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Chapter 5 PRINTING

Introduction

The printing of books is a major part of the book production process and is generally arranged and overseen by publishers. Few Australian publishers print their own books, and most contract out printing processes to specialist book printers and associated businesses. As an element in the life-cycle of the book, printing is obviously crucial; however, unlike other elements, it has no direct connections with other elements in the cycle and is linked to the cycle exclusively through the agency of publication.

The manufacture of books comprises a series of inter-related processes which make up the two distinct stages of production. Typesetting, layout, colour separation, reproduction, and plate-making are considered 'pre-press' work, while 'printing' involves the actual printing as well as folding, collating, sewing, binding, and packaging for delivery (Industry Commission 1992: xii). Much 'pre-press' work, particularly typesetting and layout, is undertaken by publishers or is contracted separately from printing, while the processes involved in the 'printing' stage are carried out by specialist book printers who may sub-contract some processes. It is the 'printing' stage of book manufacture which is the primary focus of this chapter, and it is large-scale commercial book printing which is considered here, not the 'fine' or 'art' printing of books.

This chapter examines the nature and conditions of the Australian book printing industry. It does so through both the examination of the printing of *The Orchard* which exemplifies a number of features, conditions, and issues relevant to the contemporary Australian book printing industry, and through discussion of other issues which do not relate directly to *The Orchard*, but which are also relevant to book culture in Australia.

The Nature of Book Printing in Australia

Printing has been a feature of Australian culture since the arrival of a printing press with the First Fleet in 1788. While local book publishing was slow to take root, printing was well established in the colonies by the mid-19th century, and was employed primarily for the production of newspapers and government publications (Borchardt 1988). Some books were printed in Australia throughout the 19th century; however, it was not until local publishing companies were established that book printing developed fully and assumed significant proportions.

The contemporary printing industry is a large and active player in the Australian industrial landscape, and book printing is a relatively small sector of the broader printing industry. The printing industry in general, and the book printing sector in particular, have been recipients of varying levels of industry assistance for many years and, like other assisted industries, the subjects of Industry Commission monitoring.

As mentioned above, the printing of books in Australia is arranged by publishers who generally contract the work out to specialist book printers. In the case of *The Orchard*, the publisher, Pan Macmillan Australia, contracted the production processes to companies which it routinely employs. The typesetting was carried out by Bookset, a Melbourne-based typesetting firm which was favoured by Hilary McPhee for its high quality work (Christer 1995). The printing of *The Orchard* was contracted out to McPherson's Printing Group, a Victorian company which Pan Macmillan employs to print all books under its Picador imprint, and many under other imprints, such as Pan and Piper.

McPherson's Printing Group is part of McPherson's Limited, an Australian-owned company with interests in homewares, pumps and water systems, and metal fasteners, as well as book and general printing. McPherson's Limited was established as a family company in Victoria in 1860; it has acquired a number of other companies and interests over the years, and is currently a public company listed on the Australian Stock Exchange.

As well as printing books, McPherson's Printing Group prints catalogues, magazines, greeting cards, stamps for Australia Post, and 50% of Australia's telephone directories (*Jobson's Year Book of Australian Companies 1994/95* 1995: 259-260; McPherson's Limited 1994).

The involvement of McPherson's Limited in the manufacture of a range of diverse and largely unrelated products which include books, suggests that books take their place in this company as simply another commodity, no different, in that sense, to the pumps and fasteners that the company also manufactures. This is a clear illustration of the role of printing within the book's life-cycle, connected to the cycle only through the agency of publication, and concerned with the manufacture of the book as a commodity or product, rather than with its content. This also illustrates the absence of direct intellectual and cultural influences on book printing, an event which operates almost exclusively in the industrial and commercial domain.

Book Printing Companies in Australia

McPherson's Printing Group is one of the three largest book printers operating in Australia, along with Chertsey Fifty-Nine and Pacific Magazines and Printing. In the 1993-94 financial year, the three companies received, between them, 42.7% of Book Bounty payments, while the remainder of the payments were shared among some 675 printing companies (Australian Customs Service 1994a). These figures illustrate the market dominance of the large players, as well as the presence of many small companies in the industry.

Not all book printers operating in Australia are Australian-owned; McPherson's Limited is the only one of the largest three which is wholly owned locally. Pacific Magazines and Printing is partially owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation with a 45% share; News Corporation also owns HarperCollins, one of the largest book publishing companies operating in Australia. It is likely that HarperCollins contracts its printing to Pacific Magazines and Printing, keeping the costs and profits within the same ownership structure.

The larger printing companies trade under a number of different company names, which, like the abundance of imprints in the publishing industry, masks the concentration of ownership. Pacific Magazines and Printing, for instance, operates companies in several states including Griffin Press in South Australia, Southdown Press, Wilke Colour, Wilke Directories and Progress Press in Victoria, Prestige Litho in Queensland, and Mercury-Walch in Tasmania (Pacific Magazines & Printing Ltd. 1992). McPherson's Printing Group operates five trading companies mostly in Victoria: The Book Printer, Owen King Printers, Globe Press, William Brooks and Company, and Macarthur Press Books (McPherson's Limited 1994). The Industry Commission's 1992 report, *Book Production*, notes the 1992 amalgamation of the above trading companies under McPherson's Printing Group and observes "a continued international and Australian trend toward mergers of book producers, with a resultant increase in the concentration of production" (Industry Commission 1992: 76). The report goes on to suggest that such concentration of ownership may constrain competition within the industry. Such concentration is not unique to the book printing and publishing industries, but is a feature of contemporary Australian industry in general.

The majority of book printing in Australia is carried out in Victoria, a fact which is borne out by Book Bounty figures which reveal that printing firms located in that state received nearly half of the total amount paid in Book Bounty payments in the 1993-94 financial year (Australian Customs Service 1994a). This is the likely result of the historical development of the Australian booktrade which was centred in Victoria in its early years; while a number of publishers, such as Macmillan, subsequently moved their operations to Sydney, many printers remained in Victoria.

Physical proximity of publisher and printer does not seem to be a requirement in contemporary Australia, with the availability of rapid communications technology and efficient transportation services. Many Australian publishers spread their operations between Melbourne and Sydney; Pan Macmillan's distribution service, for instance, is located in Melbourne, in relatively close proximity to McPherson's Printing Group which carries out a large part of Pan Macmillan's printing.

The Orchard was written and published in Sydney, but was edited, designed, typeset, and printed in Victoria. While it is usual for Picador titles to be printed by McPherson's in Victoria, the location of the other functions in that state is not standard. An explanation was offered by Nikki Christer, who pointed out that Hilary McPhee, who worked on *The Orchard* as editor, had been a Melbourne-based publisher prior to her employment with Pan Macmillan in Sydney, and had established contacts with a number of firms and freelancers involved in the Victorian booktrade. McPhee tended therefore to maintain and employ the contacts she had made, in spite of her move to Sydney (Christer 1995). The manuscript, design ideas, typesetting, page and galley proofs of *The Orchard* were transported between the two cities by overnight courier (Christer 1995).

Australian and Overseas Book Printing

Australian books are generally printed either by printers operating in Australia, or by printers located in Asia. There is intense competition between the two, competition which has been a major issue in the Australian book printing industry for more than 30 years.

In the 1960s, a number of Japanese companies established book production firms in both Hong Kong and Singapore in order to take advantage of low labour and land costs, and efficient port facilities. In recent years labour costs have risen in both countries and the firms have moved the more labour intensive parts of their operations to China and Malaysia where wages remain low (Industry Commission 1992:145).

Many Australian publishers take advantage of the cheaper printing rates offered by Asian firms and, in 1991, the ABPA statistics revealed that about 57% of Australian books were printed overseas (ABPA 1994b: 28). The ABPA defines an Australian book as "one that originates with an Australian-based publishing house, irrespective of whether the book is printed within or outside Australia" (quoted in Industry Commission 1992: 72). The relatively low level of the Australian dollar in relation to overseas currencies, and other factors, discussed below, have kept the balance between local and overseas printing stable over recent years, with roughly equal numbers of books being printed in Australia and overseas.

