

INTRODUCTION

‘**R**OLF BOLDREWOOD’ was the principal pseudonym of Thomas Alexander Brown (or Browne, as he became in 1864). The man is now almost forgotten, but the pen-name has lived on, its currency largely deriving from his famous bushranger novel of the 1880s, *Robbery Under Arms*, one of the few enduring classics of colonial Australian writing. In fact, Browne published sixteen novels, two collections of short stories and two small books on farm management. But this bushranger novel was the work that earned him an international reputation, facilitated in large part by the success of Macmillan & Co. as an imperial publisher and distributor. In the abridged form in which Macmillan printed the novel, it sold in very large numbers until Browne’s death in 1915 and quite solidly thereafter. It captured some vital part of the spirit of the times; and in some measure must have continued to do so, for, except for brief periods, it has never been out of print. Groundbreaking work in the 1970s revealed in outline the changes that the novel’s text underwent as it moved from a serialised form in the *Sydney Mail* in 1882–83, to a three-volume edition published by Remington in London in 1888 and then to the one-volume Macmillan abridgement of 1889. It was argued that the shortening was aesthetically for the better.¹ But readers have been in no position to judge, for the form in which it was presented to its first Australian audience has been unavailable

¹ See Alan Brissenden’s *Rolf Boldrewood*, Australian Writers and their Works series (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1972); ‘*Robbery Under Arms*: A Continuing Success’ in *The Australian Experience: Critical Essays on Australian Novels*, ed. W. S. Ramson (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), pp. 38–60; and *Rolf Boldrewood*, ed. Brissenden, Portable Australian Authors (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979).

for well over a century – until now. The present edition provides the full text of the serial, and it records the gradual dilution of its idiomatic flavour, and the break-up of the distinctively Australian speaking-voice rhythms of the first-person narrator's voice, as successive typesetters regularised and formalised the presentation of the text. In addition, the identification of whole new versions of the novel that were overlooked in the 1970s has enabled the process of adaptation of the original text into an imperial bestseller to be freshly understood.

While the 1970s assumption that the novel's cultural function is aesthetic undoubtedly remains true to some extent, the novel also functions discursively, adapting stories Browne had read in the newspapers or been told, against traditions of popular theatre and romance. The special quality of voice that he invented for this work allowed the novel to absorb those stories the more readily, sensitising it to the looser functioning of the oral tale as he satisfied (or stretched) his readers' likely expectations of a printed novel.

Browne wrote novels in order to supplement his income as a stipendiary magistrate. He considered himself a gentleman: there were appearances to maintain and bills to pay. The pseudonym neatly divided his official and personal life (in which class expectations were a major factor) from his function as a writer. His dealings with the tale need to be understood as the actions of a man whose motives were not purely aesthetic and who went on to exploit the intellectual property that he had created originally for the humbler purposes of serial publication.

Woven through the mass of reminiscences that Browne and members of his family and friends left behind is a story of the writing, publication and reception of *Robbery Under Arms*; but it never achieves clarity or exactness about what actually happened. Browne and the others evidently assumed that a tale of success from unlikely beginnings had to be told; and so, understandably, they provided it, attracting some celebrity to themselves in the process. Newspaper and magazine journalists were only too happy to retail it. So a great deal was written at first and second hand about the original sources of the story and characters and locations in it. Sometimes this and other information, provided many years after the event, was only half-recollected; sometimes it gives useful clues without clearly

pointing the way. All of it has had to be tested against bibliographical analysis, and against contemporaneous documentation including the extant sections of Browne's diary, the letters of contemporaries and the very substantial archive of Macmillan & Co. This Introduction is an account of the findings of this research; they serve as the basis for the editorial policy adopted in the present edition.

From Brown to Boldrewood

The pen-name 'Rolf Boldrewood' derives from a reference in a long poem, *Marmion* (1808), by Sir Walter Scott, whose popular mixture of historical romance and adventure left its mark on the work of many nineteenth-century writers. Brown was born probably on 6 August 1826, although the evidence both of the date and of his paternity is not definitive; and the man who acknowledged him as his son, Sylvester John Brown, had himself been born illegitimate, of Irish stock, and taken his mother's name. As a boy, Sylvester ran away to sea and, by the time of his marriage in Mauritius in 1826, he was a successful merchant mariner with his own ship. His wife, Eliza, was the daughter of a civil servant Thomas Alexander, both of whom he had taken as passengers to the island. The future novelist was born six months later, in London.

After a voyage to Bombay and back in 1827–28 in Brown's *Proteus*, the family left England permanently in 1831, with convicts as cargo: Captain Brown would soon set up a whaling business in Sydney, New South Wales. Although the colony had been in existence for only a little over four decades, and had boasted (in 1825) a non-Indigenous population of only 36,000, the Captain's son Tom was nevertheless able to receive a classical education at W. T. Cape's Sydney Academy and then Sydney College (forerunner of the Sydney Grammar School). He was also able to enjoy the comforts of a prosperous, middle-class life in a substantial home at Enmore in Sydney, designed for the family by the architect John Verge in 1835. So Tom Brown came to awareness in a Sydney in which, as his biographer Paul de Serville points out, he 'accepted the presence of convicts as normal and useful and he accepted as natural a society that was hierarchical. Brown was never to be a democrat, even if he appreciated the virtues of ordinary Australians.' His attitudes towards crime and criminals preceded those of, and would 'set him

apart from[,] 1850s men and from later immigrants such as Marcus Clarke' who arrived in the wake of the gold rushes.²

By October 1837 the enterprising Captain Brown was on the move again. Seeing opportunities beckoning in the newly opened Port Phillip District around the infant settlement of Melbourne, he set out overland with sheep, cattle and convicts; he was soon speculating in land and buildings. The family – apparently including Tom – joined him in 1839. Assuming Tom had been among them, he must have returned to his schooling in Sydney, for he had rejoined the family in Melbourne by 1841.

The depression of the 1840s brought about a collapse in the family fortunes. In response, Tom Brown – from the age of seventeen – took up three grazing properties in succession. But, after success in the first near Port Fairy in Victoria's Western District, the second in northern Victoria unluckily failed due to unexpectedly low prices for livestock and Brown's having overextended himself with borrowed money. Prolonged drought forced him from the third, in the New South Wales Riverina. His later reminiscences of his life as a squatter in the Western District (*Old Melbourne Memories*) show what a thoroughly pre-goldrush, patrician mentality Brown had developed and would always possess.

By 1870 he was married, living in Sydney with a wife and four children and with twins on the way. He was in his mid-forties and financially ruined. In desperate straits after a stint of droving, he began writing for the popular weekly newspapers, having tried his hand successfully with essays describing a kangaroo hunt and shearing, written for the British *Cornhill Magazine* in 1865 and 1869. His luck had turned, partly because there was a new appetite for locally produced fiction from the 1870s when the introduction of new, high-speed rotary presses allowed the newspapers and magazines of the period to expand their circulations greatly.³ Serialised fiction was a favoured means, and Browne (as he now

² De Serville 42.

³ A Hoe rotary-web-perfecting press was introduced for letterpress printing at the *Sydney Mail* in 1875 using stereotyped plates for the first time. They were curved to fit the cylinder, and paper was fed from a roll rather than by hand, sheet by sheet: see *A Century of Journalism: The Sydney Morning Herald and its Record of Australian Life 1831–1931* (Sydney: Fairfax & Sons, 1931), p. 675.

was) among others rose to the occasion. He first used the name Rolf Boldrewood for the narrator of 'Incidents and Adventures of My Run Home' in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* in 1874. The story was based on his own return to England and Ireland in 1860;⁴ it was written by 'An Australian'. In 1875 he took the next step, adopting the name Rolf Boldrewood as his own *nom de plume* for the serialising of 'The Squatter's Dream'. It is by this pen-name that he will now be referred to.

Probably through the efforts of a relative, but also no doubt because of his respectable background and industrious habits, he was appointed Police Magistrate in Gulgong, New South Wales, in 1871, and later Goldfields Commissioner and Coroner there. He pursued this judicial and administrative career in various parts of the colony till he retired in 1895. He saw his writing as a supplement to his official income.⁵ Until 1879 when he began receiving reviews of his first novel to be published as a book in London (*Ups and Downs* – see below) he seems to have thought of his writing as journeyman work. But on 6 September 1879 he recorded in his diary: 'now . . . I am an *author*'.⁶ *Robbery Under Arms* was one of the sixteen novels and four other books he would produce. It was written while he was performing his duties in Dubbo where he was transferred in December 1880; its dramatic title – which a reviewer would describe as 'somewhat startling' – was probably suggested by his knowledge

⁴ After this trip, on 1 August 1861, he married Margaret Mary Riley, daughter of a once-prominent Sydney merchant and landowner, having been rejected by a Miss H. Trench in Dublin. His first child, Rose, was born on 17 June 1862.

⁵ See his letter to Lord Rosebery, 18 August 1889: '[RB's brother Sylvester] writes well & easily – and, had he been compelled – like me – as an overburdened paterfamilias – to write for a supplementary income, would have made a name in that section.' (Letter owned by Graham de Vahl Davis; for the location of RB's diaries, letters and other manuscript material, see de Serville 376–7.)

On 7 April 1871 RB's annual salary was £428. By January 1885 it was £500; in his last position at Albury it was £700 (diary for 1885, ML MSS 1444/2, entry for 15 January 1885). There is an adjacent note in this diary in another hand that 'Uncle Fred got him the job at Gulgong, and paid off his debts, but took half his salary.' This would be the money that he owed his brother-in-law, Frederick Darley, as a result of the failure of his grazing properties. If so, that would help explain Darley's part in the plans to self-publish *Robbery Under Arms* (see below).

⁶ ML MSS 1444/2.

of the law. It meant armed robbery, usually bushranging: a Victorian law of 1864 defined it as a felony.⁷

A friend, George Henry Cox, had suggested the idea of a bushranger novel to Boldrewood. It was a promising subject. The exploits of the bushranging days of the 1860s remained vivid in popular memory, reinforced by bushranger melodramas in the 1870s, and recently piqued by Ned Kelly's last stand at Glenrowan in June 1880 and his subsequent execution on 11 November in Melbourne, in the face of significant public protest. James S. Borlase's novel *Ned Kelly: The Ironclad Australian Bushranger* appeared in London in 1881, after having first been serialised there. Boldrewood began writing his novel in February 1882.⁸ He submitted the first two chapters to various magazines but it was 'refused', Boldrewood later wrote, 'by all the papers with which I had formerly had dealings' – apparently on the grounds that they did not publish stories that made heroes of bushrangers or convicts.⁹ It found a home in the *Sydney Mail* whose editor had different views.

Established in 1860 by John Fairfax & Sons, the *Sydney Mail* was 'a sort of weekly resumé or echo' of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and was 'issued on Fridays, in time for the country mails, which were

⁷ *Act (Vic.) 27 Vict. no. 233 s. 111*: see *Australian National Dictionary*, ed. W. S. Ramson (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), which also cites a use in the *Illustrated Sydney News* on 16 November 1864. The review (from the *Tasmanian Mail*) is quoted below, p. lxx.

⁸ 'How I Wrote *Robbery Under Arms*' (1904), reprinted in *Boldrewood*, ed. Brissenden, pp. 491–8 [p. 491], from *Life*, 1. 1 (1904), 58–61. For a bushranger novel published in 1856 with a contemporary setting, see n. 153 below. In 1872 a serialised bushranger novel in first-person narration, 'The Bushranger's Autobiography' in her series 'The Detective's Album' by W. W. ['Waif Wander' – Mary Helena Fortune], coincided with some instalments of Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life* in *Australian Journal* (from September 1871). The voice is formal and stilted (rather than idiomatic) and does not start with the bushranger in prison. (He is a clergyman's son with an evil streak who goes from England to Victoria, is employed on gold-escort duty and then lured into bushranging.)

⁹ Letter to G. B. Barton, 3 August 1889 (ML MS Q102). See also Barton's 'The Status of Literature in New South Wales: III. How the Newspaper Proprietors Look at It', *Centennial Magazine*, 2 (1889), 238–40 [p. 240]. The 'papers' probably included *Australian Town and Country Journal* (Sydney) and *Australasian* (Melbourne): Bertram Stevens, 'Rolf Boldrewood', *Lone Hand*, 1 August 1913, 308–13 [pp. 311–13].

then generally weekly'.¹⁰ Circulation grew rapidly, it was enlarged in size, wood-engraved illustrations were included from 1871 and the number of serialised tales increased. By the 1880s it was less a newspaper than an illustrated magazine with essays, stories, social news, sports, theatre reviews and so on. In 1879 it gave full illustrated coverage to the sensational capture of the bushranger Captain Moonlight – together with a history of bushranging – and in 1880 similarly reported the final stand of the Kelly gang. It sold for sixpence. Although James R. Fairfax was (or would soon be) opposed 'on moral grounds' to the serialisation of *Robbery Under Arms*, the views of the manager, Hugh George, and its editor, Dr Frederick W. Ward – who had been a Methodist minister until 1876 – prevailed.¹¹ The novel was serialised 1 July 1882 – 11 August 1883.

The popularity of *Robbery Under Arms* would overshadow everything else that Boldrewood wrote, and a myth grew up that his career started with it.¹² In fact, he was already a recognised writer in Australia before its publication. Several novels and other fictional pieces had appeared in the *Australian Town and Country Journal*: 'The Fencing of Wanderowna' (1873: it would later be included in *A Romance of Canvas Town*), 'Incidents and Adventures of My Run Home' (1874), 'The Squatter's Dream' (1875: it would be published in London in 1878 by Silver & Co. as *Ups and Downs*), 'A Colonial Reformer' (1876–77), 'The Wild Australian' (1877) and 'The Miner's Right' (1880).¹³ During this period he also wrote some series of sketches (sometimes over other pseudonyms), and

¹⁰ *Century of Journalism*, p. 672.

¹¹ *ADB* XII. 382. See also R. B. Walker, *The Newspaper Press in New South Wales, 1803–1920* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976), p. 80; according to C. B. Fletcher (*The Great Wheel*, 1940), Fairfax was glad when the serialisation finished. In his letter to Barton of 3 August 1889 (ML), RB implicitly credits George with the decision to publish. RB's agreement to serialise with George is recorded in an autograph copy of a letter to him, dated Dubbo 21 June 1882 (copy pasted into RB's 1899 diary at 22 June, NLA MS 3208): the payment is £90, and RB had sent '60 or 70 pgs' of a 'tale lasting in weekly portions of three of four columns *abt a year* . . . I will take care not to supply in arrears.'

¹² Macmillan's publication of RB's previously written novels after the success in 1889 of its edition of *Robbery Under Arms* – discussed below – might have given rise to the idea.

¹³ For dates of serialisation and bibliographical details, see Chronology.

anonymously S. W. Silver & Co.'s *Australian Grazier's Guide* (1879) and its continuation *No. II – Cattle* (1881).¹⁴

Writing about bushrangers

While *Robbery Under Arms* was being serialised, Boldrewood's series of sketches 'Old Time Sketches: Old Melbourne Memories' was appearing in the *Australasian* (8 July 1882 – 5 April 1884). Whether he was writing them both simultaneously or only revising the sketches (at least some had been previously published) is not known.¹⁵ Writing from Dubbo to an old friend James H. Irvine of his Western District days as a squatter, Boldrewood referred to the sketches in which mutual friends appeared – 'but not in a way to offend people I think' – and also the serial. He was 'scribbling for pay'. The letter is dated 27 December 1882, in the middle of the period of serialisation of what he refers to apologetically as 'rather a sensational novel . . . A man with eight children and a limited income must do all he can to supplement the income'.¹⁶

Boldrewood's later account of how he typically scheduled his writing shows that he was a hardworking man capable of attending to many things at once:

I arranged for a serial tale by sending the first two o[r] three chapters to the editor, and mentioning that it would last a

¹⁴ A new edition in one volume, ed. J. S. Ryan (Armidale, NSW: Centre for Australian Language and Literature Studies, 1994): see pp. xii–xiii for anticipations of aspects of *Robbery Under Arms* in *No. II*. Silver & Co. (now a manufacturer of rifle accessories in Suffolk) published colonial handbooks, maps and a journal *The Colonies and India* (which also serialised 'The Miner's Right'), and were colonial outfitters.

¹⁵ RB's next contribution to the *Sydney Mail* was 'Country Sketches' (also titled 'The Sketcher' and most with the subtitle 'Walks Abroad'), a monthly series that ran 11 August – 8 December 1883. It was succeeded by 'The Rambler: Walks Abroad', which continued intermittently (five essays, 12 January – 27 December 1884) during the serialisation of 'The Sealskin Mantle' (16 February 1884 – 7 February 1885).

Two sketches with the title 'Old Melbourne Memories' had appeared in the *Australasian* by 'Pioneer': 'No. I' on 21 July 1877, 'No. II' on 4 August 1877. 'No. I' is a version of 'A.D. 1840' in RB's *Old Melbourne Memories*, published by George Robertson (Melbourne) in 1884. See further, n. 54 below.

¹⁶ ML MSS 123/32/9.

twelvemonth, more or less. If accepted, the matter was settled. I had but to post the weekly packet, and my mind was at ease. I was rarely more than one or two chapters ahead of the printer; yet in twenty years I was only once late with my instalment . . . In this fashion *Robbery Under Arms* was written for the *Sydney Mail* after having been refused by other editors.

As early as five or six o'clock in the morning in the summer, and as soon as I could see in the winter, I was at my desk, proper or provisional, until the hour arrived for bath and breakfast. If at a friend's house, I wrote in my bedroom and corrected in the afternoon, when my official duties were over. At home or on the road . . . I wrote after dinner until bedtime, making up generally five or six hou[rs] a day.¹⁷

In 1904 upon the death of a squatter with whom he had been used to stay during his judicial rounds from Dubbo, Boldrewood recalled fondly the circumstances of his writing:

I used to divide my valuable visits between Namina & Apsley . . . Both were very hospitable – used to put me up – lend me horses & do anything for me in a general way. After supper, Joe used to say – ‘You wont mind me, Mr Browne, I’ve got my accounts to do up’ – To which I answered, that suits me exactly. I’ve got my writing to do. So we used to go at it till half past ten or eleven – Then a glass of whiskey & water – a smoke & ‘so to bed’. Next day perhaps a ride over the hills to ‘Ironbarks’ – a small gold field & home to Dubbo the day after that – The Robbery Under

¹⁷ ‘How I Began to Write’ (1898; reprinted in *Boldrewood*, ed. Brissenden, pp. 432–3, from *In Bad Company and Other Stories*, 1901). RB comments: ‘I never but once completed a story before it was published; and on that occasion it was – sad to say – declined by the editor’ (unidentified). His diary for 1879 confirms his practice, in relation to ‘The Miner’s Right’: on 6 September, he ‘Remained in the house nearly all day and wrote up part of “The Miner’s Right”, before lunch & teatime’; on 29 October he wrote ‘5 sheets of copy’ and evidently sent it before recording on 3 November a ‘Letter from Mr. Heaton, who will take The Miner’s Right for T&C. [*Australian Town and Country Journal*]’. He must have immediately revised for, on 4 November, he ‘Sent down the first two chapters’. Entries for 8 and 14 November, and 3 and 23 December record a chapter each; and on 23 December (‘Chapter VII’) he ‘Saw the announcement in the Town & C that they are going to print “The Miner’s Right”’ (ML MSS 1444/2).

