

NOT MUCH ORIGINALITY ABOUT US: SCOTTISH INFLUENCES
ON THE ANGUS & ROBERTSON BACKLIST

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The Scottish background of the Sydney publishing and bookselling firm of Angus & Robertson influenced the choice of books sold in their bookshops, the kind of manuscripts commissioned and the way in which these texts were edited. David Angus and George Robertson brought from Scotland an emphasis on recognising and fostering a quality homegrown product whilst keeping abreast of the London tradition. This prompted them to publish Australian authors as well as to appreciate a British literary canon and to supply titles from it. Indeed, whilst embracing his new homeland, George Robertson's backlist of sentimental nationalistic texts was partly grounded in the novels and verse written and compiled by Sir Walter Scott, Robert Burns and the border balladists.

Although their backlist was eclectic, the strong Scottish tradition of publishing literary journals, encyclopaedias and religious titles led Angus & Robertson, 'as a Scotch firm' to produce numerous titles for the Presbyterian Church, two volumes of the *Australian Encyclopaedia* and to commission writers from journals such as the *Bulletin*.¹ As agent to the public and university libraries, bookseller, publisher and Book Club owner, the firm was influential in selecting primary sources for the colony of New South Wales, supplying reading material for its Public Library and fulfilling the public's educational and literary needs.² The books which the firm published for the

¹ See Rebecca Wiley, 'Reminiscences of George Robertson and Angus & Robertson Ltd., 1894-1938' (1945), unpublished manuscript, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, ML MSS 5238.

² For a discussion of the firm's role in securing books and manuscripts for David Scott Mitchell and the significance of different editions within his collection, see Caroline V. Jones, 'The Influence of Angus and Robertson on Colonial Knowledge', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society (JRAHS)*, vol. 89, part 1, June 2003. For an analysis of the Scottish impact on the *Australian Encyclopaedia*, see Caroline Viera Jones, 'A Scottish Imprint: George Robertson and the *Australian Encyclopaedia*', paper presented at the British Book Trade History Conference, Edinburgh, 2004; to be published in

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colony's schools, moreover, belonged to an education system more akin to the centralised Scottish model than a local English elementary one, whilst A & R medical textbooks closely followed the discipline practised at Edinburgh.³

George Robertson was born on 14 April 1860 in Essex, where his father, the Reverend John Robertson, was a Unitarian Minister and an activist in the Reform Movement. On John Robertson's death, the family returned to Glasgow and George subsequently took up an apprenticeship with James MacLehose, publisher and bookseller to the University of Glasgow. In 1879 he set sail for New Zealand, where he joined his brothers' sawmilling venture. After three years in the South Island, Robertson arrived in Australia in early February 1882 and secured a job in the Sydney branch of his fellow Scot, publisher and namesake, George Robertson of Melbourne. It was there that he made friends with David Mackenzie Angus, who had been apprenticed to E. & S. Livingstone, booksellers to the University of Edinburgh.

In June 1884, David Angus branched out as a new and secondhand bookseller at 110 Market Street and in January 1886 Robertson joined him as partner in Angus & Robertson.⁴ In 1890, the firm moved from their combined premises at 110 and 116 Market Street to 89 Castlereagh Street, premises which they shared with the Scottish Rifles. In 1895, they published A. B. (Banjo) Paterson's *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses*, which they considered the true beginning of A & R publishing—although not the firm's first publication. Sadly, in 1899 Angus retired from the firm due to ill health and returned with his family to Edinburgh, where he died from tuberculosis on 21 February 1901. George Robertson continued as head of Angus & Robertson until his death in Sydney in 1933.

the Print Networks series in the United Kingdom by the British Library and in the United States by Oak Knoll Press, forthcoming.

³ Norma Townsend, 'Moulding Minds: *The School Paper* in Queensland, 1905 to 1920', *JRAHS*, vol. 75, part 2, October 1989, p. 144.

⁴ James R., Tyrrell, *Old Books, Old Friends, Old Sydney: The Fascinating Reminiscences of a Sydney Bookseller* (North Ryde, NSW: A & R, 1987), pp. 33–42; *Fragment: The House Magazine of Angus & Robertson and Halstead Press*, No. 1, May 1954, pp. 14–15 and No. 2, August 1954, pp. 14–15; and Isadore Brodsky, *Sydney's Phantom Book Shops* (Sydney: University Co-operative Bookshop, 1973), pp. 31–39.