Asian book printers have many cost advantages over Australian printers, these include advantages associated with labour, freight and handling, and with transport from major paper suppliers, as well as savings resulting from the ability to place bulk material orders. The major advantage of Australian printers is speed since overseas production adds several weeks to delivery times and has "contributed to the legendary time lag in publishing" (Wilson 1992: 41). Another factor which might be seen as an advantage enjoyed by Australian firms is their location within the same culture and national boundaries which allows for clear communication and understanding between publisher and printer, as well as for cheaper transport costs. The ABPA surveyed its members regarding the factors which affect their choice of local or overseas printers, and the results were included in the ABPA's submission to the Industry Commission inquiry into book production; the top three factors in descending order were (1) printing cost, (2) paper price, and (3) reliable timing of delivery (quoted in Industry Commission 1992: 40). Choices between local and overseas printers are also made according to the needs of particular printing jobs with work going to firms which can best meet those particular needs. In general however, labour-intensive colour printing tends to be done mostly by Asian-based companies while text-only printing and urgent work is placed with local firms.

It appears to be of little consequence to Australian book-buyers and readers whether a book is printed in Australia or in Hong Kong, China, Singapore or Malaysia, unless it is clear that the printing site has an effect on a book's retail price. The nationalistic sentiment and concern expressed in discussion of Australian ownership of publishing is absent where printing is concerned, since printing does not affect a book's content. In the case of printing, Australian consumers enjoy the benefits of local industry participating in world markets and,

consequently producing high quality books at affordable prices. In fact, it is unlikely that most consumers are even aware of the place of printing; it takes a keen eye to locate such information amid the small print of most imprint statements.

Government Industrial Assistance

The Australian book production industry is assisted in the main by the Book Bounty. This was introduced in 1969 and paid at a rate of 25% of production costs. After increasing in 1975 to 33.3%, the rate has progressively decreased and currently stands, in 1995, at 9%; there are plans for further reductions in 1996 and 1997. The Bounty was initially introduced as an interim measure to assist the local book production industry in its competition with overseas printers, as well as to compensate for the absence of tariffs on imported books brought about by Australia's adherence to the UNESCO Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials of 1950 (also known as the Florence Agreement). Under this agreement, Australia is obliged not to charge import duty on specified materials, including most books. The Book Bounty can be claimed by either printers or publishers who carry out production work. In 1993-94, the total amount paid as Book Bounty was \$22.273 million (Australian Customs Service 1994a).

The Orchard is an eligible book under the *Bounty (Books) Act 1986*. As a book manufactured in Australia by a registered book printer, *The Orchard* meets the major eligibility requirements under the Act; it also meets the further requirements of appropriate binding, minimum net production costs, minimum print run, and minimum number of pages (Australian Customs Service 1994b). It is likely that McPherson's Printing Group has claimed the Bounty for its major role in the production of *The Orchard*. It is common practice for one party, generally the printer, to make claims for Book Bounty payments, and for other parties involved in a book's production to sign waivers of rights to claim the Bounty. In the 1993-94 financial year, Pan Macmillan received no independent payments under the *Bounty (Books) Act 1986*, and it is likely that it waived any rights it might have had, and allowed the printers to claim the Bounty.

The book printing industry is also assisted by tariffs on books not covered by the Florence Agreement, and by the absence of tariffs on some inputs to book production such as certain types of paper, and printing, folding and binding machinery (Industry Commission 1992: 12-17).

According to the 1992 Industry Commission's report, *Book Production*, assistance to the book production industry is high relative to the average for Australian manufacturing (Industry Commission 1992: xiv), a factor which raises the question of whether this relatively high level of assistance is an anomaly, or a reflection of the favoured status of book production as a cultural as well as commercial activity? A number of submissions to the Industry Commission in 1992 argued for the retention of existing levels of assistance to the book production industry on the grounds that books have particular "educational, cultural, and artistic values" which justify assistance from government for their local production (Industry Commission 1992: 47). The Commission's report argued that the value of books was neither

enhanced nor threatened by issues of local production of books. The report advises that book production be treated like any other industry:

Book manufacture has no special economic characteristics which warrant its encouragement by the community other than those measures which are available to all industries.(Industry Commission 1992: 48)

A major rationale, however, for the establishment and maintenance of the Book Bounty has been the Australian government's adherence to the Florence Agreement which explicitly recognises the special value of books and other materials in conveying educational, scientific, and cultural ideas and information. While the Book Bounty itself is an industry assistance scheme under government economic policy, its foundations lie in the recognition of the special value of books by the Australian government. The relatively high level of assistance to book production, including the Book Bounty and trade-related assistance, must therefore be seen to reflect, at least to some extent, that special value of books, despite Industry Commission claims to the contrary.

Technological Change

Technological change is a major issue in the book printing industry; there is a trend in the industry toward replacing labour with capital as a result of developments in printing and associated technology. The Industry Commission report notes that Australian book manufacturers have not only "kept pace with technological developments and [are] currently equipped to world standards", but are also "at the forefront of technological change" (Industry Commission 1992: xiii; 129). Most changes have occurred in the 'pre-press' processes of typesetting, layout and plate preparation; however, many presses are now computerised and book finishing technology has improved and integrated collating, folding, guillotining, and binding. All of these processes result in both higher quality products and a reduction in the numbers employed in the industry.

The technological developments in the printing arena which are likely to affect Australian printers as well as perceptions of the book in general, are developments in copying technology. Such technology has seen photocopying become competitive with offset printing for short print runs (3000 copies or less). An example of this 'instant' or 'just in time' publishing technology is the Xerox Docutech System which is already in place in a number of bookshops in the United States, and is used in Australia by Fast Books, a company which prints books for self-publishers. The Xerox system can print, collate and bind books at a rate of 135 pages per minute at a very low cost, under \$10 per copy (Powell 1994: 41). Installed in bookshops, the system can produce books on demand and while a customer waits. Such systems promise to revolutionise book production and distribution, particularly in the area of reprints and short print runs. Fully typeset and laid-out books can be stored on CD-ROM or downloaded over telephone lines, and printed on request, doing away with the need to order from publishers' backlists and the wait that that involves.

Such technology is likely to alter perceptions of the book; for instance, the book, produced in such a way, could be a more responsive and immediate medium than it has been - modifications, updates and

revisions could be made regularly and quickly, ensuring a currency presently unattainable. In hand with this may go a changed perception of the book as a less enduring, reliable, and authoritative medium than it has previously been considered.

This technology is unlikely to completely replace traditional offset printing methods in the short term since, as mentioned above, it is appropriate and cost-effective only for short print runs. Offset printing is likely to continue to be the most common printing technique for book production in the foreseeable future.

The Printing Process

The Orchard was first printed in hardback in September 1994, and by the end of that year, had been reprinted twice by McPherson's Printing Group. Neither Pan Macmillan nor McPherson's would reveal the size of the initial or subsequent print runs, however, a common initial print run for 'literary' works of this kind is 5,000 (Christer 1995), which was obviously too short in the case of *The Orchard*. Continued short print runs in 1995 saw the hardback edition reprinted twice (to September 1995). The paperback edition was released in June 1995, and had been reprinted three times by September of the same year. There was a delay in reprinting the paperback edition for the second time due to difficulties in obtaining sufficient supplies of appropriate paper; that print run went ahead with better quality and more expensive paper than was used previously. The subsequent reprint was printed on the cheaper paper.

