Study of Australian Literature Postgraduate Travel Scholarship (July 2008) and a Murdoch University PhD Completion Scholarship (2010). I am very appreciative of Murdoch University which provided ideal working conditions for all of 2009 and 2010. This enabled me to complete my analysis and write up my thesis following the closure of the Australia Research Institute at Curtin University. Julie Blake, Ashleigh Ninnis, Karen Olkowski and Neha Lakhiani in particular administrated my transition to Murdoch University in a careful and efficient manner.

Funding for my two research trips to the Mitchell Library in Sydney to access archival documents was provided through Richard Nile's CI-1 ARC Discovery grant, "Colonial Publishing and Literary Democracy in Australia: An Analysis of the Influence on Australian Literature of British and Australian Publishing". Additionally, support for my research was supplemented with casual work from Richard Nile at the Australia Research Institute (2007-2009), Tim Dolin in regards to the Australian Common Reader project (2007-2009), John Yiannakis in regards to three significant typesetting projects (2009-2010) and Paul Arthur in regards to the Australian National Biography Centre in Canberra (2010). Without this



additional employment, my scholarship would not have stretched the distance with the arrival of our two sons.

Above all, this thesis could not have been completed without Richard Nile, Will Smithwick, Ida Smithwick and Rana Ensor. Richard I have known for over sixteen years ever since I first hovered outside his office at the University of Queensland in 1994, curious about the possibilities of Australian Studies after having just withdrawn from a Diploma in Education course the week before. Richard continues to be an inspiration for me. Throughout this project, his wisdom, guidance and encouragement has been unwavering, with the welfare of not only myself but my family uppermost in every arrangement. Being someone's PhD supervisor might be the most thankless and demanding of all relationships but it is the most important in a project of this size. To Richard, I am simply forever thankful. Similarly, I owe a great debt to Rana's family, Will and Ida Smithwick, who have been the strongest supporters of this project. These two remarkable and determined people have provided stability, especially when the going has gotten tough, and have smoothed out bumps in the road that at times seemed overwhelming. Together they have helped us make Perth a home and adjust to the conflicting demands of family, work and study.

Last but certainly not least this study is dedicated to the Ensor clan. Over the four years that I worked on this thesis, we quickly grew from a newly married couple to a family of four. The past few years might have been described as either raising children in an office and writing a PhD in a day care centre but they were all the more fun (if not complicated) for it. I owe an indescribable amount of thanks to Rana who has not only served as a sounding board for every single page of this thesis but has been the glue between my family and research commitments. A faithful ally in the adventures that have characterised our time in Perth, Rana is my anchor in the world.

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

Earlier versions of some content appearing in chapters one, two, three and five were published during this study's course of research in the following peer-reviewed publications:

Jason Ensor, "Reprints, International Markets and Local Literary Taste: New Empiricism and Australian Literature", *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature* (May 2008): 198-218.

Richard Nile and Jason Ensor, "The Novel, the Implicated Reader and Australian Literary Cultures, 1950-2008", in Peter Pierce, ed., *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press (2009): 517-548.

Jason Ensor, "Is a Picture Worth 10,175 Australian Novels?", in Katherine Bode and Robert Dixon, eds., *Resourceful Reading: The New Empiricism, eResearch and Australian Literary Culture*, Sydney: Sydney University Press (2009): 240-273.

Jason Ensor, "Still Waters Run Deep: Empirical Methods and the Migration Patterns of Regional Publishers' Authors and Titles within Australian Literature", *Antipodes: A North American Journal of Australian Literature*, Brooklyn, New York: American Association of Australian Literary Studies (2010): 197-208.

Jason Ensor, "A Policy of Splendid Isolation: Angus & Robertson, George G. Harrap and the Politics of Co-operation in the Australian Book Trade During the Late 1930s", *Script & Print* 34.1, Burwood, VIC: Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand (2010): 34-42.

**THE LONDON OFFICE (CIRCA 1950s)**

**Source: Angus & Robertson Archives**

Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney

PXD385/PDX385-58a and PXD385/PDX385-59a