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The methods inculcated in the young Scottish apprentices were employed half a world away, so much so that George Robertson confessed that there was not much originality about them. After publishing *The Man from Snowy River*, Robertson wrote to MacLehose and Sons for approval and ordered supplies from Young J. Pentland, a friend of David Angus from his apprenticeship days in Edinburgh.⁵ Deciding to establish a Book Club, Robertson asked James MacLehose junior for the various cloths in which the old Scottish firm had covered their Book Club titles and the special thick blue paper which they used to protect the Club's magazines. The first subscriber to the Angus & Robertson Book Club was well known to the MacLehose firm and George Robertson even estimated that between twenty and thirty of his early subscribers were familiar with the Book Club in Glasgow on which the Sydney Book Club was modelled.⁶ As Bill Bell has argued, 'a geography of communications' encouraged 'familiar cultural networks' in the new land. Indeed, James Tyrrell described the Sydney Book Club's group of Scottish doctors, who read and discussed newspapers from home, a gathering of the clans.⁷

Despite the firm's authors coming from different walks of life and background, it is significant that in their correspondence and their writing they consciously emphasised their Scottish ancestry or empathy by employing pseudo-Scottish dialect and even spelling out a Scottish strand within the national narrative. In seeking help for the destitute Hugh McCrae, for example, the non-Scottish Katharine Susannah Prichard wrote that 'the best laid schemes of ... mice have gang agley' whilst Mary Gilmore, of bush birth but Highland ancestry, regularly penned poems to 'Maister' George

⁵ List of Angus & Robertson Publications, 1888–1957, MS 11600, Box 1820/5, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria; 'The Story of the Firm: The Shop in Market Street', *Fragment*, No. 3, December 1954, pp. 12–13; and 'The Story of the Firm: A. & R. in the 1890s', *Fragment*, No. 4, May 1955, pp. 12–13.

⁶ See George Robertson (GR) to James J. MacLehose, 15 June 1895, Angus & Robertson (A & R) papers, Mitchell Library (ML) MSS 314/57/399–401.

⁷ Bill Bell, 'Crusoe's Books: The Scottish Emigrant Reader in the Nineteenth Century' in Bill Bell, Philip Bennett and Jonquil Bevan, eds., *Across Boundaries: The Book in Culture and Commerce* (Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies and Oak Knoll Press, 2000), pp. 116 & 119; and *Fragment*, No. 3, December 1954, p. 13.

Robertson on his birthday.⁸ Henry Lawson himself wrote specifically about Scottish Australians in poems such as ‘Scots of the Riverina’, and it is significant that he titled his piece on outback larrikin mateship ‘For Auld Lang Syne’.⁹ Lawson even wrote ‘The Scots: A Dirge (Wi’ a’ affection)’ as tribute and acknowledgement of George Robertson’s help, for Henry Lawson, like his contemporaries, was very well aware of just how much a publisher’s inclinations can influence whom he invites to join his stable of authors, no matter how good a businessman he may be.¹⁰

The publisher, who himself had been a battler in Scotland and New Zealand, understood and recognised hardship and humanity within his authors’ verse and short stories. He knew poverty and this heightened his empathy and generosity towards impoverished writers. Robertson’s background meant that he did not shun accepting manuscripts about life in the bush, although written in the vernacular. A man who had worked with his hands could understand the struggle of those who did and his firm’s bush ballads struck a chord with the Australian public. This was important because many still looked to England for inspiration. For example, the Chief Librarian of the Public Library of Western Australia wrote to Bertram Stevens in 1905 about the poetry anthology Stevens was putting together, convinced that there was nothing of merit that was homegrown:

⁸ Even Norman Lindsay mentioned his family’s Scottish origins despite the last two centuries spent in Ireland. See A. W. Barker, *Dear Robertson: Letters to an Australian Publisher* (Sydney: A & R, 1982), pp. 64 & 158. See also *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Carlton, Vic.: MUP), vol. 10 (1986), p. 107; and W. H. Wilde and T. Inglis Moore, eds., ‘A “birthday” line to “Maister George Robertson”’ in *Letters of Mary Gilmore* (Carlton: MUP, 1980), p. 100.

⁹ Henry Lawson, ‘Scots of the Riverina’ in *Selected Poems of Henry Lawson* (Sydney: A & R, 1918), pp. 106–7; and Lawson, ‘For Auld Lang Syne’ in *While the Billy Boils* (Sydney: A & R, 1896), p. 329. For discussion of the influence of the firm’s editing on Henry Lawson’s portrayal of mateship, see Caroline Viera Jones, ‘Historical Midwifery: Editorial Birth of an Australian Narrative’, *Journal of Publishing*, forthcoming. For documentation of editorial changes, see Colin Roderick, ed., *Henry Lawson: Collected Verse*, vols. I–III (Sydney: A & R, 1967).

¹⁰ Henry Lawson, ‘The Scots: A Dirge’, 1909, and ‘The Auld Shop and the New’, 1910, A & R papers, ML MSS 314/166. Note, however, that the firm’s manuscript rejects folder declined a manuscript on Scottish poetry by John Robertson, dated 14 November 1896.