It appears that the same printing plates were used for the text of both the hardback and the paperback editions of *The Orchard*, since the type, text layout, and pagination in both editions are identical. This would have been a major cost-saving factor, made possible by the use of the small hardback format which was easily transferable to the 'B format' paperback of the Picador imprint. Traditionally, modern books first published in hardback are produced in a larger format than the subsequent paperback editions, necessitating the production of separate sets of typesetting and printing plates; this adds significantly to production costs. In the case of *The Orchard*, the additional expense of the hardback edition, with its costly matt laminate dust jacket, was, most likely, offset by savings made by the use of the same set of plates for the printing of both editions - an unusual and ingenious production arrangement.

The manufacture of *The Orchard* was arranged and overseen by the production staff at Pan Macmillan Australia, in consultation with Hilary McPhee as editor responsible for the book. The printing firm, McPherson's Printing Group, had no input into the content or design of the book, but simply produced a commodity to the specifications required by the publisher. Printing is not connected to any element other than 'publication' in the life-cycle of *The Orchard*; its printing was removed from cultural and intellectual influences, but was subject to various economic and political influences, such as industrial issues, the commercial environment, and both general and industry-specific economic conditions.

The Orchard was printed as a standard Picador production, albeit in hardback initially, by the printing firm normally employed to print Picador titles. Notwithstanding its unusual format and design, the manufacture of *The Orchard* was likely to have followed standard procedures. While the high quality of the materials used in the production of the hardback edition will have raised its production costs, the publisher is likely to have been handsomely rewarded with higher sales figures and profits.

Chapter 6 DISTRIBUTION AND SALES

Introduction

Distribution and sales involve the various processes by which books are disseminated through society - delivered to booksellers, schools, libraries, and made available to readers, buyers, and borrowers. These processes are a vital stage in the life-cycle of the book since they concern access, and are the link between book production and reception.

'Distribution' is used both specifically and generally in this chapter; within the Australian booktrade, 'distribution' is commonly used specifically, and refers to the process, carried out by publishers or their agents, of the dispersal of books to various agencies which further distribute through sale, hire, or loan. These agencies include retail booksellers, libraries, book clubs, mail order agencies, and schools or education systems. It is this specific sense of 'distribution', as the intermediary process between production and sales (and loans), which is examined first in this chapter. 'Distribution', in a more general sense is considered later, and includes the activities of various agencies, such as retail book outlets, libraries, book clubs, and mail or electronic order services, in distributing books throughout society, either through sales or loans - to readers, buyers, borrowers, collectors, students, and other book users.

This chapter examines a full range of processes and issues involved in book distribution and sales in Australia; it also provides some historical background on the major processes of distribution, bookselling, and library provision in Australia. The nature and conditions of the distribution and sale of books is examined both in general and in particular, with reference to the distribution of *The Orchard*.

Distribution by publishers is considered first, and includes an examination of the distribution of *The Orchard* by Pan Macmillan and Macmillan Distribution Services. The constraints and problems concerning book distribution in Australia are then considered. This is followed by a brief look at book imports and exports in Australia, and by an historical overview of retail bookselling in Australia. The nature of contemporary bookselling is considered both in general, and in relation to the supply, promotion, and sales of *The Orchard*; some booksellers' opinions of *The Orchard* are reported, and its market examined. Book prices and book buying practices in Australia are also considered. The role of libraries in the distribution of *The Orchard*, and of books in general, is examined, as are the notion and various avenues of 'secondary distribution'. The chapter concludes with comments on the nature of book distribution in general, and its effect on access to books in Australia.

The Nature of Book Distribution in Australia

The distribution of books in Australia is influenced by a number of factors including the large size of the country and its small and dispersed population, its distance from other English language book markets, and particularly from Britain, and the control which is nonetheless exercised over the Australian book trade by British publishers. These factors and others contribute to the unique, and sometimes problematic nature of book distribution in Australia.

In the first century after white settlement, books came into Australia almost exclusively from Britain on ships bringing settlers and other supplies. Arrivals, while they became increasingly frequent, were sporadic, and book buyers suffered either feast or famine. The situation improved with the establishment in Australia of offices and warehouses of British publishers, although this also meant the entrenchment of British control over Australian book distribution. In the late 19th century several Australian companies combined publishing and book distribution with their own networks and retail outlets. Booksellers Angus and Robertson, for instance, embarked on publishing with established retail outlets in place. The NSW Bookstall Company, with its network of railway bookstalls, took advantage of increasing rail travel and of the idle time that such travel involved to sell their books.

Australian book distribution remained, however, largely the province of British publishers; Australian copyright legislation, the 'Traditional Market Agreement', and the 'closed market' are factors which contributed to the maintenance of British control. This resulted in high prices, delays, and some books being unattainable. While changes affecting all of these practices have occurred, other significant factors have emerged in Australian book distribution, for instance, the entrance of large, multi-national publishing companies into the Australian market. This has altered distribution patterns, and most primary distribution is now carried out by such companies. The implications of this and other factors are examined in detail later in this chapter.

Publishers operating in Australia organise the distribution of their products in a variety of ways, the most common is through their own, or another, distribution department or company; however, publishers also carry out distribution through book clubs, mail-order, and catalogue sales. Publishers of educational books usually distribute their books through a system quite separate from the retail trade distribution system. The distribution of books directly to selected media for review is an important avenue for both promotion and for distribution by publishers.

The distribution of books onto the retail market is carried out largely by publishers. Many publishers, as noted above, recognising the commercial importance of the distribution process, maintain their own departments, or discrete companies which specialise in distribution. Such facilities distribute the publisher's own books and, often, the books of other local and overseas publishers on a contract or 'agency' basis. For instance, Pan Macmillan Australia, publisher of *The Orchard*, employs Macmillan Distribution Services (MDS), a separate company also wholly owned by the

parent Macmillan Limited, to distribute its titles in Australia. MDS operates as the distribution service in Australia for local, and British Macmillan companies, including Pan Macmillan, Macmillan Educational, Pan UK, Macmillan UK, Tor Books, Sidgwick and Jackson, and Picador UK. MDS also holds contracts to distribute works of other publishers including Guinness and Lansdowne.

While Macmillan Distribution Services does operate as an agency for several other publishers, it tends to concentrate on the distribution of local and overseas Macmillan titles. Several large publishers in Australia are more active in the distribution of books on behalf of other, smaller publishing companies. Penguin Books Australia, for instance, is the largest general book distributor operating in Australia; it distributes its own books, the imprints of the other publishers within the parent company (Pearson UK), and books from other companies both locally and overseas owned. Faber and Faber, Pavillion Books, Sphere Books, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Omnibus Books, and University of Queensland Press are all companies which contract Penguin to do all, or some, of their distribution (Korporaal 1990: 37, 38). Penguin wields a great deal of power within the market by virtue of its involvement in, not only the distribution of its own books, but also of a significant proportion of the total books distributed in Australia.

Publishers negotiate with one another regarding distribution in particular geographical areas, or for particular types of books; this is especially the case with small or medium-sized publishers. Melbourne University Press (MUP), for example, distributes books in Victoria for the University of NSW Press which does the same for MUP in NSW; Fremantle Arts Centre Press carries out its own distribution within Western Australia, but employs Penguin to distribute its books throughout the rest of the country.

There are a number of independent specialist book distributors, most of which operate regionally rather than nationally. The largest independent national distributor is Gordon and Gotch and, although it distributes both books and magazines, magazine distribution is its primary activity. Smaller specialist book distribution companies include Biramo Book Distributors, and Tower Books in NSW, Bookwise in South Australia, and Five Mile Press Distribution in Victoria and Tasmania. Contract arrangements between publishers and distributors often change as new deals are struck and alliances alter; information about changes is regularly reported in the various book industry news publications such as *Australian Bookseller and Publisher* and *Weekly Book Newsletter*.