Arms chapters going on all the time. It was a life that suited me exactly & I never was happier.¹⁸

Such conditions did not make for deeply pondered or reflective writing; and much of Boldrewood's other work is, in addition, marred by affected and overwritten prose. His diet of Sir Walter Scott's romantic-historical novels as a young man, his ingrained respect for good breeding and his belief in the tell-tale effects of blood-lines gave his writing a class colouring and a period flavour that have not worn well. Boldrewood believed that the transplanting of British people to the Australian colonies had created, by virtue of the physical challenges, new growth for the common racial stock. But in particular he was at pains to show that the Australian gentleman had proved to be the equal of his British counterpart.¹⁹ This was the mildest, most conservative form of the emerging nationalist protest of the 1880s and 1890s. It sprang from consciously anglophile sympathies that were in tune with those of the respectable classes in the Australian colonies: most thought and spoke of Britain as 'Home'. Reflecting those sympathies back to them and avoiding topics in his fiction that might offend Mrs Grundy seem to have come naturally to Boldrewood: intentional or not, they were a formula for success. As a magistrate and a gentleman, he was inevitably part of the colonial ruling class. His extant diaries for 1879 and 1885 show how assiduously he sought to position himself within the social web of old colonial families wherever he went on his rounds as police magistrate and Land Board commissioner. The addition of the final 'e' to the family's plebeian surname Brown in 1864 had been in keeping.

In the light of these leanings, the writing of *Robbery Under Arms* was all the more remarkable, for it tapped his underlying

¹⁸ 'Joe' was Joseph Aarons who owned 'Nanima' station near Wellington: his obituary-clipping is pasted into RB's diary for 1904 (at 7 June, NLA MS 3208). The letter to RB's daughter Emma (9 July 1904, in private hands) is quoted by de Serville at 208–9; and cf. RB's reply to a reviewer (1890) quoted below, p. lxxv.

¹⁹ Cf. his objections to the portrayal of stock Australian characters in British novels: 'It does not appear to this school of writers that in a colony, as in all British communities, there are "classes" and "masses," diverse degrees, even shades of character much the same as in England': 'The Stage Australian', *Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, 4 (1887), 338–47 [p. 340].

sympathy with the vigorous and predominantly masculine world of bush living and of its (mainly oral) culture. Feeding this sympathy were his undoubted skills as a listener to other voices; his creative mimicry of them reached their peak in *Robbery Under Arms*. Some of his pre-1882 writings show an attunement to colonial Australian idiom and a relish of droll tale-telling and yarn-spinning; and they benefit, as would *Robbery Under Arms*, from the cases of horse-stealing and violent death that he would have dealt with as magistrate and coroner.²⁰ Boldrewood had also been an attentive student in 1860–61 of Henry Kingsley’s ‘power of descriptive writing’ in *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* (1859): a relative later recalled his ‘always reading & “spouting”’ it and speculated that he ‘almost knew “Geofrey Hamlyn” off by heart’.²¹

Political concerns doubtless heightened Boldrewood’s interest in the colonial voice of the new generation of native-born Australians. He had himself been held up by bushrangers in 1867, and the following year he took the opportunity of interviewing one of them in Wagga Wagga gaol. A letter to his friend Edward Wortley, 1st Earl of Wharnccliffe, on 7 February 1868 shows that he could largely avoid the outraged hysterics of leading articles about bushranging in the colonial newspapers of the day. He was interested in observing and explaining the phenomenon. Convicts had been a normal part of his boyhood in Sydney: he felt no need now to melodramatise criminals:

The old convicts have nearly all died out – and with them it was considered that this peculiar form of crime would cease and determine[.] The white natives of the colony – it was long supposed by philanthropists – would neither become drunkards or take to any of the practices of their ‘larcenous forefathers’ as Sydney[?] Smith called them. They certainly do not drink as a rule. But they have always shown a great aptitude for horse and cattle stealing. And within the last few years, by an easy transition from this form of horse exercise, they have commenced

²⁰ See further de Serville 193 and 355 n. 61. The sources of the stories in the novel, including the bushranging and gold rushes, are dealt with in Historical Background.

²¹ Letter from C. W. Darley to Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, 27 August 1919 (ML B1504/3).

to plunder and terrorise the whole of the more thinly inhabited parts of the colony by marauding in gangs of armed bushrangers. It is no joke at all to think that a party of from three to five brisk young fellows – armed to the teeth with the best revolvers & perhaps a stray ‘needle gun’ – capably mounted and able to ride like Comanchee Indians, may be camping at ‘the back’ of your run – ready to appear at your homestead when everyone is away in the forenoon – or to ‘stick you up’ [–] Australian for ‘stopping in the high road’ – when you go twenty miles from home. We had such a gang for more than two months – robbing within from ten to 50 miles of the place. The Police during all that time, unable to come up with them. The next station was robbed. I *was* ‘stuck up’ almost twenty miles from home – on my way from Wagga Wagga – an Assize town. I was driving and met three young men riding along the road towards me. Unarmed, so that when the leader presented a revolver & roared out to me to stop & get out, I had no alternative. I then experienced the sensation for the first time of having a pistol at my head for four or five minutes. He took my watch – a gold one – but luckily did not take either of the horses – great favorites. So I was not greatly grieved. I had the pleasure of calling upon him in the cell which he occupied after his capture – when we had an amicable conversation. All the gang was captured & the last two – of seven – are under sentence of death. But such is the low state of education[?] & morals among the small settlements on the border of the pastoral districts that at any time a fresh gang may ‘turn out’. The squatters below me have all armed themselves to the teeth.²²

In a letter to Lord Rosebery in 1889 after *Robbery Under Arms* had appeared in one-volume form in London, Boldrewood described the situation with the originals of the novel’s Marstons; here he struggles to account for the attraction of crime:

The Marston family were drawn from a ‘native’ family of whom I had some knowledge – and they formed very good models for Dick and Jim. Some were perfectly ‘square’ – others the reverse – The youngest brother – a fine fellow in his way – was shot dead by the Police about two or three years since, while robbing a store

²² Wharncliffe muniment, Sheffield Record Office.

– for provisions after escaping from gaol & killing a warder in the scuffle. I *committed* him, for his first offence, – horse stealing – and when he came out gave ‘him some’ advice, of which I am generally sparing & lent him a couple of pounds to pay his coach fare to his brothers’ place. It was of no avail. He got into gaol again, & that was his end. The elder brother, who was the ruin of this one, is in Queensland with a warrant out against him. They were all remarkably fine men.²³

Ten years earlier, in 1879, Boldrewood had recorded in his diary the Kelly gang’s hold-up at Jerilderie: ‘These celebrated outlaws successfully besieged (or stuck up, Australice) the Police station Bank and town – The bank they robbed. Like as [not,] they rested on Sunday not leaving till Monday morning –’.²⁴ The begrudging respect is unmistakable. His impersonation of the voice of Dick Marston in *Robbery Under Arms* would in itself form an extended, eloquent answer to the perplexing question of why bushranging was so attractive and what allowed its practitioners to survive.

His decision to divide the Marstons into Catholic and Anglican – announced at the end of the first instalment, and with reminders near the start of Chapters II and XXV – neatly sidestepped the subversive implications of the Kelly story. The Marstons could not represent, as the Kellys did in the popular mind, the plight of the poor, oppressed Irish Catholics of rural Australia. But after the execution of Ned Kelly in 1880, the squatters’ anxiety began gradually to retreat into the past. The past was favourite territory for Boldrewood, and so it is in the New South Wales of the 1850s that most of the novel is set.²⁵

The serialisations

The autograph manuscript – that Boldrewood would have been writing in and around Dubbo and supplying weekly to the *Sydney Mail* to serve as setting copy for its instalments – is lost, and the travelling associated with his job, and his not living in Sydney, would have made his involvement in reading proofs on a regular weekly

²³ 18 August 1889, de Vahl Davis. ²⁴ 8–9 February, 1879, ML MSS 1444/2.

²⁵ See 236:9–10: this page-and-line form of citation is to the reading text of the present edition.

basis impractical.²⁶ However, a little is known of contemporary reactions as the serial was appearing. William Alison, a friend with whom Boldrewood would often stay when away from Dubbo holding court in Nyngan, later recalled in a letter to Boldrewood's daughter, Rose:

He wrote a great deal of 'Robbery Under Arms' while with us. It was then coming out in the Sydney 'Mail,' so we knew what had happened, and were all keen to see the next instalment. He told us his family refused to allow him to hang Starlight, and we added our protest. Writing such a book without revision, I consider, was a marvellous effort. We did not know what a book it was going to make! But we got to know the characters, and were as interested to know what they were going to do as if they were real people.²⁷

²⁶ A few lines of the opening of the novel from what purports to be 'the author's original manuscript' were photographically reproduced in 'How I Wrote *Robbery Under Arms*', and reproduced in the Cassell edition of 1947 (see below), reprinted from *Life*, 1.1 (1904), p. 61 where the caption was 'SPECIMEN OF MANUSCRIPT FOR "ROBBERY UNDER ARMS"'. The hand appears to be RB's but is unusually neat, and its punctuation suggests it was being read aloud while he copied. The production of autograph keepsakes was a common practice.

A claim (recorded c. 1934) that the poet, journalist and brewer John Farrell (1851–1904) provided RB with a manuscript upon which *Robbery Under Arms* was based is discussed by de Serville (357 n. 4). He suggests – plausibly but cautiously – that it may be a confusion with RB's actual use of Louis Becke's work that RB purchased and adapted for *A Modern Buccaneer* (1894). The claim, however, can be confidently dismissed. Although Farrell and RB both lived in Albury (which is a principal implied basis of the claim), their times there did not overlap; indeed, *Robbery Under Arms* had already been published before RB arrived. The other (dubious) basis of the claim – that *Robbery Under Arms* was stylistically out-of-character for RB – is not aided by its being unlike Farrell's style in 'One Christmas Day' (*Bulletin*, 27 December 1884, pp. 3–5) – his only identified prose work near in date to *Robbery Under Arms*. Farrell was and would be primarily a poet. His poem 'Dalton's Rise' (*ibid.*, p. 10) is a versified melodrama on a bushranger theme of violent revenge; it shows no sympathy for the ex-convict bushrangers. When Farrell wrote about *Robbery Under Arms* and RB in 1897 (see n. 139), he did not dispute its authorship.

²⁷ Quoted in her [as 'Rose Boldrewood'] 'Recollections of "Rolf Boldrewood"', serialised in *Sydney Mail*, 11 November 1925 – 3 February 1926 and, in different versions, in *Australasian*, 29 April – 27 May 1922 and *Queenslander*, 19 April – 31 May 1928 [19 April 1928, p. 6]. Emily Black (another daughter of RB) recalled:

A shared, social encounter with the text is also suggested by a recollection of Henry Lawson (b. 1867);²⁸ and in ‘How I Wrote *Robbery Under Arms*’ (1904), Boldrewood recalled that ‘All sorts of conditions of men, from bishops to boundary riders, read it with interest.’ He describes a later occasion in Queensland when a squatter recalled its original serialisation:

‘The mail comes in of a Saturday, y’know, and the station hands used to gather to hear me read the weekly chapter. There was a great to-do one night; the paper hadn’t come! . . . there was nearly a riot. What d’ye think we did?’

‘Don’t know, I’m sure.’

‘Wired to the postmaster at the township to let us know how “Starlight” had got on. It was a most important chapter.’²⁹

This anecdote comes many years after the event, but there is probably a kernel of truth in it. Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh’s recollection of the same event from even later (1925) has different details but confirms the response: ‘At that time’, he states, ‘feeling was running rather high as to [Boldrewood’s] making such a hero of Starlight.’³⁰ For contemporary readers (and listeners), the idiomatic diction of the tale must have rendered familiar and therefore

‘The last place I was told it [*Robbery Under Arms*] was written in was over here in Swan Hill. But Dubbo was actually its birth place’ (letter to Alice Hoare, ‘25th January’, ML Ab 98/5). This was in response to news of a claim by a ‘man in old Raby [Albury] who thought *Robbery U.A.* was written in his bedroom’.

²⁸ ‘A Fragment of Autobiography’ in *Henry Lawson, Autobiographical and Other Writings 1887–1922*, ed. Colin Roderick (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1972), pp. 173–215 [p. 193].

²⁹ ‘How I Wrote *Robbery Under Arms*’, *Boldrewood*, ed. Brissenden, p. 492.

³⁰ ‘In the bush the “Mail” containing [the serial] was literally “rushed.” On one occasion, in a township west of Dubbo – owing to the river being flooded – the mailman failed to deliver the paper containing the weekly instalment, whereupon the good folk subscribed in a body to have the entire chapter telegraphed from Dubbo – they couldn’t wait for a couple of days!’: from a preface written by Fetherstonhaugh reproduced in Rose Boldrewood’s ‘Recollections’, *Sydney Mail*, 11 November 1925, p. 14. Fetherstonhaugh’s autograph manuscript (ML B1504/4) must have been edited for publication: for ‘the weekly instalment’ it reads ‘that particular part of the story’. Sending a short section or précis (as in RB’s account) would have been feasible, but telegraphing extensive messages was expensive: 1,000 words would have cost about £4 (Moore’s *Australian Almanac and Handbook*, 1882), and the average instalment in the *Sydney Mail* made 4,056 words.

fascinating the otherwise shocking idea of not just a selector's sons turning bushrangers, but a gentleman doing so as well. Although some later readers would find the characterisation of Starlight a weakness in the novel – with 'his chivalrous courtesy to women . . . too much the conventional highwayman of romance'³¹ – he was clearly touching readers on the quick during 1882–83. Starlight allowed Boldrewood to give imagined vent – at the level of gentleman – to that part of himself that admired manly, fresh-air activity on horseback. It was in tune with the squatter gallantry and soldierly determination – an after-effect in Australia of the Peninsula War – dramatised in *Geoffry Hamlyn*. In addition, as Paul de Serville notes, 'The attraction to a mysterious identity was widespread in the general imagination of nineteenth-century colonists (hence the intense interest in the Tichborne case); Australia was full of men of mystery [like Starlight] who had concealed their past and their origins.'³²

Those readers who did not take the sixpenny *Sydney Mail* – like G. B. Barton, writing in 1890 on 'The Status of Literature in New South Wales' – would not necessarily have been aware of the novel's existence at all.³³ Nevertheless, the contemporary reception of the serial must have been sufficiently promising for the Fairfax company to try a re-serialisation in their Sydney daily, the *Echo*, in 1884. This afternoon newspaper, established in 1875, sold for a penny. In a competitive market it survived until 1893 when it was replaced by an evening edition of the Fairfaxes' broadsheet *Sydney Morning Herald*. Cheaper and in smaller format, the *Echo's* eight pages (sixteen on Wednesdays and Saturdays) carried snippet columns, feature material and short stories. In 1884 its editorship changed from Ward who had moved from the *Sydney Mail* in 1883 to Thomas

³¹ Anon., 'Summary of European Intelligence', *Home News for Australia*, no. 764, 5 July 1889, reporting a review in *St James's Gazette*. Cf. 437:11 and 225:7–8 where Robin Hood's outlawry is the implicit model.

³² De Serville 206; RB's novel *Nevermore* (1892) draws on the case of the false Australian claimant of the Tichborne fortune in England misrepresenting himself as the lost son and being accepted by the mother (as does Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life*). For the conventional and stage appeal of Starlight, see Adaptations.

³³ 'II. How the Publishers Look at It', *Centennial Magazine*, 2. 2 (1889), 89–92. Barton first learned of the novel via an 'article in the London *Spectator* as one of the three good novels that had been written in Australia'; he bought the new Macmillan edition (see below).

B. Clegg. The exact date in 1884 is not known, but the decision to serialise may well have been Ward's. Boldrewood was in Sydney 3–6 April 1884, en route to Armidale where he had been transferred.³⁴ The suggestion to re-serialise – in view of the earlier response in the bush – may have been his. If so, it would prove to be a shrewd move. Advertisements appeared in the *Echo* from Tuesday 27 May 1884 until the following Friday. The serial began on Saturday 31 May and ran in daily instalments shorter than those of the *Sydney Mail*. (This new typesetting has been previously unremarked by scholars.) The *Sydney Mail* printing would have served as its copy, being both conveniently to hand and far cleaner than the manuscript – whose parts may never have been gathered together, in any case.

A little is known of the reception of this second serialisation. Writing for the *Sydney Quarterly Magazine* of September 1889 upon the appearance of the Macmillan's Colonial Library issue of the novel (discussed below), Thomas Heney, a Sydney journalist, recalled the effect upon him as a young man from the Monaro of reading the serialisation in the *Echo* (which he names):

Never since – disappointing wisdom – I had learned the hollowness of my dear little tales of Kit Carson and Daniel Boone, and such slayers of red men, grizzlies and other beasts, never had I come across matter like this. Never before, and never since, have I cherished such resentment against the much-enduring race of editors as against the, to me, unknown man who doled out by column and a half the tale of Dick Marston. When on the second page of my paper I saw that the second column was terminated at the bottom of the sheet [rather than higher up, as it sometimes was], I felt as if I had had a great kindness bestowed upon me . . . [T]he reason why I had so loved the story years ago, and why night after night I read the paragraphs in big type about Aileen, and Starlight and Dick and Warrigal and Gracey and the others, was that even then I knew how true it all was. I knew the very landscapes; I believed I had met men and women that might have

³⁴ For the editorship, see Percy S. Allen, 'Notable Figures of the Australian and N.Z. Press', *Newspaper News*, 1 November 1929. RB's stay in Sydney was recorded by his 16-year-old daughter, Emma, in her diary for 1884 (ML MSS 6135: entry for 8 April). See further J. S. Ryan, 'Rolf Boldrewood in Armidale', *Armidale and District Historical Society Journal*, 12 (November 1969), 86–96.

served for originals of those distinct copies; the whole story came before me as clear, as direct, as personal, as if it had been part of mine. So that independently of the narrative, I seemed to have some deep and intimate knowledge of this work. For up in the district where I was reared we seemed to have had share of most of the things written in this book. (pp. 282–3)

The serial ran until 10 October. Although Boldrewood later professed himself content with the payment he received for his serials,³⁵ the possibility of more money from publication in book form must have beckoned. In January 1885 Boldrewood was appointed to Albury. En route, he stayed in Sydney and visited his sister, Lucy, wife of Frederick Darley, a prominent barrister.³⁶ As explained below, Boldrewood had evidently gathered together the recent instalments from the *Echo*, and Lucy must have volunteered to give an opinion (and perhaps to suggest changes) for, on 3 February, Boldrewood recorded in his diary for 1885: ‘Sent the first half of “Robbery Under Arms” to Lucy Darley to read’. The next day he recorded: ‘Letter to L. D. & posted second half of R. U. Arms’. As he also recorded on 5 February ‘cost of printing “R. Under Arms”’³⁷ in relation to a letter to the *Australasian*, it seems that together they were considering the possibility of a private printing of the serial in book form.