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In reply to your letter of April 3rd., asking for information concerning West Australian poets of any ability I am afraid I cannot help you in the matter. After eleven years residence here, during which I have been closely in touch with the literary output of the State, I cannot name any set of verses worthy of being included in an Australasia [sic] Anthology.¹¹

Whilst fiercely supporting and promoting Australian writers, George Robertson thought that no one could ‘Tucker’ a manuscript as well as his favourite editor did. Professor Thomas George Tucker believed that in order to prevent parochialism, literature should adhere to universal values. Whereas George Robertson encouraged national sentiment by inviting gum-scented Australiana to invade not only the words but even titles and title pages of the firm’s popular fiction, Tucker was adamant that Angus & Robertson’s serious writers only use bush symbolism when it came naturally to hand. In a lecture to the Australian Literature Society in 1902, he cited the verse of Robert Burns as the quintessential example on which to base Australian writing. It is significant, however, that Tucker considered this popular Scottish poet’s verse naive—reiterating the convention that no matter how praiseworthy colonial sentiment might be, its literary manifestation could never attain perfection. Whilst extolling the virtues of Australian literature, Tucker nevertheless located ‘high culture’ within an English rather than a British tradition, grading its quality according to its distance from the British empire’s centre:

There occurs to me one cardinal illustration of the superiority of writing which is frankly true to its environment, over writing which adapts itself to some external standard. That example is the work of Burns. So long as the Ayrshire poet wrote naively like a Scot, of things palpable in his own Scottish world, his verse is mostly beyond praise; it carries the unmistakable stamp and the irresistible charm of genuineness in feeling, fancy, and expression. But as soon as Burns attempts to say things as he fancied the higher literature ought to say them; in other words, tries to envisage and phrase them in the style of a classic English writer, he becomes artificial, frigid, and flat. Not even a perfervid Scotchman will draw his claymore upon me for this piece of candour.¹²

¹¹ Letter to B. Stephens [sic] from the Chief Librarian, Public Library of Western Australia, 13 April 1905, A & R papers, ML MSS 314/5/9.

¹² Professor Tucker, *The Cultivation of Literature in Australia: A Lecture Delivered before the Australian Literature Society*, Occasional Paper no. 2

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The boldness of George Robertson in accepting for publication stories of working men and women in ballad and short story form therefore broke with accepted English literary tradition, especially since the characterisation and language was not necessarily coarse. In publishing verse about the urban and rural poor, especially during the 1890s depression, George Robertson gave a voice to the ordinary Australian. More importantly, Robertson widened his Australian readership and influenced an urban middle class to relate to the bush. Henry Lawson even complained to Banjo Paterson that this alien class bought his titles by the thousands:

Do you know who's buying my book? Your friends of the capitalistic classes! The Labour people are not buying my book. They have declared me bogus for writing a story disclosing some good points in a squatter.¹³

In fostering Australian poetry, George Robertson and Banjo Paterson received encouragement from Rudyard Kipling, who praised Paterson's attempt to depict life in the bush. Kipling urged the firm to publish more ballads along the same lines as *The Man from Snowy River*. He especially wanted Paterson 'to write more about the man who is born and bred in the land, to say what he does and what he thinks of things and how he manages his affairs'. There were few in this world singing about what they knew and loved, he wrote, especially those who wanted other people to know and love it.¹⁴

Kipling and Paterson had part-Scottish ancestry and were following in the tradition of Robert Burns.¹⁵ The significance of this Scottish bard was that he celebrated the everyday lives of ordinary folk.¹⁶ Even Henry Lawson was

(Melbourne: Echo Publishing Company, 1902), pp. 29–30. See also Ken Levis, 'The Role of the *Bulletin* in Indigenous Short-Story Writing during the Eighties and Nineties' in Chris Wallace-Crabbe, ed., *The Australian Nationalists: Modern Critical Essays* (Melbourne: OUP, 1971), p. 53.

¹³ A. B. Paterson, 'Some Reminiscences of George Robertson, Australian Publisher', *Sydney Mail*, 20 September 1933.

¹⁴ Rudyard Kipling to A & R, 10 December 1895. A & R papers, ML MSS 314/43/357.

¹⁵ Rudyard Kipling was born in India of English, Scottish and Irish descent. See John Drinkwater, ed., *The Outline of Literature* (London: George Newnes, 1962), p. 705.

¹⁶ Teresa Pagliaro, 'Arthur Wilberforce Jose (1863–1934), an Anglo-Australian: A Study of his Contribution to Australian Literary Culture from the 1890s to the 1930s', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Sydney: 1990), p. 24.

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influenced by the book of Burns's verse which Mary Gilmore lent him, whilst he often used to recite the line 'a man's a man for a' that'. Indeed, the firm's popular wartime poet, C. J. Dennis, was even described by the Australian Prime Minister as the Robert Burns of Australia. This impact of Burns upon an Australian narrative is particularly significant because his lyrics displayed an egalitarianism and a mateship most telling in its classlessness:¹⁷

It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man the warld o'er
Shall brothers be for a' that.¹⁸

When Russel Ward wrote of a scarcity of Scottish songs and an Australian ethos derived from the verse of the more numerous and working class Irish, he based his findings on the preponderance of Irish convict verse in collections such as Paterson's *Old Bush Songs*, as well as the larger number of Irish and English convicts sent to the colonies.¹⁹ Only the most hardened of Scottish criminals faced transportation, since the Scottish authorities believed it to be a wasteful and harsh use of public funds. On arrival in Australia, Scottish free settlers did not as readily join Ward's 'nomad tribe' but were quick to farm their own land and leave behind them the poverty of croft or city slum. Perhaps, as Malcolm Prentis has argued, the Scottish free settler, literate since the advent of compulsory Scottish education and believing in social mobility through self-help and hard work, had more in keeping with perceived Australian values than the itinerant bush labourer.²⁰