Book clubs are an important distribution and sales avenue for some publishing companies; Ashton Scholastic, for instance, an American-owned publisher, operates a large and very profitable children's book club through the school systems in several Australian states. Publisher Transworld operates the successful Doubleday Book Club in Australia; its ability to sell large numbers of books without retail intervention allows it to offer books to its members at prices well below normal retail prices.

Distribution of educational books in Australia varies from state to state depending on local education department policy. Most educational publishers have specialist marketing and distribution departments to deal

with school book distribution and sales. The educational market is large and profitable, and the purchase of books for school use is heavily subsidised by state education budgets.

The Distribution Process

The distribution process differs from company to company, but essentially involves the dispersal of books from publishers to retail outlets. *The Orchard*, for example, was distributed by Macmillan Distribution Services which, although it is part of the same stable, maintains a formal distribution agreement with Pan Macmillan Australia whereby goods are distributed and debts collected by MDS in return for a distribution fee. In 1994, that fee totalled \$3,739,342 or 13.2% of Pan Macmillan's total sales revenue (Pan Macmillan Australia 1995: 15), representing a substantial cost to the publisher, albeit one which is contained within the larger company structure.

Books are distributed by MDS in response to orders taken by Pan Macmillan sales staff who act as the interface between booksellers and the distributor and publisher; specialist freight carriers are contracted by MDS to transport and deliver books ordered. Sales staff deal with returns and the associated paperwork (Pearce 1995). MDS also take orders directly, and has recently established an ordering service on the Internet. The head office of MDS, and its major warehouse is in Melbourne, and is co-located with Pan Macmillan's Victorian sales office; MDS also maintains offices in several other capital cities.

Recent problems associated with the distribution of their books has prompted Pan Macmillan to create a new position of 'distribution manager' at a senior level within the company. It is also intended that \$500,000 will be invested in 1995 in new technology to improve distribution; this will include "ordering systems, picking systems within the warehouse, better analysis, higher quality control" (Maxwell 1995b: 23).

MDS has extensive access to the retail market through both its distribution network, and by virtue of its representing a large and profitable publisher, whose works retailers are keen to sell. MDS provides a relatively efficient distribution service to Pan Macmillan Australia, and one which keeps the process and the costs involved within the Macmillan group of companies.

Constraints and Problems in Australian Book Distribution

Distribution is a major problem for small publishers in Australia, and it is often difficulties associated with getting adequate distribution of their books which have caused small publishers to founder and to be vulnerable to takeover by larger companies. Small publishers which contract their distribution out to larger publishers run the risk of their books being overshadowed by, or in competition with, works of the larger company. The situation of having a commercial competitor responsible for distribution of a like product is not always desirable. University of Queensland Press (UQP) employs Penguin, for instance, to distribute its

non-fiction books but uses Allen and Unwin to distribute its fiction since both UQP and Penguin are major publishers of Australian fiction and are therefore competitors (Moran 1990: 137).

The system of maintaining a uniform recommended retail price for books throughout Australia is another factor contributing to distribution difficulties for small publishers. A book published in Sydney retails for the same price at a neighbouring bookshop as it does in a bookshop in Perth, 3,000 kilometres away. There is bound to be a disparity in distribution costs which must be absorbed somewhere in publishers' pricing structures, an easier task for larger than for smaller publishers.

Almost all of the large publishing companies which distribute books for other publishers on a contract or agency basis are foreign-owned and, as with book publishing and printing, ownership of distribution is becoming increasingly concentrated. There is a danger that this concentration may have a negative effect on access to books in Australia: remote or geographically isolated areas may be overlooked or considered too unprofitable to service with deliveries, works from small publishers may not be adequately promoted, and books available through major distributors may lack the diversity and range which is available from a wide variety of large and small publishers. Book buyers outside of major capital cities in Australia do not have access to the range of books available in those major cities, although book clubs, catalogue sales, mail-order, and enhanced computer communications facilities offer additional options.

The distribution of overseas books in Australia has been constrained for many years by Australian Copyright legislation, the 'Traditional Market Agreement', and the 'closed market'. The 1989 Prices Surveillance Authority (PSA) Inquiry into Book Prices found that the copyright protection provided by the importation provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968* was excessive: "Those provisions extend rights from the legitimate area of production into the realm of distribution . . . they provide publishers with an excessive degree of market power" (PSA 1989a: 70). These provisions and the 'closed market' have discouraged the widespread establishment of book wholesaling such as exists in both the USA and Britain, have rendered imported book distribution a disparate and disjointed, and often illegal business, and have increased the importance of the publisher-distributor within the market.

Amendments to the *Copyright Act 1968* enacted in 1991 have gone some way to addressing problems associated with the importation of books; a subsequent PSA inquiry (1995) found that these amendments "have improved the speed with which most new releases become available in Australia" and that the pressure to make books available within 30 days of overseas release, as required by the amendments, "has lead [sic] to efficiency gains in distribution" (PSA 1995: 111). The 1995 inquiry also found, however, that the 'closed market' remained a major impediment to efficient book distribution in Australia (PSA 1995: 111-113).

While government assistance to the book industry has been a significant feature in Australian book culture, it has concentrated on book production processes rather than on distribution and access. Assistance goes to writers, and to publishers and printers for production assistance, while

little is aimed at facilitating equity and efficiency in distribution. Exceptions to this must include government funding of public and educational libraries, tax concessions for the maintenance and depreciation of individual professional libraries, and, recent Federal government assistance with the establishment of 'Publish Australia', a network for small publishers. 'Publish Australia' is a network of some 50 small, independent Australian publishers which promotes its members' books both locally and overseas, and operates as an information-sharing and research organisation. Its funding by the Federal government is a recognition of the distribution difficulties experienced by small publishers in Australia. While some distribution of members' titles is undertaken by the network (to Commonwealth Government Bookshops), members maintain their own distribution arrangements, and are linked for purposes of promotion, communication, research, and market development (*Publish Australia Catalogue 1995-96* 1995; "Publish Australia: Background Information" 1995).

The Federal government encourages the free flow of books internationally with its adherence to UNESCO's Florence Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Materials, an agreement which Australia has honoured since its inception in 1950, but which it only formally ratified in 1992 (Industry Commission 1992). The Florence Agreement is "a broad charter for preferential treatment of the printed word" (Behrstock 1991: 30), and ensures the duty free movement of books between countries in an effort to encourage educational, scientific, and cultural development and cooperation. While Australia foregoes potential tariff revenue by its adherence to this Agreement, it does little to encourage distribution of books within the country. The discontinuation of postal concessions for books in 1973 is evidence of this.

The distribution of books is a commercial enterprise with the objective of maximising profits for owners and shareholders. Distribution is therefore most effective in the profitable mass market; this market is dynamic with relatively rapid product turnover, that is, new books replacing the old regularly. It is in the less profitable areas that Australian book distribution is least effective; this includes books from small local and overseas publishers, 'backlist' books, books for which an Australian licence has not been taken up, such as fiction published in countries other than the USA and Britain, and books of specialist interest with short print runs. Such books are often difficult to obtain through retail outlets, and must be specially ordered.

Australian readers have long paid the price for the vagaries of book distribution, particularly with respect to overseas titles, with delays in delivery, unavailability of certain books through retailers, and higher prices than in both the USA, Britain, and Canada.

It could be said that Australian intellectual life has suffered as a consequence of inefficient book distribution, with Australians being denied access, on occasions, to books for largely commercial reasons. There is often a time-lag in the distribution of books in Australia which renders the book a less immediate source of ideas and information; other media are better equipped to fill that role, although few can offer the depth of treatment of subjects available in books. Often by the time some books

are available in Australia, the ideas and information in them may have already been the subject of debate or discussion in other media such as television, radio, magazines and newspapers; the time-lag experienced by Australians in obtaining topical books may exclude them from such discussions and debates. The book, not an immediate medium, is, at times, even less so in Australia.