Evidently the coincidence of the serialisation in the *Echo* and Boldrewood’s latest visit to Sydney had brought the matter to a head. His *Ups and Downs* had been published in London in 1878. Later correspondence of Boldrewood with Macmillan shows that Darley had taken it with him to England in 1876 and offered it to Macmillan who refused it. The editor of the *Australian Town and Country Journal* in which the novel (as ‘The Squatter’s Dream’) had originally been serialised, John Henniker Heaton, then came to an

³⁵ The ‘terms of remuneration’ offered ‘[are] reasonably fair – even liberal’: letter to G. B. Barton, 3 August 1889 (ML MSS Q102). But cf. Barton’s comment: ‘the scale of remuneration allowed by newspaper proprietors for fiction is a very low one . . . [it] cannot possibly give the author any adequate return for his work’ (‘Literature in NSW: II’, pp. 89–90). In ‘Literature in NSW: III’, Barton gives the payment as 10s.–15s. per column.

³⁶ Darley (1830–1910) would become Chief Justice of New South Wales in 1886 and be knighted in 1887.

³⁷ ML MSS 1444/2.

arrangement with S. W. Silver & Co., which had offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.³⁸ This firm published the novel in London in a cheap ('yellowback') form. There is no evidence that a similar plan was hatched for *Robbery Under Arms* even though the attraction of publication in London would have been great. But Macmillan had already shown itself uninterested in Boldrewood, the returns from Silver had amounted only to £50, and there was the dissatisfaction that Boldrewood later expressed with the alterations that had been made to *Ups and Downs* in London.³⁹ Perhaps the quotation for the printing of *Robbery* was off-putting, and Lucy Darley's response was only 'mildly hortatory which is all right'.⁴⁰

Boldrewood could evidently cope with disappointment, but he was not a man to let opportunities go begging. Although there is no contemporary documentation, it is clear from a later letter that 'the generosity of a relation and the kindness of a friend (Murray Smith)', broke the impasse with *Robbery Under Arms* and led to the novel's publication by Remington & Co., a London firm, in the traditional but expensive three-volume form by 11 August 1888.⁴¹

³⁸ In his letter to Darley of 23 August 1875 (ML MSS 2157), RB seeks Darley's help in London with publishers. RB's letter to Macmillan, 24 July 1890, shows that Darley tried: BL 54939/13 and *Letters to Macmillan*, ed. Simon Nowell-Smith (London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 210–12.

³⁹ Letter, RB to Macmillan, 25 August 1890: The publisher 'rather mutilated the original work, and altered the denouement without my permission' (BL 54939/18). His letter to G. B. Barton, 3 August 1889, gives the terms: 'what amounted to a royalty of three pence a copy on the 4000 copies sold' (ML MSS Q102).

⁴⁰ Diary, ML MSS 1444/2, entry for 10 February 1885.

⁴¹ Letter to G. B. Barton, 3 August 1889, ML MSS Q102. The *Spectator* listed the novel under 'Publications of the Week' on 11 August 1888 (p. 1106), as did *Literary World* on 17 August 1888 (p. 142). The State Library of Victoria (VSL) has a presentation copy inscribed to 'Henry G. Turner from the Author September 1888'. Michael Sadleir reports another, with an inscription in RB's hand, dated 20 January 1888. This date must be a turn-of-year mistake on RB's part for 1889: *XIX Century Fiction* (London: Constable, 1951), p. 42. The Remington edition was available in the publisher's binding (green cloth with a blind-stamped, flower-and-butterfly pattern in black on the front covers and gilt-lettered spines) and probably also in quires since private bindings exist (e.g. Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide; Fisher Library, University of Sydney). Advertisements for different Remington titles appear on the frontispiece page in each volume. In the publisher's binding, there are variant issues: one with pale-grey floral end-papers (VSL and Sadleir), and one with plain beige end-papers.

The roles of Frederick Darley (almost certainly the ‘relation’) and Robert Murray Smith, agent-general for Victoria in London, are treated below.⁴²

The Remington edition

On the title-page and spine, the author’s pseudonym was misspelt ‘Bolderwood’. The novel also gained a subtitle, presumably editorial: ‘A Story Of Life and Adventure in the Bush and in the Goldfields of Australia’. ‘[All Rights Reserved]’ appeared at the foot of the title-page, a claim Remington would take pains to exploit.

The firm of Remington remains relatively obscure. The *English Catalogue of Books* shows it to have started publishing by 1876, to have been interested in colonial writing from the start, to have been at its peak in the 1880s, and to have continued until at least 1897.⁴³ No archives of the firm have been located. Post Office directories for Sydney show that the company had opened an agency there in 1893.⁴⁴ But it was short lived, and on 28 September 1895 the Sydney *Bulletin* commented:

The closing of Remington’s Sydney agency doesn’t look as if so very many Australians yearn to get into print, after all. Remington & Co. publish more trash than any other house in London, and it is generally supposed that the authors pay for their privileges beforehand. Maybe the local genius doesn’t like this reversion of old-fashioned beliefs. (p. 56)

The existence of the Remington agency in Sydney indicates a need to find a new source of saleable titles in a period when English publishing was expanding rapidly. Translations, poetry, books of

⁴² Robert Murray Smith (1831–1921) was president of the Melbourne Club in 1875 (RB had been elected in 1854), and was a very successful agent-general from 1882 till recalled in April 1886 (leading article, *Argus*, 15 June 1886).

⁴³ *English Catalogue of Books*, comp. Sampson Low, 16 vols (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1963–67). The AustLit database lists, for Remington, *The Moonraker: A Story of Australian Life* (1877) by Richard Dumbledore, then a range of titles 1885–95 (www.austlit.edu.au, accessed 25 May 2004).

⁴⁴ As Eden, Remington & Co.: J. T. Dowling was the manager, and ‘Eden’ was dropped in the entries for 1894 and 1895. This branch offered to publish, at the firm’s expense, stories by Louis Becke: letter from Becke to unidentified correspondent, 30 October 1893 (ML Ab 18/7/23).

travel, memoirs, a monthly magazine, artbooks and novels appear among Remington's titles. The expensive two- and three-volume format appears often, particularly for novels, indicating that Remington was aiming at the circulating library market even though this was a period in which new, cheaper formats were beginning to find new audiences.⁴⁵

Murray Smith must have approached the head office in London about publishing the bushranger serial.⁴⁶ There was already an Australian connection. Remington had offered to publish a two-volume collection of three 'stories' by Rosa Praed (Mrs Campbell Praed) in 1878 on the basis of an £88 subvention from the author, with profits to be shared. The author would receive 'Two thirds of the *gross proceeds*, after deducting only actual cost of advertising the book'; Boldrewood was apparently offered the same return.⁴⁷ As private publishing had been considered in 1885,

⁴⁵ The days of the three-decker were numbered: Mudie's famous announcement in 1894 that his circulating library was no longer interested in the format on the currently available terms may help explain the tailing-off in Remington titles soon afterwards.

⁴⁶ It may be that he tried to interest other publishers with what must have been – as explained below – the copy of the *Echo* serialisation prepared in 1885, and that it finally made its way to Remington & Co. after he had returned to Melbourne (see n. 42).

⁴⁷ Letter, Macmillan to R. J. Jeffray (RB's agent), 19 May 1890, concerning the remainder of unsold copies of the Remington edition of *Robbery Under Arms*: 'we understand that two-thirds of the proceeds will go to Mr Browne' (BL 55430/1180). Macmillan had therefore no objection to Remington's proposal. Letter, Remington to Praed, 2 January 1878: Praed Papers, John Oxley Library, Brisbane (9A/7/1). She was also promised: 'Should the book run into further editions you would not be called upon to contribute any money'.

A young George Gissing paid Remington £125 to ensure publication of his first novel, *Workers in the Dawn* (3 vols at 21s., 1880): see *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, ed. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas, 9 vols (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990–97). Gissing's disenchantment with 'Scoundrel Remington' was rapid (II. 1). Advertising expenses were £24, and when Gissing demanded an account, Remington declared only 49 copies as sold for May–December 1880 with author's receipts being a total of 16s. For the next novel, Remington offered half-profits if Gissing put up £75 (II. 104). Gissing moved on to Chapman and Hall. Remington later offered to publish Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), but she could not afford the subvention demanded (letter, Schreiner to Jonathan Kent, 19 April 1883, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin).

a subsidy arrangement of this kind may well have been attractive to Boldrewood, because it would to some extent share the financial risk and give the publisher an incentive to market the work on his behalf. Evidently it was Darley who put up the money: without it, *Robbery Under Arms* may never have achieved publication in book form – and have been entirely forgotten. That Remington acquired some rights in *Robbery Under Arms* by a financial investment in it is confirmed by the firm's selling to Macmillan near the end of 1888 its right to reprint the novel and to Tauchnitz the European English-language rights. Tauchnitz produced a new two-volume edition based on the Remington edition – again by 'Bolderwood' – in March 1889.⁴⁸ So the Remington edition was not a case of vanity publishing, but of shared risk and shared profit – a common though not preferred way, in the late nineteenth century, for authors to get their work published.⁴⁹

Until now, it has always been assumed that the *Sydney Mail* serialisation served as setting copy for the Remington first English edition (hereafter *Et*). Boldrewood implied as much, no-one questioned it and scholars followed suit.⁵⁰ Collation proves that it was actually the *Echo* – which omits two sections of *Sydney Mail* material. Both are single paragraphs and occur at the very end of *Mail* instalments.⁵¹ They could have been overlooked by the typesetters at the *Echo* working hurriedly to the deadlines of a daily newspaper. In the first case the instalment ends on the last line of the last column

⁴⁸ The archives of this very successful Leipzig firm were destroyed during bombing in 1943: the two volumes of *Robbery Under Arms* were nos 2571 and 2572 in their Collection of British Authors. See further, William B. Todd and Ann Bowden, *Tauchnitz International Editions in English 1841–1955: A Bibliographical History* (New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1988).

⁴⁹ Cf. RB's letter to G. B. Barton, 3 August 1889: "Old Melbourne Memories" has been published by Mr George Robertson of Melbourne on half profits – excluding expense of printing &c.— As *yet*, I have got nothing out of it, but it will *come on*, I believe' (ML MSS Q102).

⁵⁰ E.g. E. Morris Miller, who also misdated the *Sydney Mail* serialisation as 1881, a mistake that prevailed until the 1970s: *Australian Literature: A Bibliography to 1938 (Extended to 1950 by Frederick T. Macartney)* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1956), p. 67. In his preface to the Macmillan edition of 1889 (reproduced on p. lix), RB thanked 'the proprietors of the *Sydney Mail*, but for which it might never have seen the light'.

⁵¹ In chaps. xvii and xxi: 161:33–7, 210:7–16.

of the page: the paragraph may have been sacrificed so that the instalment would fit into the available space. The second deletion may have been simple carelessness or it may represent an attempt to deal with a textual nonsense at the start of the following chapter. (This is discussed below.) In addition, there are three new significant omissions in *E1*. The first of these (225:2 – 226:29) leaves Chapter XXIII starting with an answer to a question that has not been asked, and the reason for Ben Marston's perverse determination to carry on with a life of crime is left unexplained – when, in the serial's text, an alternative had just been defended: 'I swore an oath when I left England that I'd make it hot for the cursed gentlefolk that hunted me down—to my dying day—and that oath I'll keep' (226:17–19). The second omission (243:16 – 247:24) deprives the narrative of a necessary transition between the robbing of the stage coach in Chapter XXIV and a conversation taking place in Terrible Hollow about going to the Turon goldfield. Luckily, the third was relatively insignificant. How the material came to be omitted can be explained.

In a typed letter dated only '25th January' but apparently written in old age, Emily Black, Boldrewood's daughter, recollected typing the novel for English publication while in Albury (1885–95): 'I did most of the actual typing for Robbery – before it was sent home to the Publishers. First Longman [in fact, Remington]; and afterwards in a one volume edition (they made him cut out some of it; as it was too long) which Macmillan published.'⁵² She was born in 1874 and would have turned 14 in 1888; she also says that she used an 'old Remington typewriter – about the size of a portmanteau'. This Remington firm (the coincidence of the name presumably caused the mistake 'Longman') was the famous American gun manufacturer, which had started making typewriters in 1874. Its Model 2 had appeared in 1878; it was the first to have lower-case letters.⁵³ If she indeed retyped the *Echo* serialisation the omitted material could have been lost then.

However, her recollection needs some probing. If true, it can only refer to the Remington edition – not, for reasons that are given

⁵² ML Ab 98/5; see n. 27.

⁵³ Christopher Latham Sholes invented the modern typewriter in 1867. The early Remingtons were bulky machines; Model 1 had upper case only.

below, to the Macmillan second English edition (*E2*). Typing most of a whole novel would have been a demanding job for a girl of 13 or 14; and, in any case, there was no need for it to be typed since a clear, typeset copy (the *Echo* serial instalments) already existed and since (as collation shows) only one section of the text of one instalment was revised. This section may indeed have needed typing – and, over the years, Emily could have conflated her memory of doing this job with the preparation of ‘a type-written revised and corrected copy’ of another work some years later.⁵⁴ The fame of *Robbery Under Arms* would, in retrospect, tend to overshadow everything else.⁵⁵

That the three extra omissions in *E1* were not deliberate is suggested by the confusion their absence creates. Discovery of the *Echo* serialisation (hereafter *Ec*) has afforded confirmation of the unintentional nature of the two major ones. In her letter, Emily Black states that her father ‘kept each chapter as it came out – and they were put in a sort of holder’. One of the major omissions represents exactly one day’s instalment of *Ec* (14 July 1884, 243:16 – 247:24): probably Boldrewood failed to clip it. The other major one is the last part of the long instalment that he heavily revised, so evidently some mix-up occurred as part of this process.⁵⁶ The explanation may be simply that Boldrewood was aware he had failed to clip this instalment when it appeared, borrowed someone else’s copy, and could not but revise as he copied out – and then, perhaps,

⁵⁴ *Old Melbourne Memories*; letter, RB to Macmillan, 9 September 1895 (BL 54939/56). Cf. RB’s letter to Macmillan of 23 November 1895: ‘I regret that the revised M.S. [i.e. typed manuscript] of “Old Melbourne Memories” did not reach you before the former edition was set up. and trust that the corrections and omissions – which I think important, – will not cause inconvenience or expense’ (BL 54939/63). Macmillan’s edition – advertised as ‘revised’ – appeared in 1896. The Brownes had moved to Melbourne from Albury in June 1895.

⁵⁵ There is another possible explanation, discussed below.

⁵⁶ The instalment (9 July 1884) is 213:1 – 226:29. The part omitted in *E1* is 225:2 – 226:29. The third omission of *Echo* material occurs in chap. LVI (580:19–25). It is only a single paragraph, not a whole instalment. Because it occurs within an instalment (not at the end) and also within a column, it is unlikely to be a clipping error. It falls within a fairly repetitious section of internal monologue. Without the paragraph, the prose, as it continues, makes perfect sense. If the *E1* typesetter nodded, nothing in the text would have given the clue that he had done so. (See foot-of-page entries.)

gave it to Emily to type.

Not aware of *Ec*, Alan Brissenden speculated in 1979 that the omissions were Boldrewood's deliberate decision at the instigation of Remington. This is now disproved.⁵⁷ And the reason for the sudden outcrop of revision, isolated in one section only of the novel, is explained. Boldrewood in fact made a large number of stylistic changes here. Some of them led to a more conventional pointing in *E1* (but this perhaps reflects some input from the typesetter); others seem to be aimed at perfecting Dick's vernacular idiom. So Nulla mountain rises up 'like a huge black mass' in *Ec* but is 'a big black lump' in *E1* (213:2–3), and the cattle and horses are 'in splendid condition' in *Ec* but 'in grand condition' in *E1* (214:24).

The five omissions that were transmitted to *E1* need also to be set in the context of some two thousand minor alterations that the novel had undergone by the time of this first publication in book form. Though most of them were changes to punctuation, spelling or sentence construction, and often individually of little importance, they do have a cumulative effect. So, for instance, *Ec* renders italicised or capitalised words in *SM* (the *Sydney Mail's* text) in roman typeface and often spells out its figures. The latter feature seems a mere matter of typographic convention in *Ec*. But since it was transmitted to *E1* and *E2* where a book formality was expected, some of the story's informality (deriving probably from Boldrewood's lost manuscript, and preserved in *SM*) appropriate to the bushman-narrator was sacrificed. In newspaper typesetting, which was often done to tight schedules, italics and small capitals were frequently dispensed with because they slowed down the work.⁵⁸ In a novel whose chief stylistic innovation was the vernacular voice of its narrator, the loss of italics in *Ec* removed emphasis

⁵⁷ *Boldrewood*, ed. Brissenden, p. xiv. In his earlier 'A Continuing Success', Brissenden had attributed the five deletions to Remington rather than RB – but commented that 'their ineptness is curious' (p. 44).

⁵⁸ Prior to the introduction of linotype machines in Australia in 1894, the use of italics involved reaching for another case of type. See further Ronald G. Campbell, *The First Ninety Years: The Printing House of Massina, Melbourne 1859 to 1949* (Melbourne: Massina, [1949]), pp. 120–1; and Henry Kingsley, *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*, ed. Stanton Mellick, Patrick Morgan and Paul Eggert (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996), p. 680.

where Boldrewood had intended it should go, and thus impaired the authorial scoring of the rhythms of that voice.