¹⁷ Geoffrey Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come: The Creative Spirit in Australia, 1788–1972* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1973), pp. 64, 68 and 115; Brian Kiernan, 'The Australian Novel and Tradition' in *Images of Society and Nature: Seven Essays on Australian Novels* (Melbourne: OUP, 1971), p. 161; A. H. Spencer, *The Hill of Content: Books, Art, Music, People* (Sydney: A & R, 1959), p. 113; and the *Scottish Australasian*, 1 January 1910, p. 21.

¹⁸ Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation: A Personal View* (London: BBC and John Murray, 1969), p. 294.

¹⁹ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: OUP, 1966); and A. B. Paterson, ed., *The Old Bush Songs: Composed and Sung in the Bushranging, Digging, and Overlanding Days* (Sydney: A & R, 1905), p. xv.

²⁰ Malcolm D. Prentis, *The Scots in Australia: A Study of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, 1788–1900* (Sydney: SUP, 1983), p. 8.

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Might not an Australian cultural identity also encompass a belief in home ownership and working for one's self? Although Eric Richards has argued that the Australian colonies became increasingly urbanised during the years 1860 to 1890, resulting in Scottish immigrants joining the urban labour force, nevertheless many went on the land in the mid-1800s and even established themselves independently. Whilst allowing for English influences, surely Australian mateship, reticence and 'having a go' could also have been derived from the clannishness and fierce individualism of the Highland Scot and the enterprising Scottish Lowlander as much as from the downtrodden Irish convict peasant?²¹

It is significant that the songs which Russel Ward transcribed have not become an important part of Australia's cultural landscape. Verse from Frank the Poet, for example, is no longer remembered or recited and neither are the following lines from one of his most popular songs, 'Moreton Bay':²²

Early one morning as I carelessly wandered by the
Brisbane waters I chanced to stray,
I saw a prisoner sadly bewailing, whilst on the
sunbeaming banks he lay.

Instead it is the published Scottish-Australian songs of Banjo Paterson, Dorothea Mackellar, Peter Dodds McCormick and Mary Gilmore which have been absorbed into our national cultural heritage. They have become a potent symbol on which to focus Australian nationalism and have continued to unite the nation in times of war and sporting conflict.²³ Perhaps this is partly because publishers, such as George Robertson, were driven to print proportionately more Scottish ballads in verse collections and school poetry

²¹ Eric Richards, 'Australia and the Scottish Connection, 1788-1914' in R. A. Cage, eds., *The Scots Abroad: Labour, Capital, Enterprise, 1750-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 114-117 and 141.

²² Ward, *Australian Legend*, p. 55.

²³ 'Advance Australia Fair' was written and composed by Peter Dodds McCormick and first performed in Sydney on St Andrew's Day, 1878; 'Waltzing Matilda' was written by Andrew Barton Paterson (in association with Christina Macpherson); 'My Country' was written by Dorothea Mackellar; and 'The Man from Snowy River' was also written by 'Banjo' Paterson. See 'Scots in Australia' and 'Songs, Bush and National', vol. 8, *Australian Encyclopaedia* (Sydney: Grolier Society, 1963), pp. 32-37 and 204; see also Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, p. 63.

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anthologies. Of the seventy-one contributors to Angus & Robertson's *The Golden Treasury of Australian Verse*, for example, twenty were of Scottish extraction, whilst A & R poet, Mary Gilmore, clearly attributed nation building and balladry to a Scottish–Australian inheritance:²⁴

They brought with them the old Scotch songs,
The songs their fathers sang ...
And day by day, and year by year,
They made for us this land.

A conscious acknowledgement of the Scottish affiliations of the firm not only reinforced strong publisher–author relationships but also provided a counterbalance to the dichotomy of English and Irish influences in colonial Australia. Because he was not of the Anglo-elite, Robertson's inclusive approach to authors of differing religious and political views allowed for a diversity of voices outside the establishment.²⁵ He even published two different children's history textbooks—one for the Catholic schools and one for the rest of the colonists.²⁶ Coupled with the firm's vastly popular bush ballads, George Robertson's attitude enriched and at the same time drew together colonial parochial strands before and after Federation.

The interplay between these strands was evident even after the First World War when Australia wished to fill her 'wide open spaces' and religious institutions sought child migrants as new recruits for the Church.²⁷ As late as 1922 the Acting President of the Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes, for example, was adamant that the Connemarra boys, whose

²⁴ See Mary Gilmore, 'The Elder Ones' in *The Passionate Heart* (Sydney: A & R, 1918), p. 88; Bertram Stevens, ed., *The Golden Treasury of Australian Verse* (Sydney: A & R, 1909); Malcolm D. Prentis, *The Scottish in Australia* (Melbourne: AE Press, 1987), p. 104 and Prentis, *Scots in Australia*, pp. 206–7.