Australia is generally ill-served by its book distribution system which has led to homogeneity in the retail market, and to problems of access to a wide-range of both locally and overseas produced books. Australian consumers, raised, for the most part, with an inefficient book distribution system, have accepted the constraints and inefficiencies, and maintain generally low expectations of the system. This appears to be changing in the 1990s, as markets become deregulated, and consumers' expectations of access to goods and services rise in a number of areas.

Imports and Exports

Australian booksellers sell almost equal numbers of local and imported books; in the early 1990s sales of Australian books began to surpass those of imported books for the first time. Locally produced books are particularly in demand in the educational market where, in 1991, local books made up 58.7% of the market, a higher percentage than in the general book market (ABPA 1994b: 5).

Book imports are still high, although changes are occurring in the sources of imports, with the USA now surpassing Britain as the major import source. Foreign trade figures for 1992-93 show that book imports for that year were valued at approximately \$500 billion, and that the major source was the USA (ABS 1993b: 85). The same figures note an increase of 4% in imports from the USA between 1990-91 and 1992-93, and a 5% decrease in imports from Britain between the same years (ABS 1993b: 85).

It should be noted that import figures can be misleading in that they include imports from countries where Australian publishers send their works to be printed; when the completed works are sent back to Australia, these Australian-originated works are included in import figures. Import figures are more accurate if imports from Hong Kong and Singapore, the majority of which are Australian books, are discounted.

Imports enter the book's life-cycle in Australia through either the 'publication' or 'distribution and sales' events, since most books are imported by the Australian branches of overseas publishing companies or distribution agents, and by library suppliers. Library suppliers are active book importers, and supply Australian libraries with single copies of books published both overseas and locally. Individual retail booksellers had been prohibited by Australian copyright law from importing multiple copies of books directly from overseas until changes were made to the *Copyright Act 1968* in 1991. There are still restrictions on booksellers, for example a 30 day (and in some cases, a 90 day) period after which, if an Australian copyright edition of a work has not been made available, booksellers may import multiple copies of overseas editions for sale. The 1992-93 Australian Booksellers Association (ABA) Economic Survey shows, however, that the

majority of respondents did not indent any books directly from overseas in that year in spite of the lifting of some copyright restrictions (ABA 1994: 29). Most Australian booksellers are obviously accustomed to relying on local distributors for their stock and are either not equipped to indent directly from overseas sources, or are reluctant to do so for other reasons.

Australian books are also exported, although mostly by publishers on a wholesale basis. While the import-export balance is weighted heavily toward imports, Australian book exports are increasing, particularly to Britain and Europe where a 69.9% increase in exports occurred between 1990 and 1991 (ABPA 1994b: 6).

Bookselling in Australia: History

Evidence of very early book distribution and sales in Australia is found in newspaper advertisements of the period for auction sales, return of books privately loaned, and for particular books wanted. The trade was largely private and dependent on informal networks. The absence of regular commercial sources of supply encouraged cooperation and private lending; several informal societies were established in the colonies to facilitate the pooling of libraries and lending (Kirsop 1988). This foreshadowed the widespread establishment of private and commercial libraries which characterised the early Australian library system; this distribution avenue is examined later in this chapter.

The consignment trade was a significant feature of early commercial bookselling in Australia; it involved the shipping of unsolicited consignments of books on invoice from British publishers and wholesalers to Australian agents to be sold, usually by auction, to individuals and to booksellers. Consignments were speculative in nature and relied on shortages to create demand and high profits. The importance of the consignment trade to Australia has been described as "the unambiguous expression of colonial dependence and even subservience" (Kirsop 1988: 20). Kirsop suggests that consignments involved the dumping of remaindered books on the Australian market with little or no consideration of the needs or tastes of colonial readers, a cynical exercise by profit-hungry British exporters who saw Australians as "intellectually deprived colonials" (Kirsop 1988: 24). While the consignment trade, which began in the early 1820s, eventually diminished in size and importance, it continued until the end of the 19th century.

When local booksellers were established, they combined their book trade with the sale of other goods; John Fawkner of Melbourne, for instance, sold beer, pigs, cattle, and second-hand books (Richards 1988). It was not until the 1830s that specialist booksellers emerged, although these were often combined with like goods such as stationery, printing products, and 'fancy goods'. Australian booksellers in this early period were importers since there was no viable local publishing industry. Some established direct links with British suppliers, while larger firms like George Robertson and Company, set up buying offices in London. James and Samuel Tegg, who established shops in Sydney, Launceston, and Hobart in the 1830s and 1840s, were sons of British bookseller, Thomas Tegg, and their Australian businesses relied on imports from the family firm in London.

Scottish born George Robertson set up a wholesale book business in Melbourne in 1861; his firm dominated the Australian import and wholesale trade for several decades and had a major influence on the nature of the books imported. Askew and Hubber (1988) suggest that, although there is no direct evidence that he boycotted particular titles, "his temperament was certainly disposed to the suppression of unconventional views" (Askew & Hubber 1988: 116-117). Robertson's firm functioned as a training ground for a generation of Australian booksellers, a factor which may have contributed to the general conservatism of the Australian trade.

In the years between 1870 and 1890, Australian cultural and commercial life expanded enormously due to the wealth provided by gold; the number of booksellers in both Sydney and Melbourne doubled in those years, and a strong retail trade became firmly established. The market diversified and the trade became specialised with large general booksellers as well as smaller specialist booksellers.

British books were still the dominant product, and Australia was an important market for the British book trade; trade figures indicate that between 30% and 40% of British book exports came to Australia in the late 19th century (quoted in Askew & Hubber 1988: 116).

In spite of the development of local publishing in the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, British publishers continued to see Australia as their exclusive market, and instituted a variety of measures to ensure that it remained so. The 'Traditional Market Agreement' between British and American publishers is an example and, in spite of its demise in 1976, it still has a strong influence on the Australian book trade. In fact, the 1995 *PSA Inquiry into Book Prices and Parallel Imports* noted that "The traditional territorial division of copyright between the US and UK publishers might mean that the former may be unwilling to supply directly Australian booksellers" (PSA 1995: 111).

British publishers openly controlled the retail trade in Australia for most of the 20th century with a succession of committees which regulated the supply of books to retailers. The first such committee, established in the 1920s, was the 'Publishers Association Committee', a group derived from the British Publishers Association' (PA). This was later replaced by a group which included Australian booksellers and publishers as well as British publishers; it was called the 'Australian Booktrade Advisory Committee' (ABTAC). In 1969 ABTAC was replaced by the 'Joint Publishers Committee' (JPC) which was made up of equal numbers of representatives from the British PA and the Australian Book Publishers Association (Page 1970). The JPC lost its control and influence with the Trade Practices Commission decision against the practice of Retail Price Maintenance in 1972.

The 1970s and 1980s saw a diminution of the power of publishers over the retail trade, at least in formal terms such as their imposition of market entry barriers and retail price setting. Publishers still have a major influence on the retail book trade, however, through their involvement in the distribution of both locally published and imported books.

The Nature of Retail Bookselling in Australia

The retail book market in Australia is a profitable one which has been characterised in recent years by steady growth. The total retail value of the Australian new book market is estimated to have been \$1.530 billion in 1993; this represents a growth rate of 9.5% over the previous year (PSA 1995: 33). Market growth has averaged 8.2% since 1986, a higher rate of growth than that of the Gross Domestic Product in the same period (PSA 1995:33).

Most books sold in Australia (87%) are sold through retail outlets, the remainder are sold through book clubs, mail-order, and library suppliers (ABA 1994: 9). Nearly half of the retail outlets could be considered 'bookshops', while other major outlets include newsagents, supermarkets, and department stores. Specialist bookshops account for about half of the retail trade, with newsagents claiming 20% of sales, and department stores between 15% and 20% (Guldborg 1990: 14, 87).