The same is true of *Ec*'s alterations to the punctuation. There are hundreds of cases. In copying a non-standard informal prose, the temptation on the part of a typesetter to regularise (either deliberately or through inattention to copy) could be irresistible. Boldrewood's pacing of the prose, especially of the hesitations and sudden changes of direction typical of spoken language, led him to proliferate dashes, which the *Ec* typesetter tried here and there to minimise by re-pointing the offending sentences. Nevertheless, the hastiness of the work often led to the careless omission of individual words, or the supplying or substitution of the expected one.⁵⁹ There are over a hundred examples of this. *SM*'s occasional repetitions of words are corrected in *Ec*; but other aspects of style – what were apparently taken to be errors but in fact reflect Dick's non-standard usage – are also corrected. *Ec*'s many departures from *SM*'s wording (usually only of a word or two) suggests that a light editing could have preceded the typesetting. But the readier explanation is that the typesetters simply did not treat the text of their copy as sacrosanct and made changes if they half-suspected error (thus repeatedly overruling intentional features) or if the expected wording failed to materialise. There are far too many errors to believe that proofs were carefully checked; and, being in Armidale, Boldrewood would not have been available, in any case, for this daily duty.⁶⁰

Since *E1* was set from *Ec*, the great majority of these changes were transmitted to it and thus to *E2* – and therefore to all subsequent editions. It would have been clear to the typesetters of *E1* that they were printing from hastily typeset newspaper copy. They evidently

⁵⁹ E.g. *Ec* prints 'pretty sorry' for *SM*'s 'fully sorry' (136:13), but it provides a missing word 'sit' (174:11: see Editor's Emendations) and substitutes 'at the races' for 'at the Lachlan' (478:34) – a more likely location for the hard-working George Storefield. Present tense 'says' after a speech frequently becomes 'said' in *Ec*. See also note 7 for p. 16.

⁶⁰ It is hard to believe that RB could have missed the change from 'our lives were not that valuable' to 'our horses . . .' (mentioned just above; 374:3), or 'the crown of the ridge' to '. . . of the ride' (310:11), or Ben Marston's saying of the Battle of Trafalgar that 'I ought to have been in that packet' when *SM* had read '. . . racket' (435:1).

felt the normal duty of compositors (when setting from autograph manuscript) of correcting punctuation and spelling as they went. So there is more formalising of diction and re-pointing of the text. Once again, the cumulative effect is significant: there are hundreds of such departures. (There is further discussion of this in the headnote to the Sample Collation.) But the level of correction is more than would be expected from a regularising typesetter. Someone decided to change *Ec*'s 'crack' (not recognising it as slang for burglary) to 'coach' (250:29), and Jim's 'hand' to 'beard' (197:21): it is 'froze as stiff as a board' – an unlikely event given the location ('Shoalhaven country', 196:19), but usefully deferring to the climatic expectations of a Home audience.⁶¹

There are very many such changes, intended to be improvements, that introduce the expected locution, usually at an appreciable cost to the novel. The changes are nearly all restricted to a word or two. There is a handful of longer changes, but all of these are neat scalpellings and localised in their effect.⁶² Examples of the shorter changes are sprinkled throughout the novel. While some are quite deft,⁶³ most are readjustments or smoothings of fancied or actual stylistic awkwardness or grammatical error (even when error is in the nature of the character's linguistic register).⁶⁴ Many are overturnings of supposed or real error, or are intended but usually unnecessary or fussy clarifications.⁶⁵

E1 must have received a light editing, either before the typesetting or (conceivably) on the proofs. Since Lucy Darley is known to have read what was probably Boldrewood's 'holder' of *Ec* instalments sent to London, she could have entered some corrections, and as Boldrewood heavily revised Chapter XXII at this stage, his eye could

⁶¹ See note 7 for p. 197. *E1* sometimes corrected obvious new errors in *Ec*, but introduced new errors of its own: e.g., a bull gets 'locks' instead of the 'hocks' it had in *Ec* (107:8) and this mistake was perpetuated through its transmission to *E2*. Since hundreds of other departures from the text of *SM* were allowed to stand, the typesetters of *E1* can have had no independent access to it.

⁶² See foot-of-page entries a on p. 506, c on p. 514, a on p. 580 and b on p. 592.

⁶³ One is inspired (150:31: see Editor's Emendations). See also foot-of-page entries a on p. 18, b and c on p. 65, a on p. 130, e on p. 296, b on p. 332 and a on p. 451.

⁶⁴ E.g. see entries b on p. 17, a on p. 44, c on p. 59, e on p. 228 and a on p. 242.

⁶⁵ E.g. see entries c on p. 60 (removing an ambiguity), c on p. 152, a, b and c on p. 305, a and d on p. 319, a on p. 320, d on p. 342 and a and b on p. 574.

have hit fortuitously upon minor problems in wording even if he did not read the whole novel.⁶⁶

The possibility of proof corrections having been made by another person in London, acting on Boldrewood's behalf, also cannot be ruled out. At 66:31 a footnote was added explaining 'gin' as 'A black woman'. This may have been a proof correction.⁶⁷ At 204:23–4 there is an addition in *EI*: the gang will 'make for Queensland and then go into the northern territory' (instead of just 'get over to Queensland'). This may be a nod towards the expansion of the settled areas by the late 1880s (despite the novel's historical setting), and in any case suggests some knowledge of Australia. Yet Boldrewood would not have been sent proofs to Albany because of the considerable delay for publication schedules this would have entailed. In his preface to *E2*, he thanked 'my old comrade R. Murray Smith, late Agent-General in London for the Colony of Victoria . . . for the time and trouble he has devoted to its publication'. The antecedent of 'its' in Boldrewood's sentence is, however, the 'tale' not the edition per se:

⁶⁶ The three blatant errors introduced in *Ec* – see n. 60 – remained in *EI*, making it unlikely that RB read carefully the copy that went to London. The improvements mentioned in n. 63 do not require authorial intervention to explain them, but a few others imply some specialised knowledge: so a 'constable of detective police' acting as Crown Prosecutor becomes a 'sergeant . . .' in *EI* (see foot-of-page entry e on p. 170), and a boast about having ridden 'thirty mile inside of four hours' becomes ' . . . three hours' (entry c on p. 206). And two of the longer deletions (a phrase, and a long sentence: see n. 62, last two entries) go further in their textual intervention than the bulk of the editorial changes, removing notes of self-pity.

The other two in n. 62 may have been responses to ambiguity or awkward expression. There are, in addition, a few occasions where *EI* retrieves readings in *SM* that *Ec* had changed. So *SM* and *EI* read 'a log lock-up' ('a lodge . . .' in *Ec*: see entry a on p. 288); but as the *Ec* reading in context makes little sense, nothing is proven. Cf. entry g on p. 69. *EI* corrects some errors of wording that had crept into *Ec*: e.g. entry a on p. 324, and at 325:15 *EI* correctly recovers 'Melbourne and' from *Ec*'s 'Mel-/ and'. (The latter falls into a silent category and is not recorded: see Note on the Text, p. 5.) Again, *EI* re-italicises some words that had become romanised in *Ec* (see entries e on p. 233, b on p. 182 and a on p. 103 – the last two being only partial recoveries): but failures to overturn such departures from *SM* far outnumber these cases. See also entries a on p. 250 and q on p. 222 where, in a passage that RB revised, a word originally italicised in *SM* (but not in *Ec*) is re-italicised in *EI*.

⁶⁷ Cf. the proof changes made by Henry Kingsley for *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*. These included footnotes explaining Australian terms: see the Academy Edition, ed. Mellick, Morgan and Eggert, p. lxiv.

the preface is delayed thanks for Smith's arranging the publication of *E1* with Remington and in presumably arranging for someone else in London to read the proofs.⁶⁸ If so, this would very likely be Robert Jeffray, of the Union Mortgage and Agency Company of Australia Ltd in London. He proofread later titles on Boldrewood's behalf: he may also have officiated for *E1*.⁶⁹ He certainly made several revisions on the proofs of *A Miner's Right* and they have the character of factual corrections.⁷⁰ The clarification about the direction the gang intends to take, referred to above, reads like one made for the benefit of a Home audience (as does the new footnote).

Another, more significant one first appears in *E1*. There is an obvious nonsense, caused by a lacuna, at the start of Chapter XXII. *SM* and *Ec* read as follows:

I brought it out sudden-like to Aileen before I could stop myself, but it was all true; that, and nothing short of it, we'd laid it out to tackle as soon as we began to work regular together, and look ahead a bit. How we were to make the first start we couldn't agree; but we were bound to make another big touch, and this time would be the police after us for something worth while.
(corresponds to 211:2–8)

⁶⁸ RB was writing this preface prior to the publication of *E2* and it is known that someone at Macmillan & Co. read its proofs (see below).

⁶⁹ In a letter to Remington of 12 December 1888, RB mentions 'Mr. R. Murray Smith, Repson, Toorak – Melbourne for whom Mr. Jeffray kindly acted as my agent in this affair [of the proposed cheap edition *E2*]' (BL 54891/157). Jeffray was a fellow member of the Melbourne Club (elected 1875), a banker, resident partner in Melbourne for stock and station agent William Sloane, and a founder of the Stock Exchange.

See letters from Macmillan to Jeffray about his proofreading *A Colonial Reformer*, 12 and 19 May 1890 (BL 55430/1110 and 1180) and RB's letter to Macmillan of 20 July 1891 about *Nevermore* (1892) saying that Jeffray was returning to Australia and 'will not therefore be able to do the "reading" which he has hitherto been so very good as to perform for me. However I have gone over the printed and written portion with more than usual care so that the misprints (with the aid of your own reader) are likely to be minimised' (BL 54939/25).

⁷⁰ See letter from Jeffray to Macmillan, 12 February 1890. He had identified and corrected misquotations from Scott's novel *Heart of Midlothian* and Robbie Burns's narrative poem, *Tam o' Shanter*, and changed some substantives which he felt did not quite make sense, e.g. 'valuable' to 'important' and 'pare of doubt' to 'pool of doubt' (BL 55259/146).

The gang's likely future – the 'it' that Dick has revealed near the end of the previous chapter – is an escalation in their criminal activities for, he reasons there, they may 'as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb' (209:30). Some words in the quoted passage seem to be missing after 'true; that', probably a reference to the gang's plan for a big robbery, thus providing the antecedent for the 'it' of the following phrase. Also 'would be' in the last clause is either mispositioned or should have read 'it would be'.⁷¹ Either the *SM* typesetter struggled with unclear or ambiguous copy but failed to clarify it, or the missing words ended with 'that' and there was eye-skip.⁷² *Ec* follows *SM* here, but the second single-paragraph omission in *Ec* noted above may be part of the typesetter's (failed) attempt to make sense of the lacuna. Leaving out the last paragraph of the previous chapter at least brings the elusive antecedent of 'it' closer.

Although Chapter XXII happens to be the first one in volume II of *EI* (so that the nonsense would have been especially prominent), Jeffray (or the editor) may be the responsible party, taking the simple option of deleting the offending lines ('that, and nothing . . . ahead a bit.').

Reception of the Remington edition

Some copies at least of the Remington edition made their way to Australia. The *Torch and Colonial Book Circular* listed it under the heading 'Novels and Works of Fiction at the Circulating Libraries' in September 1888.⁷³ Its retail price was given as 3*ls.* 6*d.* – the standard three-volume price in England. Remington may have had only 500 copies of the novel printed: low print runs of three-volume novels were common. If so, then about 400 were sold.⁷⁴ The economics of the book trade dictated that the bulk of them would have gone, heavily discounted, to circulating libraries, mostly in the Home market. It is known that William Gladstone (then in opposition in the British parliament) read *EI* with pleasure. In a note to Remington

⁷¹ It is repositioned in *EI*: see Editor's Emendations entry for 211:7.

⁷² For this reason and also in view of the high number of other obvious mistakes in *SM* (and in *Ec*), it is very unlikely that RB corrected the proofs of either.

⁷³ 2. 5 (1888), p. 30.

⁷⁴ In a letter to Macmillan of 2 January 1890, Jeffray would ask whether Macmillan could make any use of the 'unsold copies – abt 100 I think' (BL 54259/143).

& Co. in 1888, he thanked the firm for sending him the copy, saying he had ‘read through’ it, and describing it as ‘a work of so much interest & such conspicuous talent’.⁷⁵

The edition made little public impact in Australia and may not have been reviewed at all (review copies may not have been sent). Nevertheless, the English reviews piqued interest in some quarters and raised hopes of a cheap one-volume edition. In October 1888, *Mullen’s Monthly Circular of Literature*, published by the proprietor of Melbourne’s principal circulating library Samuel Mullen, commented in its column ‘Current Literary Topics’:

Rolf Boldrewood, who from time to time writes such spirited and graphic descriptions of bush life in Australia, has just published in London a stirring novel entitled *A Robbery Under Arms*. Messrs. Remington are the publishers, and the book has been rather favourably reviewed by the *Athenaeum*. As yet, however, it is only in a three volume library form, and for that reason cannot attain a wide circulation this side of the globe until its issue in a more compact shape.⁷⁶

The *Athenaeum* had indeed been complimentary, registering but defending a vulnerability: the novel was ‘Rough, straightforward, honest, and thoroughly natural’. The reviewer found a ‘trace of false sentiment’ but argued that the novel’s ‘obliquity of moral vision . . . only makes it read more naturally’. There was ‘nothing prosy from beginning to end’ and the ‘women’s characters [are] very well drawn . . . A pleasant freshness of incident and treatment runs through the three volumes’.⁷⁷ The *Saturday Review* reacted differently to the ‘obliquity’: the reviewer disliked the centring of the narration in a criminal and the rendering of it in his vernacular:

Judges might reasonably refuse a ‘long day’ if prisoners under sentence of death took to recording their reminiscences in three-volume novels as bulky as *Robbery under Arms* . . . The book contains a large number of stirring incidents, which will probably

⁷⁵ Held at NLA. Reproduced in *Letters to Macmillan*, ed. Nowell-Smith, p. 157. The date of the note is unclear (apparently ‘6.12.88’).

⁷⁶ No. 57 (October 1888), p. 1. The *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* noted its publication, but not its local availability, on 5 October.

⁷⁷ 25 August 1888, p. 253.

please boys; but the adventures of ‘Marston’s gang’ are given at too great length, and are too much like one another. Besides the story is one of mere vulgar ruffianism; and the plan on which it is written, the whole being told in the slang and rough language of an Australian bushranger, makes it exceedingly tedious to read.⁷⁸

Other reviewers contended with the same anxiety about ‘vulgar ruffianism’. On 7 November 1888, the *Guardian* found the novel a ‘capital story, full of wild adventure and startling incident, and told with a genuine simplicity and quiet appearance of truth, as if the writer were really drawing upon his memory rather than his imagination’.⁷⁹ But the reviewer worried that ‘it is possible to feel some admiration for [the bushrangers]’ exploits, and even to entertain real sympathy for their fate.’ Three months later, the *Spectator* classed the novel as ‘one of the most vivid pictures of an adventurous life that has ever come under our observation’.⁸⁰ But the reviewer felt obliged to resist the tug:

The fact is that the book is too fascinating. We can quite imagine that an adventurous lad might think that twelve years of prison, gloomy as they might be, would not be too high a price to pay for the years, almost as numerous, of stirring adventure which the hero enjoys before justice lays hands on him.

By June 1889, *Mullen’s Monthly Circular of Literature* was able to announce that ‘The new Australian novel, *Robbery under Arms*, by Rolf Boldrewood, has made an unqualified hit in Great Britain. It is about to be issued by Messrs. Macmillan & Co. in a one volume cheaper edition.’⁸¹ The ‘unqualified hit’ is parochial puffery, a creation of the literary gossip columns written from London for Australasian audiences presumed to be eager to hear of the success at Home of their favourite sons.⁸² Reporting the Macmillan

⁷⁸ 25 August 1888, p. 244.

⁷⁹ 43. 2 (July–December 1888), pp. 1687–8.

⁸⁰ 23 February 1889, p. 275. The review was also reported in *Otago Witness* (Dunedin, NZ) on 11 April 1889.

⁸¹ No. 65 (June 1889), p. 1.

⁸² Cf. *Canterbury Times* (NZ) of 7 August 1890, quoting an unnamed ‘Antipodean novelist’: ‘As a rule . . . the London reader and reviewer must place the seal of his approbation on the Colonial writer’s work before the Colonial reader will admit the possibility of there being anything in it’ (p. 36).

announcement, the *Auckland Weekly News* claimed that *EI* ‘soon got into its third edition’ (which was wishful thinking),⁸³ Gladstone’s letter was mentioned in a number of literary columns,⁸⁴ and news of Macmillan’s decision was widely reported. But, given that the reviews of *EI* were both mixed and few in number, E. Morris Miller’s statement that ‘it was immediately acclaimed’ – at least in England – has not been substantiated.⁸⁵ The initial reception was more varied than that.

The Macmillan edition

Despite this qualified success, Macmillan & Co. acquired the rights to publish the novel in abridged form in one volume. It appeared on 4 June 1889 at 3s. 6d.⁸⁶ The 6s. format for reprinting novels in one volume that had usually appeared as three deckers at 31s. 6d. was long established, but Macmillan had been successful with a 3s. 6d. form for the Home market and a Colonial Library issue at 2s. 6d.⁸⁷ *Robbery Under Arms* would be no. 94 in that Colonial series, but its acceptance did not follow the normal route of recommendation by the firm’s readers.⁸⁸ Extant correspondence makes it clear

⁸³ 13 July 1889, p. 31.

⁸⁴ E.g. *Canterbury Times* (NZ), 31 January and 18 April 1889, 30 January 1890.

⁸⁵ Miller and Macartney, *Australian Literature*, p. 67.

⁸⁶ This is the date given in the Macmillan Editions Book at Basingstoke (described below). In his letter to Macmillan of 2 August 1889 thanking him for his three copies, RB gives 31 May 1889 (BL 54939/1). A Macmillan advertisement (‘Books for the Holidays’), listing *Robbery Under Arms* first, appeared in *Spectator*, 8 June 1889, p. 811 and in *Publishers’ Circular*, 15 June 1889, p. 738. *Manchester Guardian* had ‘received’ it by 11 June 1889, p. 7.

⁸⁷ See further J. Walch and Sons, ‘The Story of the Colonial Library’, in *Walch’s Literary Intelligencer and General Advertiser*, no. 440 (September 1895), 129–31; and Charles Morgan, *The House of Macmillan (1843–1943)* (London: Macmillan, 1944), pp. 135–6. The *Bookman* commented in October 1891, quoting a ‘leading bookseller’: ‘The public will buy books readily at a sum not exceeding the orthodox two-and-eightpence net, but a higher price seriously debars the demand for high-class fiction. The works of Kingsley, Dickens, Thackeray, Crawford, Haggard, and – among newer authors – Rolf Boldrewood and Kipling, at 3s. 6d. or less, sell readily, whereas the demand for William Black’s, at 6s., is much lower . . . Messrs. Macmillan have set a good example’ (pp. 16–17).