²⁵ For an analysis of Angus & Robertson manuscripts on Aboriginality, published and unpublished, see Caroline Viera Jones, 'Unrecorded Voices' in 'Australian Imprint: The Influence of George Robertson on a National Narrative (1890–1935)', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Sydney, 2004), chapter eight, pp. 316–29.

²⁶ Angus & Robertson, *History of Australia and New Zealand for Catholic Schools*, revised edition (Sydney: A & R, 1906); and Angus & Robertson's *History of Australia and New Zealand: Being a Short Account of the Early Discoveries and Settlement*, new edition (Sydney: A & R, 1912).

²⁷ Alan Gill, *Orphans of the Empire* (Alexandria: Millennium Books, 1997).

orphanage had burnt down, be 'trained' in the Presbyterian religion instead of the Anglican on arrival in Sydney:

There seems to be some little perturbation in Anglican Church quarters here in connection with the fact that the Presbyterians have stepped in and clinched matters in this important movement, and certain folks in high places have been inquiring whether, even though the boys are put in Burnside, they would be allowed to have them confirmed into the Church of England. We have given them to understand quite clearly that when the boys go there they become Presbyterians and will be trained as such, and that no other authority, whether Church or State, can be allowed to interfere; and I would presume that you thoroughly agree with me in this.²⁸

For too long has the tension between English and Irish Australians been used to explain the forging of national sentiment. Early Australian nationalism was even then multi-stranded and cannot therefore be divided between Irish republicanism and English conservatism. Indeed, as Neville Meaney has argued, if the colonies had been so evenly split, such a strong difference of opinion should have resulted in civil war.²⁹ Examiners' notes for the NSW junior history examination for 1894, however, clearly depict a public not professing to be Keith Hancock's 'independent Australian Britons' but instead a colonial society drawing on the different parochial loyalties of English, Scottish, Irish or Welsh.³⁰

²⁸ Letter from the Acting President, Burnside Orphan Homes Board to Burnside Board Member, Andrew Reid, dated 27 October 1922, cited in Caroline Jones, 'Broken Ties: The Reasons Behind Child Removal in New South Wales, 1945–1965', unpublished MA thesis (University of Sydney, 1999), p. 16. See also Caroline Jones, 'Adoption: A Study of Post-War Child Removal in New South Wales', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 86, part 1, June 2000.

²⁹ Neville Meaney, 'Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 32, no. 116, April 2001, p. 78.

³⁰ And Jewish, Chinese and German. See, for example, Henry Lawson's comments about his upbringing in a German district in 'From Mudgee Hills to London Town: I. Faces in the Street and Golden Gully', *Miscellaneous Manuscripts*, prose, vol. II, A & R papers, ML MSS 314/153/129 filed at ML A1861. Note that in his history of Australasia, Jose wrote about the arrival of the English and not the British. See Arthur W. Jose, *History of Australasia* (Sydney: A & R, 1911), pp. 5–14; see also W. K. Hancock, *Australia* (Sydney: Australasian Publishing, 1945).

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In explaining the ‘consequences’ of battles it is not enough to state which side won. A short statement is also wanted of what came of the victory. For instance, the consequence of the battle of Pinkie was not that Somerset beat the Scotch, but that the relations between England and Scotland were further embittered, and that Scotland again inclined to alliance with France instead of with England.³¹

Generally loyal to the empire and not as hostile as the Irish, nevertheless the Scots brought a certain level of anti-Englishness to the fledgling Australian nation. This attitude was evident in contemporary journals, such as the *Scottish Australasian*. The following lines from Ruth Harding’s poem about British regiments from the Highlands were published in the *Scottish Australasian* as late as 1922 and are derived from a 1914 poem. They reveal the same level of frustration in Scottish soldiers under British high command as the Australian Diggers experienced at Gallipoli:

British? God, British! The Cromarty strain
Is fierce in my blood and my heart beats fast,
For the terrible sons of the Scottish men
Are armed and crossing the hills again;
THESE ARE NO BRITISH: THEY OWN THEIR PAST.

The Picts and the Romans are well forgot,
But—Balliol, and Wallace, and Robert Bruce?
When North-of-the-Grampians cast its lot
With an ancient foe in a bloody spot,
These names are not lost, though the Scots bear truce.

Whose kings died prisoned, whose lands were fee,
Whose pride was lent to an alien state:
Though they of the kilt and the naked knee
Be one with the Saxon soldiery,
We share with the English not race, but fate.

... British? God, British! Nor now, nor then!
The pipes still skirl, and the ranks march on—
O, warriors brave are these kilted men
Who follow their pipers to death, again ...
The ‘British’ Scots, with their birthright gone.

³¹ Notes and suggestions to candidates for the 1894 Junior Public Examination on Modern History, *Manual of Public Examinations, 1892–1900*, University of Sydney Archives, G3 series 230.