The majority of specialist bookshops in Australia are 'independent', either single operator-owned, or small chains. There are also several very large national bookshop chains which dominate the market in terms of sales volume by dollars. The major chains operating in Australia are Angus and Robertson (A&R) Bookworld and Dymocks; these chains wield significant power in the market through both their purchasing practices which can favour certain publishers and distributors above others, and their ability to order in bulk, demand high trade discounts, and sell books at a price lower than the Recommended Retail Price (RRP).

Where small independent booksellers cannot compete on price with large chains and department stores, they must compete on stock coverage and service. There are independent bookshops, for instance, which specialise in books on particular subjects such as art, religions, feminism, lesbian and gay issues, the 'New Age' movement, government, law, and foreign languages. Most independent booksellers offer customer services such as locating and ordering of specific titles, informing customers of new and forthcoming books and, often, producing regular newsletters or catalogues which offer mail-order services. Knowledge of their particular market is an important attribute for successful independent booksellers as it ensures appropriate stock coverage.

The Australian Booksellers Association (ABA) is a major representative body within the retail bookselling trade, with approximately 560 members nationwide (ABA 1994: 1). The ABA concerns itself with industry matters including training, commercial practices, and economic issues; it is also a lobby group which represents its members in negotiations with, and information provision, to government, suppliers and other bodies (ABA 1994: 37). In 1994, the ABA introduced the 'ABA Australian Book of the Year Award', with entries nominated and selected by its members. It also runs a national system of book tokens which can be purchased from, and redeemed at, participating bookshops across the country.

Publisher D. W. Thorpe produces the *Weekly Book Newsletter* which includes industry news, agency changes, awards information, events, advertisements for book promotions, positions vacant, and other classified

advertisements. It is a major vehicle for communication for the book trade. Thorpe also publishes the monthly *Australian Bookseller and Publisher* which features news, articles, and advertisements, and is a source of information regarding new book releases and associated products.

Booksellers' Roles: Commerce and Culture

Booksellers have an obvious commercial role in their participation in commodity trading; the commodities in which they trade give them a cultural role as well. As in publishing where dual roles are also maintained, there can be conflict between commercial and cultural demands. In retail outlets this conflict can manifest itself in a number of areas including stock-holding, staffing, displays and shelf arrangements, and service. Issues involved in stock-holding, for instance include choices which a bookseller makes regarding the nature of the stock held; choices such as whether the stock should represent a range of available titles, or concentrate on the most commercially viable titles. Booksellers may choose to stock and display books which do not have obvious commercial appeal but which may be considered culturally significant; in this way booksellers have an educative and cultural role, and use their retail outlet to expose customers to particular titles, issues, or ideas. On the other hand, booksellers may choose to stock and display titles which promise to be popular bestsellers, and which are accompanied by promotional material provided by publishers. These positions can be seen as either end of a continuum along which Australian booksellers locate themselves; the tendency is for independent booksellers to hold a wider range of bookstock than the chain shops which tend to concentrate on fast-moving, mass market stock.

Staffing is also an area of possible commercial-cultural conflict. Staff may be selected for any number of attributes including age, sales experience and ability, education or training, interest in or knowledge of books, personality, and so on. Booksellers, like other employers, determine criteria on which to select staff according to their priorities, the kind of service they wish to offer, and other considerations. At one end of the spectrum, a bookseller may employ an experienced, enthusiastic and interested bibliophile; at the other end, a junior straight from school with little interest in or knowledge of books. The latter may cost less in wages but will not provide informed or interested service. While staffing decisions are essentially commercial decisions, they also have an impact on a bookshop's cultural standing.

Service is another site where commercial and cultural issues intersect, and may conflict or coexist comfortably. Booksellers determine a role for themselves, and offer a level and style of service which reflects that role. A bookseller may simply offer books as commodities for sale, providing shelving, lighting, and 'check-out' staff; or booksellers may also offer information on books and authors, suggestions and promotions which extend customers' knowledge and horizons; they may provide an atmosphere and physical surroundings conducive to browsing, reading and contemplation. A few Australian bookshops combine the relaxed atmosphere of a coffee shop with retail bookselling. Some publish regular newsletters which inform subscribers of recent publications, provide

reviews, and articles which discuss and explore ideas and issues contained in books, advertise books and services, and make available mail-order facilities. Bookshops operate in Australia all along the service continuum, in a variety of balances of commercial and cultural interests.

The dichotomy between these two interests is a dynamic one, as it is in publishing, with changing interests and a vast range of stances and approaches. The nature of the book enables and promotes this variety since the book is itself a medium for a vast range of subjects and interests.

Commercial Practices in Australian Bookselling

There are a number of commercial practices which are common to most retail booksellers, although there are obviously differences. An examination of the retail sales process of *The Orchard* will illustrate many of these.

Most booksellers first heard about *The Orchard* through Pan Macmillan sales representatives who visit shops and buyers regularly with updated stocklists, advertising material, and copies of covers and dust jackets of forthcoming publications. The *Australian Bookseller and Publisher* is another source of information and advertising for forthcoming titles; in fact Pan Macmillan foreshadowed the publication of *The Orchard* in the *Australian Bookseller and Publisher* early in 1994 when it included the book, then known as *The Silver Hands*, in its "Publishers' top tips for '94" ("Publishers' top tips for '94" 1994: 22).

Booksellers ordered the book from the Pan Macmillan list, and continued to reorder as the need arose. The closed market in Australia, as mentioned previously, has worked against the establishment of large book wholesalers as exist in the USA and in Britain. As a result, booksellers buy directly from publishers or their agents, a practice which involves establishing and maintaining commercial relationships with a large number of supply sources, and keeping track of changing distribution relationships. This situation increases the complexity of booksellers' access to bookstock, ordering, tracing, and accounting procedures, and takes its toll in commercial efficiency.

The standard and most common conditions under which books are supplied to retailers involve a 40% trade discount on the Recommended Retail Price (RRP), and supply on a sale-or-return basis (that is, booksellers pay only for the books they sell, and can return unsold books after a set period of time). While the 40% trade discount is standard, there are a number of circumstances under which larger trade discounts are offered. For instance, Pan Macmillan provided *The Orchard* to Fullers Bookshop in Hobart at a higher discount rate in return for substantial local promotion of the book. In a recent issue of *Australian Bookseller and Publisher*, Clive Tilsley of Fullers praised Pan Macmillan's sales policies; he said of sales director, Peter Phillips, he "is very creative and understanding. Independent bookshops struggle. Peter knows this and supports us by offering good terms" (quoted in Maxwell 1995b: 22).

Large volume bookshops, department stores and chains are often able to order in bulk and receive higher than normal discounts for so doing; larger discounts enable these shops to offer books for sale at less than the RRP, although they do not always choose to do so.

The Orchard, like most Australian books, was offered to retail booksellers on a sale-or-return basis. The ubiquity of the sale-or-return system of book supply in Australia is thought to have originated with competition between publishers for space on retail shelves under closed market conditions (PSA 1989a: 25). The Prices Surveillance Authority (PSA) maintained that return rates of 20% were common (in 1989), and could go as high as 40% in the case of mass market titles; the PSA expressed concern at the wastefulness of this practice since many of the returns were pulped (PSA 1989a: 26). It is unlikely that *The Orchard* will be returned on this basis; the book is considered, by several independent booksellers I spoke with, as a book which they will keep in stock and which will continue to sell. This assessment is based on the booksellers' experience with Drusilla Modjeska's earlier book, *Poppy*, which continues to sell steadily in their shops in 1995 after having been first released in 1991 (Gaunt 1995; Tilsley 1995).