⁸⁸ There is no reader’s report for the novel in the Macmillan archives at BL even though a register of these was kept from 1877.

that Remington & Co. made the approach, presumably after – as described below – an Australian publisher had contacted Remington seeking reprint rights, thus alerting the firm to its promise. Perhaps Frederick Macmillan read the novel himself, and saw profit in it: it would help with his plans for expanding his Colonial Library. He decided to deal with Remington.

The Macmillan archive at the British Library allows the production history of *Robbery Under Arms* from 1889 to be told in considerable detail and with unusual authority.⁸⁹ With probably the bulk of their copies of *E1* sold, Remington & Co. evidently decided that a one-volume edition of *Robbery Under Arms* would make money. A far-sighted George Robertson – the Melbourne publisher and bookseller who had published the first edition of Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life* in 1874 – had approached Remington with a view to bringing out 'a special Australian edition' at 6s. 'to be published forthwith in England'.⁹⁰ Seizing the opportunity but taking control of its conditions, Mr E. Power of Remington cabled Boldrewood in Albury to tell him of the new proposal – probably on 22 November 1888, for on the same day Remington prepared a formal offer of terms for such an edition and sent it to Jeffray. An attested holograph copy of the offer survives, dated 26 February 1889: it was to be a 'half crown [2s. 6d.] Edition' with Remington 'taking all risk of printing paper binding & advertising and allowing the Author a royalty of four pence on every copy sold sales being calculated on the usual trade basis of 13 copies as 12'.⁹¹ Remington apparently stalled on the deal with Robertson, evidently claiming that 'the three volume copies continued to sell so well the publishers have postponed it', as a literary columnist would duly report.⁹²

⁸⁹ The 1,250-volume archive was purchased in 1967 and additional material in 1990: *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts: New Series 1966–1970*, 2 vols, *Part I Descriptions* and *Part II Index* (London: British Library, 1998). The archive includes the firm's letterbooks, allowing correspondence with authors, other publishers and printers to be traced.

⁹⁰ *Canterbury Times* (NZ), 31 January 1889 in 'Literary Notes' dated 'LONDON, Dec. 7': the two publishers are reported as having 'come to terms' 'after all'.

⁹¹ Enclosed with a letter of 13 February 1889, Remington to Macmillan (BL 54891/153–4).

⁹² *Canterbury Times* (NZ), 18 April 1889, p. 34 in 'Literary Notes' dated 'LONDON, Feb. 15'.

There was at least a modicum of truth in this claim,⁹³ but events had moved on.

In his reply to Remington dated 12 December 1888 written from Melbourne, Boldrewood implicitly accepted Remington's offer:

I was informed of, indeed received your cable, respecting the shortening of my book 'Robbery Under Arms'^[1] with a view to its being published in a cheap edition. I was indisposed to entrust the rather delicate task to any one in England, one of my books, 'Ups and Downs' published some years since by Silver & Co, having suffered in the alteration process. So I came from Albury, 350 miles, in order to make the condensation myself. I enclose the notes which I made after carefully going through the three volumes. I had some difficulty in getting a copy, as only a circulating library, the 'Melbourne Mudie'^[1] (Mullen's) had any.

The book, in this edition is very well printed and got up generally, but the price, is prohibitory, (as a rule) to Australian buyers. I have excised or noted for excision one hundred and thirty three pages in all. (133) After going over it twice, I do not see that any more can be eliminated without injuring the interest and action of the story.

I would suggest that the new edition be either in one volume of smaller print, uniform with the cheap edition of Robert Elsmere, (which we have here) with a paper cover. [*IN THE MARGIN*: two thousand price 2/6d.] It has 600 pages. and I think, with smaller print that R. U. A. ought to go within the same compass. A very large sale may be looked for in the Colonies – particularly in New South Wales, where inquiries (in Sydney and the Country towns) have been numerous. The copies in the Library here have been very eagerly read & much appreciated. Another form of cheap edition could be uniform with that of 'The Black Arrow' which is now out here [*IN THE MARGIN*: Five shillings 5/ in price] – and still another – two volumes, paper covered – at half a crown each

⁹³ Cf. the same columnist's report (dated 23 March 1889) that: 'The sale . . . which slacked off last month, has suddenly and inexplicably revived. One small retailer had orders for six copies last week, a fact speaking volumes, as 31s 6d novels are seldom bought in England save by the libraries. It was probably for a Colonial order' (*Canterbury Times* (NZ), 23 May 1889, p. 34).

– similar to the cheap two vol editions of Macmillans' Colonial Library firm.

I think it essential that a cheap edition, sh[ou]ld be supplied to Australian readers, as soon as possible – & to bookstall readers – in England.

I append notes which I trust will be found intelligible.

Please print my “nom de plume” Rolf Boldrewood *not* Bolderwood⁹⁴

It is not clear how much deletion Remington had requested (the cable is lost); but working as Boldrewood did had its dangers. The ‘notes’ which he enclosed would later cause some concern. He also enclosed the ‘draft preface’ for the new edition:⁹⁵ it is dated, in its printed form, 12 December 1888: see illustration 2 opposite.

Despite their formal offer, Remington & Co. apparently had no intention of publishing a cheap edition but only wanted to secure the right to do so: it would be saleable, and probably on better terms than Robertson was offering. Initial sales of *ET* had been made and a second printing of it was unlikely; the firm in due course would remainder the rest of the copies.⁹⁶ By 7 February 1889, Mr E. Power of Remington & Co. had offered the cheap edition rights to Macmillan for £50, and by the 25th had secured Boldrewood's agreement to the new arrangement. The royalty would remain (as Macmillan stipulated) what Remington had originally offered: 4*d.* per copy ‘on all copies of his book sold in England and the Colonies’.⁹⁷ On 26 February Power forwarded to Macmillan Boldrewood's ‘instructions for cutting out 133 pages of the 3 vol. Edition’.⁹⁸

Knowledge of Macmillan's £50 payment to Remington was not communicated to Boldrewood or Jeffray even though it affected the level of royalty per copy that Macmillan was prepared to offer.

⁹⁴ BL 54891/155–7.

⁹⁵ Stated in a letter from Remington to Macmillan, 26 February 1889 (BL 54891/150–1). ⁹⁶ See n. 47 above.

⁹⁷ Letter from Macmillan to Remington, 11 February 1889 (BL 55427/1333). For a more detailed account of the negotiations, see Paul Eggert, ‘The Bibliographic Life of an Australian Classic: *Robbery Under Arms*’, *Script and Print: Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, 29 (2005), forthcoming.

⁹⁸ BL 5481/150–1.

Mr Power had made a tidy sum for Remington for relatively little outlay,⁹⁹ having already, in December 1888, sold Continental rights to Tauchnitz for £25, again without informing Boldrewood.¹⁰⁰

The novel went to press, but in the process Macmillan's printer, working to Macmillan's instructions, omitted about 33 pages fewer than Boldrewood had authorised in his letter of 12 December 1888. He stated there that his notes detailed excisions of 'one hundred and thirty three pages in all. (133)' from *EI*. Correspondence between Macmillan and the firm's printer R. & R. Clark in Edinburgh explains how the mistake could have occurred. By 7 February 1889 when Macmillan wrote to Clark for an estimate of page-extent for a one-volume edition, the firm must have been in possession of a copy of *EI*, by now marked with reference to Boldrewood's notes for the excisions. Presumably Mr Power had supplied it – together with the notes, the new preface and Boldrewood's letter of 12 December 1888. Either Power marked up the copy or this was done at Macmillans, using Boldrewood's notes as a guide. As the instruction to R. & R. Clark shows, there was some ambiguity in the enclosed copy of *EI* about what was to be deleted:

Robbery Under Arms by Rolf Boldrewood.

Please cast this off for a 1 volume edition and let us in [i.e. design and set] a specimen page. It can be in the type of Robert Elsmere if necessary, though we should like a larger type if it can be

⁹⁹ The office copy of the contract of 23 August 1889 (presumably the date RB signed it) states a royalty of 4d. per copy on every copy sold for a duration of 10 years from 1 July 1889, and acknowledges that the copyright would remain with the author. If the licence to publish was then terminated by him, he would be obliged to purchase the printing plates and stock-in-hand at the cost of production. There were to be annual accounts (BL 54939/3).

¹⁰⁰ In the negotiations in February 1889, the sale was not mentioned by Remington & Co., and by 18 May 1890 the firm had still not accounted to RB for it (letter, Macmillan to Jeffray, 19 May 1890: BL 55430/1180). Jeffray had by then noted the German edition and inquired of Macmillan the circumstances of its publication. Having gone to Tauchnitz's London agent for the particulars, Macmillan concluded to Jeffray in a letter of 22 April 1890: 'This money undoubtedly belongs to Mr. Browne and we would suggest that you applied to Me[ssrs] Remington for it' (BL 55430/898). Macmillan would secure £50 for RB for similar rights from Heinemann and Balestier for *A Sydney-side Saxon* in 1891 (BL 54891/171).

got into about 350 pages. In the copy sent you will find several excisions marked & we also send copy for a new Preface.

N.B. pages 174–206 vol III are *not* to be omitted.¹⁰¹

Macmillan gave the order to proceed with the typesetting on 9 March 1889. On 3 April the firm gave instructions to R. & R. Clark on the choice of paper stock for the ‘English Edition of 1000’, on 4 April requested that the printing be completed ‘3 weeks from now’, and on 10 April requested ‘thickness copies’ of the novel.¹⁰² (Such copies gave the spine-width needed by the binder – Burn, at Hatton Garden, London – so that materials could be ordered for the job.)

By 18 April 1889, Clark had supplied proof-sheets to Macmillan and they had been checked in-house, with this reply:

We return you the sheets, doing the best we can with the corrections. We also send you the authors excerpts [excisions?] for abridged Edition as they may be useful to you in checking the marked sheets. We specially call . . . your attention to the *third volume*, as we are not at all sure that we realised the authors wishes.¹⁰³

Upon checking the proofs and comparing them to Boldrewood’s notes, which had evidently been retained at Macmillans, the reader had had second thoughts about what was to be omitted: the situation in relation to ‘pages 174–206 vol III’ was perhaps not as clear-cut as first thought. In the letter of 7 February 1889, the printer had been told not to omit the pages: either there was some ambiguity in relation to these pages in Boldrewood’s notes (he had said: ‘I append notes which I trust will be found intelligible’), or perhaps someone had clouded matters originally by marking-up the copy of *E1* carelessly. The conversion of *E1*’s three-volume format to continuous chapter-numbering in the *E2* proofs would have made the job a little more complex for Clark and in proofing; but the result was that *E2* made 413 pages of text rather than the 350 that Macmillan had hoped for.

¹⁰¹ BL 55329/653. To *cast off* is to estimate the amount of printed matter that manuscript copy would require, i.e. the novel’s likely page-extent; see n. 105.

¹⁰² Respectively: BL 55329/696, 699, 704. The so-called Home (or English or domestic) issues were printed on Quad Crown octavo 80 lb paper and the Colonials on the thinner 50 lb variety.

¹⁰³ BL 55329/717.

The pages in question make up exactly two chapters in *E1*, and the story as such would not be crippled if they had been removed. (The chapters come after the attack on Mr Knightley's house and cover a visit home and the plans for sailing to America.) Had the chapters been excised, 33 pages of *E1* would have been affected (not 32, as both pp. 174 and 206 are involved). Six *E1* page-ranges were actually omitted in *E2*, of approximately 100 pages in total: hence Boldrewood's calculation of 133.¹⁰⁴

Boldrewood *may* have said in the notes that accompanied his letter that the two chapters might be omitted only if absolutely necessary. But, if so, it is difficult to see why Macmillan would have been adamant that the section was not to be omitted when getting the page-extent down to 350 was commercially desirable.¹⁰⁵ The fact remains that, in his letter of 12 December 1888, Boldrewood unambiguously authorised the excision of 133 pages of *E1* material. He had been through the novel twice; the instruction was deliberate. Two chapters (or conceivably some other, equivalent page-extent of which we have no indication) are present in *E2* that Boldrewood

¹⁰⁴ The two chapters are III.XIII and III.XIV in *E1* and XLVII and XLVIII in *E2* (528:1 – 548:25). One of the omissions is *E1*'s vol. III, pages 261–6. Because 261 and 266 are complete pages, 6 pages are involved. This is not so with the other 5 page-ranges: where RB's notes would have had to specify line numbers or wording to indicate where cuts were to be made. For *E1*'s vol. II, pages 62–102 and 262–80, a normal arithmetical subtraction gives a fairly accurate picture of the amount cut: the equivalent of approximately 40 and 18 pages of *E1* text were deleted in *E2*. The other three excisions are arithmetically 9, 21 and 5 pages; however, they each go many lines over such a calculation: respectively, 20, 25 and 23 lines (*E1* has 33 lines to the page). If, working impressionistically, RB credited one of these subtractions with the extra page, and if the pages mentioned in the letter to R. & R. Clark are included in the count, he would have arrived at his total of 133. The six excisions relate to the present edition at 261:3 – 287:3, 371:6 – 377:14, 389:27 – 401:27, 454:2 – 467:31, 550:18 – 554:2, 584:16 – 587:35.

¹⁰⁵ A review in the *Adelaide Observer* would note its being longer than most tales in the Colonial Library series and the consequent use of small type (24 August 1889, p. 41). Choice of font, and point-size for type and leading affected page-extent. In Macmillan's 3s. 6d. and Colonial series, RB's *The Miner's Right* (1890) was set tightly, like *Robbery Under Arms* (both have 50 lines of type per page) and made 389 pages, *Nevermore* (1892) was set with 41 lines per page and made 309 pages, and *A Modern Buccaneer* (1894) with generous leading and with larger typeface (35 lines per page) was bulked-out to 338 pages. But *A Colonial Reformer* (1890), again with 50 lines per page, could not be got under 471 pages.

authorised for removal; but they were not removed. He had agreed to an abridgement but not *this* abridgement. So it was that a version of the work not authorised by him was published as *E2* on 4 June 1889. Through its various printings and issues, and because all other subsequent editions derive directly or ultimately from it, this text in its hundreds of thousands of copies came exclusively to represent the work for succeeding generations of readers.

The Tauchnitz edition (*TZ*), mentioned above, had appeared in March 1889. It was set from *E1* and was unaffected by Boldrewood's instructions for abridgement. Errors in *TZ* are uncommon, and *TZ* corrects some obvious errors in *E1*; but overall (and ignoring Boldrewood's deletions for *E2*) *TZ* has fewer departures from its copy than *E2* has.¹⁰⁶ *E2* on the other hand continues the process of regularisation already noted in *Ec* and *E1*, though at a slower rate.

Upon receiving in Albury his three complimentary copies of the Home issue of *E2* by 2 August 1889, Boldrewood professed himself pleased with their appearance (he thought them 'very well got up' in their gold-blocked red boards). He noted that he had also 'seen the Colonial Edition for which, I understand . . . there is a pent demand'.¹⁰⁷ The latter issue of *E2* was printed on thinner paper in green soft covers and sold at 2s. 6d. Whether he ever re-read the novel to check that his instructions had been carried out is not known. Since he does not mention the problem in his published reminiscences, the chances are, he did not.

Reception of the Macmillan edition

Macmillan's advertising for the Colonial Library (101 titles by 25 July 1889) took the form of a printed list – some entries quoting praise from reviews – bound-in as a last gathering. New titles might receive special attention on this gathering's wrapper. On 31 May

¹⁰⁶ See headnote to the Sample Collation. For discussions of other Tauchnitz editions of Australian works, see *Geoffrey Hamlyn*, ed. Mellick, Morgan and Eggert, pp. lii–liv, 681–3, and Tasma's *The Pipers of Piper's Hill*, ed. Margaret Bradstock (Canberra: Australian Scholarly Editions Centre, 2002), pp. xxii, 324–5.

¹⁰⁷ Letter RB to Macmillan (BL 54939/1–2). Copies had arrived in Albury by 19 June 1889 (review in *Albury Banner*: see n. 139) and in New York by 27 June (*Nation*, 'Books of the Week', p. 534).

1889 Macmillan wrote to R. & R. Clark about *Robbery Under Arms*: 'Let us have a nice card for this, not too large but we want the public to know it is a Bushrangers Story.'¹⁰⁸ The advertising block that appeared said little more, but it shows that the novel was intended by the publisher to appeal to an existing taste for romantic tales of outlawry, even though the novel's ambivalent attitude towards the exploits of its bushrangers was very different from the mid-Victorian one towards the depredations of the villainous George Hawker and his gang in *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*, also published by Macmillan.¹⁰⁹

Robbery Under Arms, in its one-volume formats, was soon being noticed by various booksellers in Australia. Having announced Macmillan's plans in the June 1889 issue, *Mullen's Monthly Circular of Literature* devoted a whole page of the July issue to the new edition:

To lovers of what may be termed legitimate fiction – *i.e.*, of fiction which neither seeks to solve social problems nor penetrate the 'unseen' – this 'Story of Life and Adventure in the Bush and in the Goldfields of Australia' will prove an absolute Godsend . . . Its date is placed at the time of the first discovery of gold . . . In the midst of this record of perilous and rollicking adventure are to be found numberless touches of pathos, and throughout there is a deep human interest. (p. 32)

It is not certain that this puff was written from an actual copy of the Macmillan edition since copies were not available in London till, at the earliest, 31 May 1889.¹¹⁰ Macmillan had sent some form of publicity designed to whet the public's – and the booksellers' – different appetites. So Walch's *Literary Intelligencer* (Tasmania) for July 1889 could report 'advice received from Macmillan' of an 'exciting Australian tale of bushranging and adventure during the old gold digging' from the 'pen of [a] well known colonial author'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ BL 55329/763. Another instruction to Clark (25 July 1889) for '*Robbery Under Arms* colonial' reads: 'Send Burn 1000 wrappers please. Put advert on back of the [advertisement list of the Colonial Library's then] 101 books' (BL 55329/826).

¹⁰⁹ 3 vols in 1859, 1 vol. in 1860 and reprinted thereafter from stereotypes of this edition into the 1890s: see further *Geoffry Hamlyn*, ed. Mellick, Morgan and Eggert, pp. xix–xx, lviii–lxi. ¹¹⁰ See n. 86 above.

¹¹¹ Page 114. Not until the November issue does Walch announce the novel's availability in Macmillan's Colonial Library.