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LORD OF OUR HILL TRIBES, ELD AND JUST,
MINGLE THEIR OWN WITH THEIR CHIEFTAIN'S DUST.³²

In his portrayal of the ANZAC legend, C.E.W. Bean also linked Scottish bravery and initiative to the Australian Digger, emphasising the Scottish background of the military training college of Duntroon and a number of the AIF's military leaders in the volumes he wrote for *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, published by Angus & Robertson.³³ Indeed, after fierce debate over the conscription issue, an Australian heroic military tradition no longer combined easily with an Irish convict and bushranging narrative in the firm's books, even though *Ginger Mick* went some way to smoothing over this divide. Instead, parallels were found between the bush-hardened ANZAC Diggers and depictions of Scottish highland regiments toughened by the harshness of their climate and history.

The concept of environmental determinism and the shaping of fit soldiers from the provinces is important as a background influence to Charles Bean's description of the ANZACs.³⁴ As in the Roman army, so the British Empire's provincial 'footsoldiers' and auxiliaries were traditionally meant to be strong and fit, to show initiative but to lack discipline. They were to be contained under the disciplinary umbrella of the regular British army and to be led by officers not taken from within their ranks but from within an elite officer class. Regional regiments and their people were seen as classless and distinct from the educated elite, who viewed them and the areas they came from as scenic venues for tourism and their patriotic knick knacks as kitsch commodities.³⁵

³² Ruth Guthrie Harding, 'British Regiments from the Highlands', 1914, cited in the *Scottish Australasian*, 21 September 1922, p. 149.

³³ For material on Angus & Robertson's editing of the official history, see Caroline Viera Jones, 'Unfortunate Omission: Writing Women out of the Anzac Legend', conference paper presented on 31 January 2003 at the Society of the History of the Book regional conference in Sydney and published in 'Books and Empire' Special Issue, *Bulletin of the Bibliographical Society of Australia & New Zealand*, vol. 28, 1–2, 2004.

³⁴ Rob Pascoe, *The Manufacture of Australian History* (Melbourne: OUP, 1979), p. 14.

³⁵ Murray G. H. Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 106.

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As early as the British prime ministership of Gladstone, ethnocentricity in the outlying Celtic ‘colonies’ of Great Britain was acknowledged. This imagined idea of nationality within the far reaches of the empire took the shape of a kind of ‘tartanry’ of the Highlands—a selection of clichés, such as clannishness or mateship, national sentimentality, physical vigour and initiative brought about by climate and geography.³⁶ Significantly, in assessing the manufacture of Scottish identity through the historical creation of highland mythology, Charles Withers’ environmental determinism is very similar to Bean’s analysis of the influence of the bush environment on Australian soldiers:

The Highlands become ... populated by a people in part made out to conform to prevailing ethnological theories as physiologically suited to labour in the open air and not to the rigours of regular indoor work (itself a carry over from eighteenth-century ideas of the ‘fittedness’ of native Highlanders for battle given their environment), and in part represented as servants to their own landscape.³⁷

For centuries Great Britain encouraged the enthusiasm and pride of crack troops from the far-flung regions of Great Britain and her empire. At the same time, a strong tradition of local patriotism and esprit de corps was established within these regiments. To this day Gurkhas and Highlanders, for instance, are famous for their storming ability and also their courage under fire, such as ‘the thin red line’ of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders at Balaclava in 1855.³⁸ Indeed, as Murray Pittock argues, outlying ‘colonial’ soldiers were used at a much higher rate than English soldiers. So much has the idea of such troops spearheading battle become entrenched that Pittock claims the Scots, for example, have had an overall mortality rate of fifty per cent:

At the same time, there is plenty of evidence that Scottish troops, though officially partners in Empire, suffered as if they were

³⁶ Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: NLB, 1977), ch. 3. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

³⁷ Charles Withers, ‘The Historical Creation of The Scottish Highlands’ in Ian Donnachie and Christopher Whatley, eds., *The Manufacture of Scottish History* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992), p. 154.

³⁸ John Laffin, *The Battle of Hamel: The Australians’ Finest Victory* (Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 1999), p. 35.

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expendable colonial auxiliaries. Of the 3 million or so men who served in the Scottish regiments (a good number of whom, it is true, were not Scots), 50 per cent have been killed or wounded. Scots suffered grotesque casualties in the Seven Years War, four times the Anglo-American rate, with the Black Watch alone haemorrhaging 650 from 1,300 at Ticonderoga, a rate they almost repeated at Magersfontein in the Boer War. In the Indian Mutiny, Scots were heavily used in storming duties, while in World War I their casualty rate was double the English level (incidentally, such disproportionate losses were repeated among other 'white' colonies: the ANZACs in particular grew to resent their dreadful casualties at Gallipoli, while Scots regiments tended to take pride in their slaughterhouse record).³⁹

When Charles Bean analysed Australian character, he also saw a classless mass of bush soldier-battler-heroes honed by a rugged environment, much as the wilds of Scotland were supposed to have shaped the Highlanders, and he frequently singled out the Scottish regiments for their bravery, friendliness and similarity to the Australians.⁴⁰ Indeed, there is a strong link between the characteristics of Bean's perceived concept of national cultural identity and that of other colonial entities and his assessment carries with it a degree of self-fulfilling prophesy. The ANZACs at Gallipoli were therefore treated no differently from storming regiments already in the British army. This trend was exaggerated in the case of the Australians, however, because they formed a complete division confined to their country rather than a Celtic regiment from within Great Britain, such as the Welsh Fusiliers, or the Gurkhas from within a colonial outpost.