Australian booksellers involve themselves in advertising and promotion both of their shops, and of particular books; bookshops are sites for promotional activities ranging from the display of posters and 'dump-bins', to appearances and signings by authors. Some bookshops also sponsor literary events such as festivals, conferences, readings, and workshops, and often provide a retail outlet at such events to sell the work of participating authors. Larger bookshops may also sponsor literary awards or prizes, such as Gleebook's Prize for Literary and Cultural Criticism, part of the NSW State Literary Awards. Promotional materials and activities are often organised in conjunction with publishers and other booksellers, or may be trade-wide promotions such as Book Week, or the ABPA's Book Day.

Booksellers' promotional responses to *The Orchard* provide an interesting example of their involvement in the promotion of individual books. The hardback edition of *The Orchard* appears to have sparked the imagination of a number of booksellers, particularly independent booksellers, and this resulted in innovative and imaginative promotional activities and displays. Fullers Bookshop in Hobart organised a dinner with the author at a popular local restaurant. A menu was designed specifically for the occasion, the restaurant was decorated with branches and fruit to resemble an orchard, and the book's cover design was reproduced on labels for the wine provided with the meal. The cost was \$75 per head which included a meal, wine, and a hardback copy of *The Orchard*. Fullers organised the event, and negotiated with promotions staff at Pan Macmillan to arrange Drusilla Modjeska's attendance; Fullers also met the costs, including the author's airfare and accommodation (Readings bookshop in Melbourne contributed \$100 toward the fare in order to have Modjeska stopover in Melbourne for a reading). Fullers also arranged for Modjeska, while in Hobart, to appear on ABC Regional radio and speak about *The Orchard* (Tilsley 1995).

The Pentimento Bookshop in the Sydney suburb of Balmain mounted a window display around the book; it featured "fresh flowers, an antique teddy bear, stone columns, copies of Drusilla Modjeska's *The Orchard*, and

fresh fruit..." (Maxwell 1995a: 67). Gleebooks, also in Sydney, promoted *The Orchard* with a feature in its newsletter, *Gleebooks Gleaner*, and with an appearance and reading by the author in its upstairs 'literary event space'. The reading was advertised in the bookshop's newsletter, in press advertisements, and in posters; David Gaunt, unable to estimate numbers, considered the event "well attended" (Gaunt 1995). While Sydney's Feminist Bookshop did not specifically promote *The Orchard*, staff "regularly pointed it out to customers as something new" which, along with the book's cover, and recommendations by staff who had read the book, "had a great effect" (Waddy 1995).

National chain, A&R Bookworld, featured the paperback edition of *The Orchard* in both its mid-year and Christmas catalogues in 1995.

The Orchard: Booksellers' Opinions and Sales Performance

Australian booksellers demonstrated their high regard for *The Orchard* by selecting it as the 'Australian Booksellers Association Australian Book of the Year 1995'. In selecting a shortlist and, subsequently a winner for this award, booksellers were asked "which book did you most enjoy selling in the past year?". David Gaunt believes that booksellers felt both comfortable with *The Orchard*, and "proud of it as a book"; they were, in his opinion, "proud to sell it and to be associated with it" (Gaunt 1995). This attitude toward *The Orchard* reveals an appreciation of both its content, and the physical features of the book. The pride David Gaunt spoke of is an interesting phenomenon in the economic rationalist, and technology-dominated late 20th century; this is perhaps another manifestation of the book returning to itself in such an environment (Hetherington 1995). Another factor in its popularity with booksellers may have been that *The Orchard* sold very well, especially in independent bookshops.

Staff at Mostly Books in the Adelaide suburb of Torrens Park said that *The Orchard* was "an unusual merging of essays and stories. A very fine edition to handle" ("Hot Tips" 1995: 12). Barbara Horgan of Shearer's Bookshop in northern Sydney commented: "Drusilla Modjeska's *The Orchard* was a worthy winner of this year's ABA Book of the Year Award: the cover of *The Orchard* one of the most beautiful I've ever seen" (Horgan 1995: 16).

When Clive Tilsley first saw the book, he thought immediately "it was our kind of book"; in explanation, Tilsley said it was a "women's book", and the right kind of book for Fullers' clientele, which he described as "mixed but definitely literary". Tilsley personally likes the book as a total package; he believes that the physical object "becomes part of the experience of the book once it has been read". His decision to organise a dinner and author appearance in Hobart was motivated by a desire to do "something different and interesting" to promote a "different and interesting book" (Tilsley 1995).

The Orchard sold "relatively well" at Fullers; by July 1995, it had sold 179 hardback copies and 57 paperback copies. At the time of my interview with Clive Tilsley (July 1995), Fullers had sold out of the paperback edition which had only been released the previous month; more copies were later supplied.

David Gaunt sees *The Orchard* as "an independent's book", that is, one which independent booksellers liked, took up, promoted, and which did well for them. Gaunt said that the book had sold, at Gleebooks, mostly to women, and had been popular with "the intelligent and reflective reader" who wants his or her reading to be "provocative in a non-confrontational sort of way". Gaunt sees the format and the content of *The Orchard* as "precious in both the negative and positive senses of the word". The format and design worked well, in Gaunt's opinion; however he felt that it was not a format which would work with all books, "only those in which the content suits the format, mostly literary fiction", an interesting comment in light of the fact that Gleebooks is one of the very few bookshops which classified *The Orchard* as non-fiction (Gaunt 1995).

The Orchard sold extremely well at Gleebooks; by August, 1995, it had sold more than 800 copies (500 in hardback, 300 in paperback), and David Gaunt expected the book to sell over 1,000 copies. The sale of 1,000 copies of a single book at Gleebooks is exceptional, Gaunt said, "in the last ten years, there wouldn't have been ten books which have sold more than 1,000 copies here" (Gaunt 1995). Indeed, sales over 1,000 of single books in individual bookshops is so exceptional an event that some Australian publishers award bookshops commemorative wall plaques to mark such achievements. In November, 1995, over a year after its initial release, *The Orchard* ranked number two best-seller at Gleebooks ("ABR Australian Bestsellers" 1995: 6).

Jane Waddy of the Feminist Bookshop, wrote that they did not keep a record of numbers sold, however, *The Orchard* "has been one of the most popular books" (Waddy 1995).

While *The Orchard* sold well in independent bookshops, it has also sold well in chain bookshops, but does not appear to have been stocked by most non-specialist outlets such as newsagents, supermarkets, or department stores.

The Orchard's retail market is made up predominantly of women, a unanimous opinion of everyone I spoke to who was involved with *The Orchard*. *The Orchard*, informed as it is by feminism, also taps the feminist market within a broader women's market. The retail success of *The Orchard* attests to the presence of a substantial market in Australia for books by women which explore the conditions of women's lives; this market is clearly strong, and a significant one for Australian booksellers.

Book Buying Practices

Book buying practices in Australia have been the subject of a number of major studies in recent years. The first and foundational study was carried out in 1978 by a research group engaged by the Australia Council (Brenac & Stevens 1978); it was important for establishing methodologies and benchmarks for subsequent studies. It was followed in 1989 by a similar study also commissioned by the Australia Council and published in 1990 under the title *Books-Who Reads Them?* (Guldborg 1990). This later survey provided data comparable to the 1978 study as well as additional material on Australian books in public libraries, and an overview of the Australian

book industry. In 1995 a further study, *Books: Who's Reading Them Now?* (ABS 1995b) was published and based on data collected, in 1994, by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on behalf, once again, of the Australia Council. The involvement of the ABS in this latest research and their use of the quarterly national Population Survey Monitor has increased the accuracy of the data (ABS 1995b: 1). These studies have provided vital information on Australian book culture and, in particular on reading, buying, and borrowing practices.

All of the studies comprised three surveys which collected data at separate sites: there was a household survey, a survey of book buying at the point of sale, and a borrowing survey carried out at public libraries. Information on book buying practices was drawn from both the household survey and the book buyers survey, with the former being most statistically reliable, based as it was on careful sampling. It is interesting to note that the two surveys, within the latest study, produced what the researchers describe as "broadly similar" findings (ABS 1995b: 39).