Copies must nevertheless have arrived by early July for the *Tasmanian Mail* reviewed the book on 6 July under 'Publications Received':

'ROBBERY UNDER ARMS.' – This is the somewhat startling title of one of the latest volumes issued of Macmillan's Colonial Library, a series of books fast winning way in popular esteem . . . written by Rolf Bolderwood, a frequent contributor to colonial literature, and written in his best style. It is as the author says an 'ower true tale' of bushranging and wild, reckless adventure, with which is interwoven many tender passages of woman's devotion, and here and there dark threads of woman's mad revenge . . . the local colouring throughout painted by one who has spent his life in Australia is vividly correct. (p. 7)

The novel was reviewed in the *West Australian* on 17 July 1889 and this review also appeared in the weekly *Western Mail* on 20 July, again with a tribute to Macmillan's 'deservedly popular Colonial Library series'. The review gave a detailed synopsis of the plot, and expressed relief that, because of the author's background, 'we are spared those ludicrous mistakes which English writers so frequently fall into when describing things Antipodean' (p. 19). The Melbourne *Daily Telegraph* reviewed the novel on 9 September 1889 and took up Boldrewood's remarks in the Preface about the factual basis of the novel: 'whether fact or fiction, there is no question but what Mr. Boldrewood has struck a new patch in the way of story-telling'. The novel was 'light, readable, and fresh in style', and would 'probably have a good run as an Australian novel with abundance of local colour' (p. 3): 'a good run' it was indeed to get. The *Age* followed on 28 September, lifting the stakes by calling Boldrewood 'the Homer of the Bush'; the novel was second only to *Jane Eyre* as a fictional autobiography because of its 'unmistakeable air of verisimilitude':

There is a singular simplicity about it . . . Things are taken for granted which would be quite amazing and incredible if they were set forth analytically as by the hand of a stranger. The writer knows his theme so well that he has ceased to be surprised by it.¹¹²

¹¹² David Christie Murray, 'Australian Verse and Fiction', p. 4. The *Adelaide Observer* noticed the novel in a collective review on 24 August 1889 and separately on 12 October, remarking that it would explain why 'law-abiding people took with regard

This was high praise: in Australia at least, the novel had made it.¹¹³

Anecdotal evidence about the novel's early success soon began to come to the eager attention of the financially 'overburdened paterfamilias' who had written it. On 12 December 1889, upon receiving his statement of sales of *Robbery Under Arms*, Boldrewood wrote to Macmillan:

The booksellers in the country here complain very much that they cannot be supplied in sufficient quantities so that customers go away disappointed.

One bookseller here has the names of nearly 40 people on his list for copies . . . In Bathurst I was told that 50 copies were sold in two hours –

From New Zealand, & Queensland indeed from every part of Australia, from Lord Rosebery in England (a perfect stranger) I have received complimentary letters & newspaper notices. There has not been *one* uncomplimentary colonial review – & in England the *Saturday Review* was the *only one* which attempted a sneering & deprecatory tone . . .

I have given permission to Mr. Dampier of the Melbourne Alexandra Theatre to dramatise the book. It will serve as an advertisement.¹¹⁴

Boldrewood also enclosed a letter to him dated 13 December 1889 from W. C. Hunter, jeweller, bookseller and stationer at Wagga Wagga:

Yours of the 12th Inst to hand and I am much pleased to inform you that I have good sales of *Robbery Under Arms*. For a long time it was totally impossible for me to get a copy from the wholesale booksellers of either Colony but some three months since I did get a supply and found a ready demand . . . I could

to several gangs of bushrangers, who only baffled the police through the good offices of their friends' (p. 41).

¹¹³ The same was true in New Zealand: see reviews in *Weekly News* (Auckland), 17 August 1889 ('the best production which Australian romance has yet given birth to', p. 40); *ibid.*, 21 June 1890, reporting a gossip column in an English journal ('A book on which a select circle is raving', p. 39); *Canterbury Times* (NZ), 1 August 1889 ('the well-known Australian masterpiece', p. 34); and the reprinting (*ibid.*, 2 January 1890, p. 34) of Murray's article from the *Age* (see preceding note).

¹¹⁴ For the *Saturday Review* and Dampier, see nn. 117 and 144 below.

have sold quite a number of the 6/- ed. had there been such a thing . . . [I have sold] more than I ever sold of any one work of fiction in the same time not even excepting Dean Maitland – your *bête noire*. I have been able to get the 2/6 & 3/6 editions with equal facility and have found equally ready sale for each. The demand has now fallen off but *R. U. Arms* is established as one of the books that must be always in my stock. You have falsified the Scripture which says a prophet has no honour in his own country.¹¹⁵

This last statement was literally true: *E2* seems to have been more widely reviewed and noticed in Australasia than in Britain. In the *Academy* (London), William Sharp predicted on 13 July 1889 that ‘Possibly the book may prove too long, and the style just a degree too colloquial, to suit British readers as well as Colonials; but more probably it will prove a success here, as it has already done in Australia.’¹¹⁶ The *Saturday Review*, on the other hand, found the characters melodramatic and objected to the ‘offensive familiarity’ of a first-person narration being delivered by a criminal.¹¹⁷ The *Academy*’s prediction would be borne out by sales, and by May 1890 a review in the London *Speaker*, of Boldrewood’s *The Miner’s Right*, referred to ‘a general agreement as to the merit displayed’ in *Robbery Under Arms*, in particular the ‘Defoe-like minuteness of detail that compelled belief in its veracity’. The Irish politician Justin McCarthy, based in London, wrote to Rosa Praed on 28 February 1890: ‘I am glad to find that “Robbery Under Arms” is catching fire at last. Ever so many people talk to me about it.’¹¹⁸

By 30 June 1889, Macmillan had sold only around 2,360 copies, but on 6 February 1890 Macmillan was able to report to Boldrewood that a further 9,500 copies had subsequently been sold: ‘7,500

¹¹⁵ BL 54939/9. RB had recently reviewed the anonymous novel, *The Silence of Dean Maitland*: this ‘mischievous’ and ‘much-belauded book’ caused him ‘sickening disgust’: *Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, 5 (1888), 215–22 [pp. 215–16].

¹¹⁶ 36 (July–December 1889), p. 1,920. Presumably the Australian ‘success’ was the serialisation in the *Sydney Mail* mentioned in the *E2* preface.

¹¹⁷ 13 July 1889, p. 51.

¹¹⁸ *Speaker*, 3 May 1890: 1 (1890), p. 493; *Our Book of Memories: Letters of Justin McCarthy to Mrs. Campbell Praed*, ed. Rosa Praed (London: Chatto & Windus, 1912), p. 222.

copies of the Colonial Edition in addition to 2000 copies sold in England'.¹¹⁹ With solid sales and good reviews, Boldrewood's reputation was secure. Criticisms expressed in the Australian reviews were very mild. The Melbourne *Daily Telegraph* noted that Dick Marston is 29 years old at the start of the novel but 27 at the end – 'One of those strange mistakes which are remarked in all rapid authors'.¹²⁰ Others had noted occasional inconsistencies in register in Marston's diction. The *Telegraph's* reviewer also acknowledged a likely sensitivity in the city that had hanged Ned Kelly amid great protest only nine years before: 'The fact that the book is written from a prison cell, and has such a termination, entirely redeems it from the suspicion of glorifying crime.'¹²¹ In February 1891, the *Australasian Critic* disagreed: 'What a curious comment it is on Australian history that the heroes of our best novels are convicts and bushrangers . . . *Robbery Under Arms* would make bushranging attractive.'¹²² Clearly the issue remained a live one.

Bringing home the bacon: sales and later editions to 1915

The strength of the novel's reception can be gauged partly by its effects. In his letter to Macmillan of 12 December 1889, quoted above, Boldrewood also enclosed a letter that he had recently received from the lessee of the Albury Railway bookstall, wanting 'a few dozen "Ups and Downs"'. This work, Boldrewood states, went through an edition of 4,000 (with Silver & Co.) but was now out of print. As 'The copyright is now in my hands', he requests that it come out after *The Miner's Right* and *A Colonial Reformer*, 'which I sent

¹¹⁹ 2,360 copies: on 12 December 1889, RB acknowledged receipt of a royalty cheque for the period to 30 June 1889 of £39 7s., and royalty was 4d. a copy (BL 54939/6v.); letter of 6 February 1890 (BL 55430/164). For figures of each impression, see p. lxxi and n. 129, below.

¹²⁰ Robert Kaleski would note in 1935 that Crib is 'a very Methuselah of dogs': he is old at the beginning of the story and dies 'thirty years or so later' (*Bulletin*, 27 November 1935, p. 2). Explanatory notes 2 for p. 72, 1 for p. 388, 1 for p. 447 and 3 for p. 511 list other errors.

¹²¹ Page 3. Thomas Heney claimed 'the book is as healthy as anything can be . . . there is no whine' (*Sydney Quarterly*, September 1889, p. 284).

¹²² Page 102; cf. G. E. F.'s complaint about 'the undesirability of picturing the scoundrelly outcasts of that day . . . in the alluring garb of fictional romance' (*Argus*, 27 January 1890, p. 5).

to Mr. Jeffray'.¹²³ Evidently Macmillan had expressed interest in considering Boldrewood's earlier writings for publication. For his part, Boldrewood, now in his early sixties, wanted to move fast to capitalise on the success of *Robbery*, cognisant of the advantage of an energetic and powerful publisher.

Macmillan's reader, called upon to advise on the prospects in book form of the serial versions of *A Colonial Reformer* and *The Miner's Right*, reported:

Considering the success of 'Robbery under Arms', I should suppose that these experiments in the same vein – the wild adventurous life of new colonists and diggers, magistrates and police etc – would find a public. They are different from the same line of work in America – fresher, simpler, more free from literary self-consciousness.¹²⁴

This praise was implicitly being extended to *Robbery Under Arms*. Macmillan would in fact go on to publish these works, Boldrewood's other previously published serials, some of his shorter fiction and essays, and the new fiction he would write after 1889.

In the process Boldrewood would very quickly secure better terms from Macmillan.¹²⁵ In 1892, he decided to appoint an agent, A. P. Watt, to represent him in London – probably because he felt, with some justification, disappointed with a reduced royalty that he had just been offered for *The Squatter's Dream*.¹²⁶ Macmillan came to terms immediately, linking them to Watt:

¹²³ BL 54939/4–6; lessee's (T. F. Hughes's) letter, 3 December 1889.

¹²⁴ BL 55943/42. The reader's report is marked 'acc. [accepted] Jan. 3. 90'. For Macmillan's principal readers (John Morley and Mowbray Morris), see Warwick Gould, 'Playing at Treason with Miss Maud Gonno': Yeats and his Publishers in 1900' in *Modernist Writers and the Marketplace*, ed. Ian Willison, Warwick Gould and Warren Chernaik (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 36–80, especially pp. 43–6 and notes.

¹²⁵ For *A Colonial Reformer*, Macmillan offered one-sixth of the retail price (without discounts, 7d. per copy) after the first 200 copies were sold of the Home edition, 6d. on the Colonials and £100 in advance of royalty (letter to Jeffray, 29 November 1889, BL 55429/935). Evidently pushed by Jeffray, he soon extended this offer to include *Robbery Under Arms* as from 30 June 1890 (letter to Jeffray, 13 December 1889, BL 55429/1060). RB accepted the offer: a memorandum of the terms is noted on a letter from Jeffray of 2 January 1890 (BL 55259/142).

¹²⁶ See further Eggert, 'Bibliographic Life'.

We are sorry to hear that you propose to deal with us through an Agent, as it is far pleasanter for a publisher to feel that he is in direct relation with any client for whom he is acting. We have nothing whatever to say against Mr Watt whom we know, and with whom we have had many dealings. He is, we daresay, useful to young authors whose books or magazine articles have to be hawked about from one place to another. But in the case of a successful author like yourself who has a firm of publishers willing to bring out his books on satisfactory terms, we fail to see what is the use of an Agent.

Macmillan then exempts Jeffray from this observation since he is ‘a cultivated man able & willing to undertake the revision of your proofs as your books went through the press’. In his absence,

we should naturally have your proofs gone over by a member of our own staff, as was done in the case of “Nevermore”[.]

We find that since we began to publish for you we have paid you altogether £2150 in addition to about £1600 which will be due to you for sales from July 1891 to date.¹²⁷

Macmillan goes on to observe that, had an agent been party to the publications so far, the total receipts would have been 10 per cent (£375) less. ‘Rolf Boldrewood’ was considered a valuable property at Macmillans: Thomas A. Browne would be treated well. He decided to defer the appointment of a literary agent.¹²⁸

The novel’s reception history can, for its first fifty years, be readily quantified. The Macmillan Editions Books at the British Library

¹²⁷ BL 55843/355, 5 May 1892. Some later annual receipts are acknowledged in letters from RB to Macmillan: on 20 March 1892 £1,620; 12 March 1894 £906; 23 November 1895 £703; 30 March 1898 £341 (BL 54939/ fols 31, 38, 63, 70). The last figure (for July 1896 – June 1897) suggests why the idea (described below) of a 6d. edition of *Robbery Under Arms* arose soon afterwards: the order to print was given on 26 April 1898 (BL 55911/126–7). Although there must have been spikes in royalties during the 1900s when reprintings of 30,000 copies were ordered and also after the printing in 1928 of a 2s. new edition (see below), the trend was otherwise downwards. Royalty figures for some later years exist: calculations done by RB in 1902 for *Robbery Under Arms* show only £73 not including the 6d. edition (ML MSS 1444/2); for the year ending June 1923 total royalties for all titles were £107, and by 1934 they were around £60 (BL 54939/103v., 143).

¹²⁸ Eventually RB did appoint Watt – on 22 July 1895.

record the firm's printing orders as sent in correspondence to printers and copied in the firm's letterbooks. They begin at 23 March 1892 and end in 1937. Corresponding Editions Books (still owned by the firm at Basingstoke) record the number of copies actually printed and received.¹²⁹ The latter set goes back before 1889. They give a detailed annual figure of copies of *Robbery Under Arms* intended for the Home market, and they provide a composite total for Colonial copies until 1896 when separate print runs for the Colonial market on cheaper paper ceased.¹³⁰ Excluding the Colonial copies, the Basingstoke records show a first printing in May 1889 of 1,000 copies. This run was repeated in August and December 1889, increased the next year to 2,000 (in March, June and August), to 3,000 in November 1890 (repeated in January and June 1891), to 5,000 in October 1891, February 1892, January and November 1893, and so on. By 1896, 46,000 copies are noted for the Home market and a total of 52,000 Colonial copies. Thereafter the number tailed off slightly, sales of this edition remaining strong until 1915 and with a revival at a lower level after the end of World War I through the 1920s.¹³¹

But these figures tell only part of the story of the novel's popularity. With royalties clearly on the decline by 1897, Boldrewood would have been receptive to the idea of stimulating sales by trying

¹²⁹ These Basingstoke figures (quoted below) are drawn from a transcript of records from the Editions Book and cards prepared by their former archivist, John Handford.

¹³⁰ Thereafter the 3s. 6d. printings apparently served for both markets; the Colonials were now in blue cloth. Entries in the BL Editions Books (BL 55909–55930, arranged by date) for 12 February 1906, 9 February 1909, 6 June 1910 and 5 March 1912 refer also to the ordering of Colonial title-pages for some of each print run (5,500 Colonials in total). The decision to produce a 6d. edition (see below) – which would prove popular in Australia – may explain this change of policy. The last order in the BL Editions Books actually noted as Colonial is dated '16/2/97' (5,000 copies, but probably a mistake for 16/12/97). The paper weight noted (70 lbs) now became the norm for the 3s. 6d. issue, but this order was presumably intended for the Colonial market.

¹³¹ A further 46,000 copies for 1897–1915. In 1918 the retail price of *E2* issues rose to 4s. 6d. and by 1921 they were being advertised as part of a 'Uniform Edition' with eleven other Boldrewood titles at 6s. The last impression of *E2* was in 1926. For further details, including two Canadian issues of *E2*, see Eggert, 'Bibliographic Life'.

the novel in the burgeoning, end-of-century market for very cheap reprints. A third English edition (*E3*) set from *E2* was prepared, and printed by Richard Clay in London. It was issued by June 1898 with advertisements for proprietary medicines and boot preparations at the back, together with an advertisement for ‘Macmillan’s Sixpenny Series’. *Robbery Under Arms* was the first title in the series.¹³² This new typesetting in double columns (222 pages) inevitably introduced a great many more unauthorised changes in matters of presentation, as well as accidentally omitting words. Collation shows no evidence of authorial involvement.

The last known typesettings of the novel before Boldrewood’s death in 1915 were serialisations in the Montreal *Family Herald and Weekly Star* and *Montreal Daily Star* in 1901–02 that he mentions in his article ‘How I Wrote *Robbery Under Arms*’. The newspaper had purchased serial rights from A. P. Watt;¹³³ the weekly (set from *E3*) began appearing in 1901 and the daily (reset from the weekly) in 1902, so that the two serialisations would conclude at roughly the same time.¹³⁴ The Montreal serialisations are notable for the assumption that this novel of Australian colonial bush-life would speak to a Canadian audience during the period of the Anglo-Boer War; for their progressive omission of blaspheming and swearing (even when the words had been represented by dashes); and for the journalistic headlines and subheadings introduced into the daily’s version: ‘THE GALLANTRY OF STARLIGHT’, ‘THE ROBBERY OF THE BILLABRI BANK’, ‘DANGEROUS, BUT SIMPLE’, ‘A BOLD GAME FULL OF DANGER’ and so on.¹³⁵ The weekly had lacked these racy additions, and, in its advertisement in the issue before serialisation began, described the tale’s ‘wild exploits’ and ‘thrilling interest’ but also

¹³² For details of the negotiations over *E3*, see *ibid.* The other titles (listed for later in 1898) were: A. E. W. Mason, *The Courtship of Morrice Buckler*, Mrs Oliphant, *Kirsteen*, Charlotte M. Yonge, *The Dove in the Eagle’s Nest* and F. Marion Crawford, *Mr. Isaacs* and *A Roman Singer*.

¹³³ See letter on the firm’s letterhead to A. P. Watt, 12 July 1901 and reply 1 August 1901 (General and Literary Manuscripts, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, #11036 A. P. Watt and Company Records).

¹³⁴ 6 November 1901 – 1 October 1902 in *Family Herald and Weekly Star*; 24 May – 9 October 1902 in *Montreal Daily Star*.