Another Angus & Robertson author, the Scottish-Australian poet, Will Ogilvie, also linked the heroism of Australian soldiers to Scotland. In his dedication to *The Australian, and Other Verses*, he summed up his (and George Robertson's?) dual loyalties:

³⁹ Pittock, *Celtic Identity*, p. 108. Interestingly, after Gallipoli the number of Australian volunteers of Presbyterian religion dropped dramatically. See L. L. Robson, 'The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914-1918: Some Statistical Evidence', *Historical Studies*, vol. 15, October 1973, no. 61, p. 741.

⁴⁰ For example, the Gordon Highlanders at Bullecourt. See Andrews, *ANZAC Illusion*, p. 188. See also C. E. W. Bean, *ANZAC to Amiens: A Shorter History of the Australian Fighting Services in the First World War* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1946), pp. 343 and 416; and C. E. W. Bean, 'Sidelights of the War on Australian Character', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. XIII, 1927, Part IV, p. 220.

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To the men of Australia, who have proved for all time their unconquerable spirit and unswerving loyalty to the right, I dedicate these songs of the misty land they fought for and the sunny land that bred them⁴¹

Ogilvie addressed the Australians not as themselves but as part of an Empire.⁴² Although in 'The Heroes' he saw the ANZACs creating a new island race as noble as their ancestors from Great Britain, he was also aware in other poems of the strands which made up that island.⁴³ In 'Sunny Country', for example, the poem which Ogilvie wished to feature as the title verse in his collection, he made it quite clear that it was Scotland which was the misty land of his dedication whilst the city of London was a foggy place.⁴⁴ He also hinted that the Diggers' bravery was inherited from the Scots. England may have been Mother of the Empire, he argued and Robertson published, but Scotland was Mother of the Brave.⁴⁵

The Diggers' duty lay in honouring those killed for England's sake, cautioned Ogilvie, but Australian soldiers should not forget that their ancestors learnt how to die nobly under Scottish banners.⁴⁶ It was 'our England' even though 'the heart of Scotland is the readiest heart of the three'.⁴⁷ Australia thus gained two different traditions through Angus & Robertson verse. When George Robertson and his poets wished to write about patriotism, it was given an Australian nuance with an English background.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Will H. Ogilvie, dedication, *The Australian, and Other Verses* (Sydney: A & R, 1916).

⁴² See Ogilvie, 'A Song of the Flag' in *The Australian*, pp. 153–58.

⁴³ Ogilvie, 'The Heroes' in *The Australian*, p. 150.

⁴⁴ His exact words were: 'Far out of misty Scotland and the fogs of London town ... I rode through Sunny Country in a blaze of blue and gold.' See Ogilvie, 'Sunny Country' in *The Australian*, p. 7.

⁴⁵ Ogilvie, 'O Weeping Glens!' in *The Australian*, p. 145.

⁴⁶ Ogilvie, 'A Song of the Flag' in *The Australian*, pp. 153–58. See also A. B. Paterson, *Saltbush Bill, J. P., and Other Verses* (Sydney: A & R, 1917), p. 117.

⁴⁷ Ogilvie, 'A Dream of England' and 'War' in *The Australian*, pp. 134 and 136.

⁴⁸ GR to Major A. B. Paterson, 14 March 1917, A & R papers, ML MSS 314/66/409.

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Gallant, gallant dead of England! To the wandering winds that know them
Let us flaunt our flag afar,
On the hills that guard our heroes, on the fenceless seas below them;
It is ours to hold the Empire that they left us, ours to show them
We shall not forget the homage and the honour that we owe them
Who have made us what we are!⁴⁹

However, when George Robertson's authors, including C. E. W. Bean, wrote about Australian courage, it was to the Scots that they looked for an honourable Australian military inheritance:

Scotland's banners! Who shall gaze
On their faded folds unstirred?
Who in these Imperial days
Hear unthrilled their martial word? ...
Banners in the dimness here
Taught such soldiers how to die.⁵⁰

In publishing these ballads, George Robertson continued the Scottish publishing tradition of promoting national sentiment through verse and romantic texts. He was well aware that mythologising folklore could enrich and foster nationalism, especially when songs were partnered with a catchy tune. Robertson brought this knowledge with him to Australia and the texts he published during the 1890s influenced the manufacture of an Australian narrative, which has survived right up to the present day. As Ian Willison argues, Sir Walter Scott's historical romances were copied by colonial nations as models for literary nationalism.⁵¹ George Robertson encouraged patriotic feeling by publishing Australian folklore since he believed that 'sentiment and the lyrical cry for ever'. Arguing that this was what Sir Walter Scott had done in the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, in 1918 he advised his editor, David McKee Wright, to do the same for the Australian ballads:

⁴⁹ Ogilvie, 'A Song of the Flag' in *The Australian*, p. 156.

⁵⁰ Ogilvie, 'The Colours' in *The Australian*, p. 147. See also Kenneth Mackay, *Songs of a Sunlit Land* (Sydney: A & R, 1908).

⁵¹ See I. R. Willison, 'Across Boundaries: The History of the Book and National and International Literatures in English' in Bell, Bennett and Bevan, eds., *Across Boundaries*.

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See whether you can do for 'Dunn, Gilbert & Ben Hall' what Sir Walter did in the Border Minstrelsy. He made the ballads country folk brought him more Borderish and more minstrelsh than they ever were.

Enclosed are two versions of one which have just come into our hands. We send, also, A. B. Paterson's 'Bush Songs'—note the marked passage in the Introduction. You'll have to get a tune—a well-known one—to which it can be sung.⁵²

Yet, Angus & Robertson cast its net more widely than bush balladry and military history. One of the most popular titles the firm sold was the *Cookery Book of Good and Tried Receipts*. Indeed, by July 1927, it had reached a total print run of 350,000 copies from just nineteen editions. When George Robertson took over publishing the cookbook from the Executive Committee of the Women's Missionary Association of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales, the royalties he paid went towards missionary effort locally, in northern Queensland, the New Hebrides and India. The Committee was even approached in 1903 by the Edinburgh committee to send a lady doctor to the mission at Zenana in India. In 1907 the Australian committee became responsible for Dr Butcher's travelling expenses from Calcutta to Sholinghur and based her salary upon the Scottish medical missionary fee.⁵³ Profits from the *Cookery Book of Good and Tried Receipts* were crucial, therefore, in succouring mission stations abroad and in buttressing some of the firm's more prestigious but poorer paying publications at home. More importantly, this little cookbook demonstrated perfectly the continuing links which Angus & Robertson forged between Scotland and Australia.⁵⁴

⁵² GR to David McKee Wright, 28 September 1918, A & R papers, ML MSS 314/90/301. In the introduction to the 1905 edition of *Old Bush Songs*, Paterson wrote that he failed to find a song about Dunn, Gilbert, and Ben Hall. See Paterson, *Old Bush Songs*, p. xv.

⁵³ Executive Committee, Women's Missionary Association, Presbyterian Church of New South Wales, 16 July 1903, Minute Book No. 2 and 21 February 1907, Minute Book No. 3, St Stephen's Church, Archives of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of NSW, Ferguson Memorial Library (FML), Box 487/1.

⁵⁴ For a description of missionary activity in India, a copy of a hand-drawn map of mission stations on the sub-continent, a discussion of the association's newsletter, *Ministering Women*, and a publishing profile of the cookbook, see Jones, 'Australian Imprint', chapter one, pp. 35–41. See also Caroline Viera

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Scottish Australians encouraged a common mutuality of experience and empathy which subtly defined a distinctive kind of nationalism hitherto underestimated. How much George Robertson's Scottishness provided an entrée into their world is debatable, but it is important that he chose to publish a significant number of authors of Scottish and Presbyterian persuasion, and many A & R children's textbooks, poetry collections and *Australian Encyclopaedia* entries were written by them. The thistle & waratah publisher's mark, which featured in the *Australian Encyclopaedia*, moreover, was described in the house journal as a symbol of the firm's early Scottish-Australian links, whilst the poet, Brunton Stephens, even asked Angus & Robertson if they could figure the Scottish thistle on the title page of his book of verse.⁵⁵

Although he imported the latest English bestsellers and his readers enjoyed the English classics, George Robertson did not suffer from cultural cringe and was prepared to extend reading lists beyond an Anglo-centred literary base.⁵⁶ He was uniquely placed to know what books were popular amongst his customers because he had access to the Angus & Robertson Book Club lists and consequently knew his public's reading habits intimately. This information allowed him to accurately reflect colonial sentiment in his publishing list and imported bestsellers. By allowing for inclusiveness in his selection of Australiana as well as in his published books, George Robertson helped to dilute an emerging cultural divide. At the same time, his very Scottishness provided a buffer between English and Irish Australians and allowed for a depth of national sentiment and a publishing backlist non-sectarian in its scope and sway.

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Jones, 'Cookbook of Good and Tried Receipts', NSW Independent Scholars' Association newsletter, 2004.

⁵⁵ James Brunton Stephens to A & R, 19 February 1902, A & R papers, ML MSS 314/79/109; *Fragment*, No. 8, December 1956, p. 18; and Jennifer Alison, 'Publishers and Editors: Angus & Robertson, 1888-1945' in Martyn Lyons & John Arnold, eds., *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945: A National Culture in a Colonised Market* (St Lucia, Qld.: UQP, 2001), p. 29.

⁵⁶ Luke Trainor, 'British Publishers and Cultural Imperialism: History and Ethnography in Australasia, 1870-1930', *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1996.