¹³⁵ *Daily Star*, 19 and 24 July, 3 and 4 September 1902.

outlined its 'literary merit': the 'language, in keeping with the personality of the narrator, is simple and unaffected, yet withal vigorous and picturesque'.¹³⁶ Although, in terms of the novel's textual tradition, these Canadian serialisations represent a dead end, they have unusual interest because of their adaptation of the text for a particular audience, and for the newspaper proprietor's political agenda, to which the novel's Australian subject matter was discernibly relevant: these matters are dealt with in the appendix, *Robbery Under Arms* in Montreal.

E3 was by far the biggest selling format for *Robbery Under Arms*. Priced initially at 6*d.* and section-sewn in paper wrappers, it expanded the novel's readership very considerably: 320,000 copies would be printed by 1926. The Editions Books at the British Library show that three print orders of 30,000 copies were made in 1898 and single orders of the same size in 1903, 1906, 1907, 1908 and 1911. The Melbourne bookseller George Robertson took one of the 1898 printings in its entirety, and Macmillan arranged for the title-pages to bear Robertson's imprint.¹³⁷ Thereafter orders reduced in quantity; the last issue (at 1*s.* since 1917) was in 1927.

A new sales strategy was devised for 1928 when a new Macmillan edition at 2*s.* appeared in Globe octavo (506 pages) with an initial order of 30,000, reprints in June 1930 and July 1937 (4,250 copies in total), and another printing in 1937 (for Macmillan's new 'Cottage Library') in August of 10,000. The total number of copies of all Macmillan editions until 1937 was of the order of 523,125 copies – an average of roughly 11,000 copies per year over 48 years.¹³⁸ It

¹³⁶ *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, 30 October 1901. The *Daily Star* advertised the serial as 'redolent of the soil' and predicted it would 'be read by all lovers of clean, exciting fiction': 'This story is one of the classics of Antipodean literature' (19 May 1902).

¹³⁷ Letter, Macmillan to Clay, 25 August 1898 (BL 55357/767, 778). Distortion and loss of characters consistent with slight damage to plates on several pages of the first impression of 1898 show that *E3* was printed from stereotyped plates from the start, and new-generation plates were made from original moulds when required, but with some spot resetting to fix some mistakes present in 1898, and also later damage: see further Eggert, 'Bibliographic Life'.

¹³⁸ The last issue was apparently in 1941. The figures are calculated from the Basingstoke records wherever possible (copies actually printed: *E2*, 157,625; the typesetting for the 2*s.* edition, 44,250) and otherwise from the BL records (copies

was a very solid sales success, but not a single copy contained the abridged text that Boldrewood had authorised.

Later reception and posthumous editions

The novel's remarkable sales curve was in part an effect of its critical reception after the initial phase of reviewing in 1888 and 1889. A memorable discussion of the novel appeared in the Melbourne *Argus* on 18 January 1890 by 'Telemachus' (Francis Myers). It led to a response by 'G. E. F.' on 27 January, to which Boldrewood himself replied on 4 February. 'Telemachus' praised the novel for its historical qualities:

[Boldrewood] had known his men . . . their crimes and their punishments; and, more, had studied, and deeply, the social conditions out of which those phenomena grew. Those conditions have almost, or wholly, passed away now; and therein is one chief value of the book . . . In virtue of this historic value chiefly, it ranks as an Australian classic. It paints, and accurately, certain scenes of the first Australian century, which, without it, would have no record . . . If any other writer had done as well for the free life of the time as Clarke did for the convict life [in *His Natural Life*] we should be able to realise and to understand it tolerably well. But none essayed, none perhaps were fitted for the task . . . There is, indeed, an Australian period from Macquarie's reign to the diggings, say, which very few people understand. It is just on the tail of this period that Rolf Boldrewood picks up the thread.

'Telemachus' goes on to show how Boldrewood has explained the conundrum of how there could have been an Australian type that was 'Matchless in heroism, yet monstrous in crime'. In this context, the characterisation of old Ben Marston gets particular praise, but Starlight is criticised as 'melodrama masquerading as real life'. The

ordered for printing: for *E2* a further 1,250 copies in June 1894 for a special issue on 120 lb stock – not seen – and for *E3* 320,000 copies). The (estimated) number of copies printed 1947–2001 is 163,000: see Eggert, 'New Life for a Colonial Classic *Robbery Under Arms*', in *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia (1946–2005)*, ed. Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006), pp. 195–8.

only other criticism – ironic, in view of what we now know of the production of *E2* – is that ‘a good many pages and some chapters might with advantage be cut out; and it is a pity that when the author was revising his work for this special edition, he did not use the pruning-knife with vigour’ (p. 4).

‘G. E. F.’ answered that there were ‘glaring errors and anachronisms’ that rendered the novel a ‘careless and negligent’ work (p. 5). Boldrewood replied that alterations of time and place were of the nature of romance:

Conceding that trifling errors and immaterial slips of chronology may be detected in a book written during intervals snatched from work and travel amid all sorts of queer environments, what matters it? As a whole, *Robbery Under Arms* ranks as a vivid pictorial record of the wild times long passed. So much has been admitted by all classes of Australians. With them and their children I am content to leave my reputation. (p. 11)

Shifts between appeals to romance convention and claims of realistic representation are a notable feature of the novel’s reception. They are linked to the contemporaneous creation of an Australian canon: long, considered articles discussing what had been achieved so far in Australian literature appeared from the late 1880s.¹³⁹ For ‘Telemachus’, it consisted of *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* (except that Kingsley ‘was somewhat as the foreigner who learns to speak our language tolerably well, but never thinks in it’), *His Natural Life* and, now, *Robbery Under Arms*.¹⁴⁰ Writing in the *Illustrated Sydney News* of 13 September 1890, ‘J. S. R.’ expressed

¹³⁹ See *Geoffry Hamlyn*, ed. Mellick, Morgan and Eggert, pp. xix–xxiv. See also those discussed below, Barton’s ‘Status of Literature in New South Wales: II’, Arthur Patchett Martin, *The Beginnings of an Australian Literature* (1898; Canberra: Mulini Press, 1998) and John Farrell, ‘The Victorian Period in Australian Literature: Our Poets and Novelists’, *Daily Telegraph* (Melbourne), 19 June 1897. The review in *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* on 19 July 1889 was the first Australian one to compare the novel ‘in its treatment of certain phases of colonial life’ to *Geoffry Hamlyn*; RB’s works ‘bid fair . . . to take the lead in the foundation of a standard Australian literature’ (p. 23).

¹⁴⁰ For Alexander Sutherland, writing on 1 January 1887 in the *Argus*, there was only one – *His Natural Life*, which ‘has every title to a foremost place in the ranks of second-rate novels’ (‘Australian Literature in its First Century’, p. 4).

a piety of the time that it takes a civilisation with historical density and a class of people endowed with privileges and leisure to produce great novels of manners and ideas. The idea had been expressed with rich, self-conscious irony by Henry James in his essay *Hawthorne* (1879) in explaining the difficulties of the American writer of fiction in finding adequate subject matter. But 'J. S. R.' went on to argue that 'if the term *novel* be used in the wider and looser sense which it bears in common speech, and be permitted to include in its sweep the narrative of incident and manners, then it must be allowed that at least two Australian writers have attained considerable success as novelists'. Clarke's 'repulsive yet wonderful' convict novel qualifies: it is based on his 'visions of what he might have known and might have seen'. But so, too, do the two Boldrewood titles (Macmillan's three-volume edition of *A Miner's Right* had appeared in April) because of their 'reality, freshness, and breeziness': in them, Boldrewood wrote 'of what he knew and saw'.¹⁴¹

In the *Australasian Critic* for March 1891, 'E.H.I.' gave the response a twist when he differentiated the achievements of what was rapidly emerging as the Kingsley–Clarke–Boldrewood canon.¹⁴² In the Clarke novel the 'human interest . . . completely dwarfs the

¹⁴¹ Page 27. Cf. the review of *A Colonial Reformer* in the London *Saturday Review* of 20 December 1890: 'Mr. Boldrewood certainly put his best foot foremost when he wrote *Robbery under Arms* . . . As long as he sticks to his coach robberies and his bushrangers, his miners, and even his natural phenomena, Mr. Boldrewood is thrilling and admirable . . . but he lacks invention where he lacks experience' (p. 711). The *Bookman* complimented RB on rising above 'the vulgar sensational novels of the Melbourne Boulevards – the Mysteries of Hansom Cabs and all the rest'. His novels are 'racy of the soil. The free air of the Australian bush blows through them. It is an earnest attempt to bring before Englishmen the realities of Australian life' (November 1891, p. 71). And, in New York, the *Nation* remarked: 'Great Britain's older colony, Canada, has produced no novelist comparable with Boldrewood' (25 December 1890, p. 507).

¹⁴² The review in the *Academy* (see above, p. lxxvii) on 13 July 1889 was the first to compare the novel to *His Natural Life* and *Geoffry Hamlyn*. Extracts of reviews (all positive) were printed and bound-in with Macmillan's Colonial edition of *A Miner's Right* (1890): those not traced are from *World*, *Morning Post*, *Graphic* and *Whitehall Review*. The *World* is quoted as comparing the novel to *Geoffry Hamlyn* and praises its evocation of 'the Australian bush, the sense of space, freedom, and freshness . . . and rarely has the "joy of living" been more graphically described than in the midnight ride after the escape from Berrima gaol'.

historic', and it is 'for story, not for history' that we read *Geoffry Hamlyn*:

As compared with Henry Kingsley, he [Boldrewood] is thoroughly Australian . . . he looks at things with Australian eyes . . . [His books] are the work of a man who possesses no great genius for writing, and has not that keen perception of human character which can alone make a really great novelist, but who has to a large extent made up for these natural deficiencies by close and careful study and a diligent observation of what has gone on around him.

'E.H.I.' concludes that Boldrewood's books 'differ in kind from that of Marcus Clarke, to whom, as a novelist, he is inferior in just about the same degree as he is superior as a historian' (p. 125). Although 'E.H.I.' had not sounded the Jamesian note about the cultural inferiority of the new societies ('No State . . . no palaces, no castles . . . no Epsom nor Ascot!' ¹⁴³), his arguments were woven back into an unsigned but stylish article in the Edinburgh *National Observer* reprinted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 21 December 1892.

The writer clearly had some knowledge of Australia and of the particulars of Boldrewood's life, and may have been Australian. But the audience being addressed was one who knew of the dilemma that James had so memorably named: 'that the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep'. The Australian situation was akin to that of the American in this, except that America was more differentiated:

Australia is America with a chubby face. Its art and its letters, its music and its culture, are far to seek. Where these humanities are to be found, they are gamely fired with ambition; they aspire and grope gallantly, but that is all. For the rest, the land sounds with the pick and the shears, and the experience of a manifold and romantic existence is soaking into the blood of a new race.

Even Clarke's novel 'had the taint of English masters', and it was the best. Others were peopled by characters who were but 'plagiarised

¹⁴³ Henry James, *Hawthorne* (1879) in James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers* (New York: Library of America, 1984), pp. 351–2 and 320 (the quotation in the next paragraph).

Londoners or blood-proud squires':

From this preposterous mimicry Rolf Boldrewood has delivered us . . . he has gripped the life out of a long experience, because he has a diverse knowledge of an interesting country, and because he has jerked it into the bald facts of fiction, he deserves all the credit of a herald and a pioneer . . . The famous Starlight suffers from the sentimental . . . But saving for this touch of the 'Lady's Journal' the book was admirably done. The narrative was faithful, the pictures were vivid, the incidents were out of photography. And the historian of posterity who has mislaid his police reports may turn up Rolfe Boldrewood quite contentedly. (p. 6)

The appendix, Historical Background, discusses this claim.

As each succeeding Boldrewood title was published by Macmillan during the 1890s until the last in 1905, *Robbery Under Arms* was frequently mentioned in the reviews. The stage adaptation of 1890 and its many revivals also kept the novel in people's minds,¹⁴⁴ as would its adaptations for film in 1907, 1920, 1957 and 1985. (See Adaptations for a discussion.) In 1896, Desmond Byrne devoted a 40-page chapter to Boldrewood in *Australian Writers*,¹⁴⁵ in 1899, *Robbery Under Arms* was included in Sir Edwin Arnold's list of 'The World's Best Hundred Novels';¹⁴⁶ famous people professed their admiration

¹⁴⁴ The adaptation for the stage by Alfred Dampier and Garnet Walch, 1 March – 18 April 1890 (ed. Richard Fotheringham; Paddington, NSW: Currency Press, 1985) was reviewed in *Table Talk* (7 March 1890). RB, present on the opening night at the Alexandra Theatre in Melbourne, received 'a burst of applause from the crowded stalls' (ibid., p. 5). De Serville quotes RB's gratified account of the night (p. 240). The play was also a success in England where it subsequently toured. The *Bulletin* reviewed the play's revivals enthusiastically (7 November 1891, 9 November 1895 and 24 September 1903 in Sydney; 17 October 1896 in Melbourne), as did *Adelaide Observer* (22 August 1891, in Adelaide). Dampier's performance was especially commended. And, on 13 April 1913, *Hawkesbury Herald* reviewed a recent staging by Mr Philip Lytton's Company in Windsor of 'the old familiar Australian bush drama'.

¹⁴⁵ (London: Bentley, 1896). He contrasted RB's cheerful optimism with Clarke's morbid imagination and felt that the narrator of *Robbery Under Arms* helped RB to avoid his usual stylistic excesses. Cf. E. A. Badham's claim that Australia 'has produced few readable novels, and none which can claim to be much more than commonplace'. He was decrying the suggestion that Australian works could be substituted for English ones in the syllabus at the University of Sydney: 'An Australian School of Literature', *Cosmos*, 30 April 1895, pp. 415–17.

of it;¹⁴⁷ and in 1915, upon Boldrewood's death, obituaries showered tributes upon him in newspapers in Australia and overseas.¹⁴⁸

Either Boldrewood's ventriloquising of a racy vernacular was something critics had been taught to be ashamed of or they had no critical vocabulary in which to prize it: in any case, it was rarely pointed to as an aspect of the realism that his romance was constantly being said to have achieved.¹⁴⁹ Nettie Palmer referred in 1931 to the novel's 'loose vernacular style' as a failing that ought to be overlooked, but this was either a defensive manoeuvre (to meet the anticipated objection) or could co-exist with her private opinion of 1927 about the novel's 'pleasant expressive idiom'.¹⁵⁰ Opinions were shifting. In 1930, H. M. Green called Dick Marston 'perhaps the first thoroughly Australian character in fiction'; and in 1948 'I.M.' (Ian Mair) described the narrative as 'a masterpiece of living Australian speech'.¹⁵¹ However, the link between that recognition and the claim for the novel's historical testimony (which Mair repeated) had not yet been made.

In 1950, the New Zealand journal *Landfall* published what was

¹⁴⁶ See Burke 58. A special issue of *E2* in a quarter-leather binding appeared in the Daily Telegraph Library of these novels (1899).

¹⁴⁷ 'The Duchess of York in 1901 and Tsar Nicholas II in 1904: see further, de Serville 279, 284.

¹⁴⁸ For Australian obituaries, see Burke 34–5. For overseas, see, e.g., *Otago Daily Times*, 13 March 1915; *Publishers' Weekly*, 20 March 1915.

¹⁴⁹ *Adelaide Observer* was an exception, commending 'the natural speech of a half-educated man full of colonial phrases and grammatical errors' (12 October 1889, p. 41). In *The Development of Australian Literature* by Henry Gyles Turner and Alexander Sutherland, Turner recognises it only to subsume it as 'character': Dick's 'story is told with a fine manly ring in it . . . The character of the narrator is so thoroughly well defined, that one recognizes at a glance the impossibility of any feeble sentimentality in his words or deeds' (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1898), p. 84.

¹⁵⁰ Respectively: *All about Books*, January 1931 (quoted in Burke 36); *Fourteen Years: Extracts from a Private Journal 1925–1939* (Melbourne: Meanjin, 1948), p. 28. A long article by 'M.H.C.B.' on 'Rolfe Boldrewood' in 1935 makes no advance in this regard (*Age*, 10 August) but testifies to the novel's ongoing popularity. It was re-serialised in the Melbourne *Weekly Times*, 13 June 1936 – 1 May 1937: information from Elaine Zinkhan.

¹⁵¹ Respectively: *An Outline of Australian Literature* (Sydney: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1930), p. 55; and "'Robbery Under Arms" To-day – A Birthday and a Jubilee', *Age*, 7 August 1948, p. 6.

probably the freshest piece of criticism of the novel since the 1890s. In a long review Frank Sargeson took issue with Thomas Wood's introduction to a recent edition where Boldrewood was criticised for having gone 'wrong at the start by deciding that the story should be told in reminiscence by a man of little schooling'. Sargeson pointed to the more or less simultaneous discovery in *Robbery Under Arms* and *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) of the possibilities of the 'colonial vernacular' in first-person storytelling: 'To this day it [the Australian language of Dick Marston] is wonderfully fresh, alive and transfigured on the printed page, wonderfully immediate and animated, and . . . wonderfully employed to carry the weight of the story . . . Dick Marston . . . speaks for himself, and at the same time speaks for a whole continent'.¹⁵² Sargeson was prepared to defend Starlight as a mythic figure:

Starlight and the men of the Marston family are at war with the society of their day . . . Starlight got out of England to escape it there, and Dad escaped it by being transported; but what they escaped from is waiting for them out in Australia in its colonial form. So they try to escape again, with the two boys following their lead. But now, having already arrived at the ends of the earth, there is the problem of discovering a fresh place to escape to . . . sure enough they discover the remote and idyllic Hollow . . . and a good convenient cave in which they can live and be secure . . . how familiar both Hollow and cave will be to those readers who know their colonial writers!¹⁵³ . . . it seems to be an almost entirely male world that their more or less unconscious wish directs them towards . . . Starlight's most deeply felt relationship is with Warrigal . . . [who] 'would have made a bridge of his own body any time to let Starlight go safe'. (p. 264)

¹⁵² 4 (1950), 262–5 [pp. 262, 264], reviewing the Oxford University Press World's Classics edition of 1949.

¹⁵³ Sargeson, a New Zealander, does not specify: but an earlier, anonymous tale [by Charles de Boos], 'The Stockman's Daughter: A Tale of the New Country', serialised in *People's Advocate and New South Wales Vindicator*, 6 September – 1 November 1856, has a 'Devil's Hole' that is also a safe (if smaller), natural fortress in the mountains used by bushrangers. There is also a gentleman-in-disguise, a self-conscious use of the flash language of the bushrangers mixed with the standard English of the squatters, and a faithful Aborigine loyal to the bushranger hero.

In his introduction to the Macmillan ‘First School Edition’ of 1968, R. B. Walker would point out that ‘Nearly all the female characters suffer from Victorian anaemia . . . spilling over with sweetness and goodness, and thus they are rather insipid to modern taste’ (p. viii). G. F. Maine’s introduction to the 1954 Collins edition provides – unconsciously – an explanatory link between Sargeson and Walker’s observations about gender by reflecting on the appeal of the novel in an age of ‘the holocausts of two world wars . . . the iron curtain . . . the apocalyptic power of atomic weapons . . . Perhaps it is well that, in this age of unrest . . . we should turn for relief to a century when life was relatively uninhibited, when even lawlessness was uncomplex and circumscribed’ (p. 11).

The bushranger figure of the 1860s – attractively youthful, defiant of authority, reckless, dying ‘game’ – had retained a sentimental affiliation in the hearts of many Australians. The stoic mateship and the loyalties – the ‘deeply felt relationship[s]’ – that had sustained the men during World War II were crying out for cultural endorsement. As Vance Palmer pointed out, also in 1954, there was a new interest in the myth of the (predominantly male) national character that could, now, be imagined as having been continuous from colonial days. Books by historians Russel Ward and A. A. Phillips, both appearing in 1958, would consolidate the insight.¹⁵⁴

Robbery Under Arms was one of the colonial classics that benefited from this new climate of interest. Four new typesettings appeared from 1947 to 1954: from Dymocks (Sydney, 1947, 427pp.), Cassells (London, 1947, 432pp.), Oxford (1949, 660pp.) and Collins (London, 1954, 446pp.). These editions would form the basis of approximately 56 reprintings until 1994 from these and other publishers, in particular Lloyd O’Neil and Angus & Robertson.¹⁵⁵

Dustjacket design changed with the decades, as the postwar

¹⁵⁴ Palmer, *The Legend of the Nineties* (1954; Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963), p. 48; Ward, *The Australian Legend*; Phillips, *The Australian Tradition*. Palmer described the opening paragraphs of *Robbery Under Arms* as embodying ‘the voice of a new people that had never found expression except in the oral lays and stories they passed around’ (p. 67). Ward followed suit: ‘Here, if anywhere in imaginative literature, is the actual birthplace of the “noble bushman”’ (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 204.

¹⁵⁵ For details of postwar reprints and two new typesettings ([Melbourne]: Modern

burst of interest in the novel gave way to differently inflected ones. Variations of the man-on-horseback motif were gradually supplanted, in post-1970 formats, by reproductions of colonial paintings: these were documentary appeals to a past imagined, now, as more firmly historical.¹⁵⁶ In the universities, the gradual professionalisation of the study of Australian literature from the 1960s brought on the one hand a new kind of scholarly attention to its literary-historical, biographical, bibliographical and linguistic contexts; but, on the other hand, the dominant commitment to analyse literary works as morally complex or self-conscious (but unified) aesthetic objects, and to judge Australian works by international standards, decisively displaced the nationalist agenda of the 1950s. Many critics came to believe that *Robbery Under Arms* did not repay serious literary-critical attention;¹⁵⁷ but a new phase of reception began in the 1980s when the implications of the novel's place within a broader context

Publishing Group, 1992), 528pp.; (Adelaide: Axiom, 2001), 431pp.; as well as print-on-demand artifacts from c. 2002, see Eggert, 'Bibliographic Life'. The novel has also been twice abridged for children (1968, 1977) and repeatedly adapted for sound recordings and braille. Extracts have been anthologised, and the novel has been translated into various languages including German (1928, 1954), Gaelic (1936), Norwegian (1956), Polish (1970, 1988) and Chinese (1985), but it was out-of-print during the second half of the 1990s, its fortunes probably affected by a cultural climate of globalising postmodernism.

¹⁵⁶ E.g. Tom Roberts's *Bailed Up* (1895) was used in Lloyd O'Neil's reprintings of the Collins typesetting, 1970–84; Angus & Robertson used a Frank Mahony painting in their hardback reprintings of the same typesetting (1982–90); and, for their paperbacks (from the Cassells typesetting), the firm changed from a commissioned Don Stephens illustration of two bushrangers bailing up a stagecoach (1980) to a detail from William Strutt's *Bushrangers, Victoria, Australia* (1852), (1990–94). In a form of postmodern quotational design, the editions of 1992 and 2001 (see preceding note) used collages of historical but otherwise unrelated photos. See further, Eggert, 'New Life'.

¹⁵⁷ For the general shift in approach, see G. A. Wilkes, 'The Eighteen Nineties' (1958) in *Australian Literary Criticism*, ed. Grahame Johnston (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1962); and H. P. Heseltine, 'Australian Image: (1) The Literary Heritage', *Meanjin*, 21 (1962), 35–49. In 1986, Heseltine would add that RB was not 'a serious artist, as we understand art today' and that he was 'undisturbed by any profound self-searching': *The Uncertain Self: Essays in Australian Literature and Criticism* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), p. 6. Cf. Owen Thompson's review of the Lloyd O'Neil printing of *Robbery Under Arms* (1970), issued as part of a series of six 'Australian Classics' with *Geoffrey Hamlyn, Such is Life*,

of late-century Empire fiction began to be explored, confirming, whether intentionally or not, its continuing status as a classic of Australian literature.¹⁵⁸

Editorial rationale

The textual situation of *Robbery Under Arms* may be summarised as follows. There were two serialisations prior to the first book edition: the first, the *Sydney Mail* (*SM*), set from Boldrewood's lost autograph manuscript submitted in successive instalments. Whether that manuscript was returned to Boldrewood is not known, or indeed

His Natural Life, *While the Billy Boils* and *Joe Wilson's Mates*: 'if these are not classics, we are never going to have any. Internationalism, mainly through the pressures of marketing, has taken too firm a hold of anything worthwhile in the arts for any classic national traditions to be formed in the future' (*Australian*, 13 June 1970, p. 19). See also John Morrison's review of the series: 'Let us move on, by all means, but we can ill afford to lose respect for such precious origins' (*Age*, 20 June 1970, p. 15).

¹⁵⁸ See, as examples of the first (literary-historical) development, R. B. Walker, 'The Historical Basis of *Robbery Under Arms*', *Australian Literary Studies*, 2 (1965), 3–14; T. Inglis Moore, *Rolf Boldrewood* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1968); work by Alan Brissenden (cited in n. 1); essays by J. S. Ryan, including 'A Walter Scott Model for the Structure of *Robbery Under Arms*', *Notes & Furphies*, no. 22 (1989), 7–9; and Bruce Mitchell, 'On the Trail of "Terrible Hollow"', *ibid.*, no. 10 (1983), 15–16. As examples of the new phase, see Peter Pierce, "'Weary with Travelling through Realms of Air . . .': Romance Fiction of "Boldrewood", Haggard, Wells and Praed', *Westerly*, 32 (1987), 79–90; Graeme Turner, 'Ripping Yarns, Ideology, and *Robbery Under Arms*', *Australian Literary Studies*, 14 (1989), 239–50; and John Docker, 'Postmodernism, Cultural History and the Feminist Legend of the Nineties: *Robbery Under Arms*, the Novel, the Play' in *The 1890s: Australian Literature and Literary Culture*, ed. Ken Stewart (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996), pp. 128–49 – an answer to influential 1980s feminist critique of masculinist oppression of women in 1890s Australian literary culture (and, implicitly, of RB's role in it), and pointing to the novel's affinities with popular genres. For a postcolonialist reading of the novel's erasure of Aboriginality, typical of its time but partially resisted by the 'surly, inscrutable' Warrigal, see David Callahan, 'Whiteness Under Arms: Rolf Boldrewood and Rosa Praed's Outlaw Narratives', *Westerly*, 44 (1999), 76–88 [p. 87]. In 2004 Callahan named the postcolonialist 'stress fractures' in this sentimental adventure novel: 'the ways in which freedom and restraint contend with each other', 'the attractions of the social and the domestic . . . over the roving outlaw characters', and Starlight's appeal to the colonial imaginary as both English gentleman and larrikin: *Is Boldrewood Readable?* (London: Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 2004), pp. 15–16.

whether it ever existed as a single document. Boldrewood's regular travelling, his living so far from Sydney and the many obvious mistakes in *SM* strongly suggest that he did not correct proofs and that they were not closely checked at the *Sydney Mail* offices either. In view of the high number of inconsistencies in matters of presentation such as spelling, contractions and punctuation, the typesetters probably had little or no benefit of copy-editing. They would have been working at speed and have had at least initial trouble with Boldrewood's handwriting. (That general problem is the reason that his daughter Rose later gave for his purchasing a Remington typewriter some time after the family moved to Albury in 1885.) The second serialisation in the *Echo* (*Ec*) was set from the first, eliminating some obvious errors but creating a great many new ones in wording, including the omission of two passages, the result of haste and oversight. Punctuation became heavier. Again, and for the same reason, Boldrewood's involvement with proofs can be ruled out. He seems to have gathered together the *Echo* instalments, either as they were being published or soon after their publication, and to have sent them to Lucy Darley in February 1885. That this collection served as setting copy for the Remington edition (*E1*) is proved both by its omission of the two passages omitted in *Ec* and by one of the three new omissions in *E1* being exactly equivalent to one day's instalment in *Ec* (243:16 – 247:24). The confusions within the text created by the new omissions show that they were unintentional, and suggest that Boldrewood did not read it through, although the minor revisions sprinkled through *E1* suggest that a light editing of the text was carried out. It is possible that some of the revisions derive from Boldrewood glancing through the printer's copy, or from Lucy Darley whom we know read it.

The argument that he was responsible for heavy revisions in Chapter XXII is on much firmer ground. For some reason, possibly because he realised he had failed to keep the instalment, Boldrewood evidently copied it out, doing some close verbal revision as he went; and his daughter Emily may have typed it out afresh. Either he failed to complete the rewriting of the instalment, or there was some other mix-up; in any case, the end of the *Ec* instalment (225:2 – 226:29) was not transmitted to *E1*.

Boldrewood's remoteness from London effectively ruled out his

participation in the proofing of *E1*: that job was done by someone else, probably Robert Jeffray, and a Remington proof-reader may also have been involved. The Macmillan edition of 1889 (*E2*) was set from a copy of *E1* marked up with six long deletions (and some new, associated wording) specified by Boldrewood in notes, now lost, that accompanied his extant letter of 12 December 1888. *E1*'s departures from its setting copy were overlooked by Boldrewood when, 'going over it twice' as he tried to decide which material could be omitted 'without injuring the interest and action of the story', he evidently failed to notice (or at least to repair) the sizeable omissions that had already crept in. Not noticing *them* (he does not say that he *read* the novel twice), it is no wonder that he did not notice the couple of hundred smaller departures from the wording of *SM* and the thousands of others that were part of the gradual regularisation of the novel's non-standard features of presentation.

This process would continue in *E2*. Its proofs were corrected in-house at Macmillans for again, with the commercial pressure for (Northern-hemisphere) spring publication, time did not permit of sending proof sheets to Albury in New South Wales. In addition, some confusion with or in Boldrewood's instructions led to the retention of about 33 pages of text in *E1* that he had marked for deletion. *E2* was reset probably in July 1894; its first impression is that of 1895. A handful of substantive variants resulted and duly made their way into *E3*.¹⁵⁹

The Tauchnitz edition of 1889 (*TZ*) was set from *E1*, but Boldrewood did not know of its publication until after the event. *E2* was the last edition in which Boldrewood intervened, although he authorised the preparation by Macmillan of their double-column edition (*E3*). It was published in 1898 from the 1894 resetting of *E2*; the Montreal *Family Herald and Weekly Star* serialisation was set from *E3*; and the *Daily Star* serialisation was set from the weekly.¹⁶⁰ No other typesettings are known in Boldrewood's lifetime, and the posthumous ones derive directly or ultimately from *E2*. No printing

¹⁵⁹ See n. 162. The Basingstoke Editions Book records one other resetting and stereotyping in October 1908; this was confirmed by optical collation (see next note), but no substantive changes were discovered.

¹⁶⁰ For the present edition, computer collations of *SM*, *Ec*, *E1*, *TZ*, *E2* (a Colonial issue of 1889) and *E3* (an impression of 1921) were carried out. The *Daily Star*

has returned to the text of *E1* or *SM*, and until now scholars have been unaware of *Ec*.

Only three textual states have direct authorial involvement: *SM* which stands in the closest relationship to Boldrewood's lost autograph manuscript; *E1*, but only Chapter XXII; and *E2* because of its deletions of *E1* material that Boldrewood authorised (although he authorised more than were carried out). Ever since the early 1890s, commentators on the novel have prized its historical testimony, not so much for its factual accuracy as for its rendering of colonial bush-life. Gradually, critics identified Boldrewood's creation of a distinctive narrating voice – a 'colonial vernacular' – as the innovative source of this achievement. This consideration weighs heavily against the choice of *E2* as copy-text since the number of its departures from accidentals in *SM* – the closest state to the manuscript where Boldrewood scored the modulations of that narrating voice – is in the thousands: those inherited cumulatively from *Ec* and *E1*, as well as new ones of its own.

Brissenden's argument that the novel was tightened by the excisions in *E2* assumes the desirability of a coherent, integrated aesthetic object:¹⁶¹ a scarcely contested assumption in the early to mid 1970s when he was writing. Consideration of the longer text

serialisation was orally collated for substantives, and its chaps. I and XXII and chap. I of the weekly were computer-collated to determine their setting copy. Complete optical collations of *E2* impressions of 1889, 1895 and 1915 and also of *E3* impressions of 1898 and 1922 were done, as was spot collation of other lifetime impressions of *E2*. Four minor errors in the collated copy of the 1889 Colonial issue are not present in the (optically collated) August 1889 Home issue, nor in another 1889 Colonial copy inspected: either some correction was done during printing in 1889 or some type came adrift (if plates were not used). The errors are: 'weeks' (instead of 'weeks!', 12:23), 'appeared' (176:27), 'despair' ('despair.', 345:12) and 'there' ('there.', 556:8).

¹⁶¹ E.g. 'Continuing Success', pp. 47, 48, 50. Earlier, H. M. Green had claimed that the novel 'is perfect in construction, which cannot be said of [*His Natural Life*]: 'Australian Literature – A Summary [Part 2]', *Arts Journal* (University of Sydney), 11. 2 (1928), 26–34 [p. 30]. T. Inglis Moore was nearer the mark in acknowledging the 'conflicting time-sequences, inconsistencies, and loose ends like Warrigal's speech and Rainbow's star' as being 'minor beside the gusto which sweeps the action forward in memorable scenes': 'A Word for Boldrewood', *Bulletin*, 12 March 1957, p. 2.

of the first serial form draws attention to Boldrewood's innovative and cheekily accurate ventriloquising of a range of voices other than Dick Marston's, including official ones. This is part of what might be called the novel's oral literacy. It is related to the conditions under which the writing took place. Loose-limbed serials work from instalment to instalment. Boldrewood had to invent as he went, attracting into the orbit of his accreting text the creative stimulants he found around himself – whether in the newspapers, the stories that he heard or even, conceivably, the accounts of misdeeds that he was hearing (and the voices that delivered them) in his own courtroom. The serial form of *Robbery Under Arms* enacts a balance between these fertilising sources and the needs of an audience for what was usually called in late nineteenth-century Australia a 'tale'. Conversion to book form brought with it the expectations of a 'novel' of a certain length endowed with what might be called a book decorum. While Boldrewood was happy to oblige and so achieve the large readership and financial success for which he yearned, the Macmillan printings – distributed in Britain, USA and throughout the Empire – considerably altered the functioning and to some extent dulled the meanings of the work experienced by those first readerships.

We can never stand in their place, but we can have the luxury of an historically informed and informing choice. The economics of trade publishing will dictate that the abridged version of *Robbery Under Arms* (which has 29,000 words fewer than *SM*'s) will usually be preferred when reprints are considered: editions derived from *E2* will probably remain available for a very long time. In the light of this and the other considerations given above, *SM* has been chosen as copy-text for the present edition. A combination of hasty typesetting and inadequate proof-reading left some hundreds of palpable errors in its published form; these have been emended (see Editor's Emendations and the list of silent categories in Note on the Text). The start of each new *Sydney Mail* instalment is noted. Substantive variants in *Ec*, *E1*, *TZ*, *E2* and *E3* are given at the foot of the page;¹⁶² and all the omissions are also noted there. The texts

¹⁶² All new substantive variants in *E3* have been checked against the 1894 resetting of *E2*. Where it is the source, this fact is recorded: see Note on the Text and note 6 for p. 66.

encountered by successive readerships – *E3*'s being far and away the largest – can thus be substantially reconstructed on the reading page. The Canadian serialised texts are separately treated in the appendix, *Robbery Under Arms* in Montreal.

Two approaches are possible in respect of Boldrewood's revisions in Chapter XXII for *E1*. Incorporating them into the copy-text would have made sense had his revision been thoroughgoing – for all of the novel. Not incorporating them – the approach adopted in this edition – maintains a separation of serial and book forms which reflects the historical nature of the editorial rationale. The nonsense at the start of Chapter XXII has been resolved, not by omission as in *E1*, but by the supply in square brackets of a possible wording.

In order to allow the fullest access to Boldrewood's working methods, all variants (not just of wording) are given at foot-of-page for the section of this chapter that he revised (213:1 – 224:3), subject only to the silent categories listed in Note on the Text. In addition, the Sample Collation lists for Chapter I all variants in the lifetime states to *E3*, and the headnote discusses the kinds of regularising carried out in each state after *SM*, including the 1894 resetting of *E2*. Thus the Sample Collation and the expanded foot-of-page recording for 213:1 – 224:3 afford the interested reader access for part of the novel to the larger body of evidence on which the present edition rests.¹⁶³

As of 2005 and not counting the serialisations, adaptations, translations and recent print-on-demand artifacts, there have been about 130 impressions and issues representing eleven editions (original typesettings) of *Robbery Under Arms*. The present edition is the twelfth. Whether the novel will stretch forward for another century of life with anything like the popularity it has enjoyed more or less continuously since 1889 cannot be confidently foretold. Understandings of the way in which we live and think change unpredictably, and the novel has played its part in this process. The upsurge in its appeal in the decades after the Second World War can be explained bibliographically but also by the way that the novel's bibliographic base reveals or instances wider social and

¹⁶³ Computer collations are deposited in Special Collections, Australian Defence Force Academy Library, Canberra.

ideological currents. Whether the process will continue is hard to say. However, the early life of the novel must always be of historical importance for the various forms of Australian colonial realism (as well as romance) that were claimed in its name. For this reason, the present edition respects that historical functioning both in its establishment of a reading text and in its provision of textual and contextual apparatus.

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