The latest household survey found that 27% of people had purchased at least one book in the month prior to the survey; this compares with 31% in 1989, and 43% in 1978, differences significant enough for researchers to conclude that "there appears to be a long-term trend away from buying books" (ABS 1995b: 21). The trend apparent in book borrowing is similar, with less people borrowing books in 1994 than in 1989 and in 1978. These figures suggest a gradual diminution in the importance of books to the general population, and might indicate a movement to other media as entertainment and information sources. The figures certainly do not indicate a thriving or widespread book culture in Australia, however, the continued growth of the book production industry belies that conclusion.

While less people are buying books in general, more Australian books are being bought in relation to books from overseas; in 1989 Australian books made up only 24% of books bought on the retail market, while in 1994, 34.9% of books bought were Australian (that is, "published in Australia, written by an Australian author or had significant Australian content" ABS 1995b: 5). These figures support industry figures which indicate a growing Australian share of book production and sales.

All of the studies found that book buying increased with both educational level and income level, and that women are the major book buyers in Australia. In 1994, 32.1% of women had purchased a book or books in the month prior to the survey, compared with 23% of men (ABS 1995b: 112); in addition, the 1994 book buyers survey found that 77% of books bought by respondents were bought by women (ABS 1995b: 121). The fact that women are the major book buyers in Australia has a significant effect on book marketing which Louise Adler, a former publisher with Reed International, described as "almost entirely oriented toward women as buyers" (quoted in Hancock 1994: 21). Women buy books not only for themselves, but also for children, family, and friends. Books, therefore, are marketed to women as readers, shoppers, and buyers, a complex marketing exercise.

The 1994 book buyers survey, in common with the previous surveys, found that around one third of books just purchased were adult fiction, 23% were

children's books, and 46% were various kinds of non-fiction (ABS 1995b: 121). 64% of books purchased by respondents in the 1994 survey were paperback, and 36% were hardback, figures which reveal an increase in the proportion of hardback sales from the 1989 figures where only 24.2% of books were hardbacks (Guldborg 1990: 72). The publication of books in hardback appears to be enjoying a revival in Australia, however, this increase in hardback sales may also indicate a growing remainders market.

The major reason Australians buy books at retail outlets was found to be, overwhelmingly, for relaxation, either for themselves or their families (76%); this was followed by the purchase of books for gifts (15.2%), then for formal study (10.5%), and for work (7.4%) (ABS 1995b: 123). These figures highlight the importance of books for recreation purposes in Australia, and do not differ greatly from the 1989 survey.

The outstanding feature revealed by these studies of Australian book buying practices is the decreasing numbers of book buyers in the Australian population. The factors contributing to the decrease are difficult to pinpoint, however some clues may be gleaned from the reasons given by non-buyers and non-borrowers for not reading: equal numbers of people had "no time available for reading" and "prefer other activities", the next most common reason given was that "TV is more relaxing" (ABS 1995b: 117). In an era of multiple entertainment, recreation, and information options, the book is clearly only one option among many.

Book Prices in Australia

Book prices in Australia have also been the subject of investigation in recent years; a major Prices Surveillance Authority inquiry was held in 1989, and another in 1995. These inquiries formed part of a larger debate about the regulation and protection of authors, publishers, printers, and booksellers in the Australian book trade. The 1989 PSA inquiry took submissions and evidence from a range of interested parties, and focused its attention primarily on the importation provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*; the inquiry found that:

The importation provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968* have been used by publishers to exercise international price discrimination, which has resulted in excessively high prices for books in Australia. (PSA 1989b: 39)

An example of price discrimination was cited which illustrated that Australians paid 31% more than the British for British books, while Canadians were offered the same books for 3% less than the British price. It was suggested that Canada's proximity to the large and competitive American market encouraged British publishers to lower their prices (PSA 1989b: 7); it could be suggested that the same publishers have, conversely, taken advantage of Australia's physical isolation and its closed market to keep prices high.

The Australian Copyright Law Review Committee also looked into the importation provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968* and found evidence of opportunistic price discrimination. Part of its investigation involved a

simple price survey of recently published paperback books which carried both the Australian recommended retail price (RRP) and that of either Britain, the USA, or Canada. This survey found that British prices for the books surveyed were 11.1% lower than the Australian price, US prices were nearly 12% lower, and Canadian prices were 17.1% lower (Copyright Law Review Committee 1988: 389).

In 1991, these importation provisions were amended to allow parallel imports of books which are published overseas, and which have not been made available in Australia within 30 days of their overseas release. If a publisher fails to make a new book available within the time limit, the publisher loses forever its exclusive import right on that book. Other changes were also made to the *Act*, and all were associated with access to books. It was hoped that increased access would result in lower book prices relative to other English speaking countries. The PSA maintained a monitoring brief on book prices after the amendments were passed, and conducted another inquiry in 1995 (PSA 1995). This later inquiry found, as previously mentioned, improved availability in Australia of new releases, and efficiency gains in distribution; however, it also found that "prices of some books continue to be high relative to overseas, particularly in the technical and professional and mass market paperback areas" (PSA 1995: 111). The inquiry concluded that the major impediment to lower book prices is the lack of effective competition brought about by the closed market, and it recommended that the Australian book market be opened.

It has long been recognised that Australians pay too much for books; investigations into the reasons for this have both encouraged debate and wrought changes within the industry. The report of the 1995 PSA inquiry suggests that such debate has "raised awareness among publishers of the need for price restraint" (PSA 1995: 111); as a result of this and of other factors, Australian book prices, while not falling *per se* are becoming more favourable in relation to prices in comparable countries.

Australian Libraries and Book Distribution

Libraries as distribution points for books in Australia have a somewhat chequered history; while mechanics' institutes and other privately endowed libraries were established in the early years of the Australian colonies and spread widely and rapidly, the same cannot be said for public libraries. It was not until the 1850s that free municipal libraries began to appear. These co-existed with mechanics' institutes for many years, and tended to meet reference needs while the institutes were weighted toward recreational reading (Biskup & Goodman 1982). The latter half of the 19th century also saw the founding of the State libraries, the establishment and funding of which were characterised more by good intentions than cash commitment. Public libraries in general suffered official neglect in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and a major survey of Australian libraries carried out in the 1930s revealed a very poor public library system. The report of the survey stated:

As a whole, Australia was better served with local libraries in 1880 than it is today. Almost every city and large town now contains a decadent institute or school of arts, many of which give evidence of

having had a former period of real usefulness. (Munn & Pitt 1935: 23)

Perhaps it was the sorry state of the public library system which gave rise to the prevalence and popularity of private subscription and circulating libraries. These commercial operations were particularly popular in the early part of the 20th century when the public library system had reached its nadir. Circulating libraries provided new and second-hand books for loan on the payment of a small daily or weekly fee; they specialised in popular fiction, particularly in romance, mystery, western, and adventure stories. An interesting feature of these libraries was their focus on hygiene; some even highlighted it in their names, for instance, Stinton's Hygienic Book Club, and claimed to disinfect their books with formalin after each loan (Arnold 1992). It is estimated that in 1940, there were 550 circulating libraries in Melbourne, not including "the many chemists, dry-cleaners, florists, and the like, that had a small library attached to them" (Arnold 1992: 68).

The public library system in Australia did not begin to develop fully until the mid 20th century. In a relative flurry of activity following the damning Munn-Pitt Report of 1935, all six states enacted legislation providing for the establishment of free public libraries. The flurry was followed by further inactivity, and it was not until the 1950s that all states committed money and actually began developing public library systems, some on a state-wide basis, and others under local government authority. The 1950s also saw the rapid expansion and development of university libraries, and in 1960, the National Library of Australia emerged as a separate entity from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated, in 1992, that there were 13,000 libraries in Australia; most of these are school libraries, and 11% or 1,400 were public libraries (ABS 1992: 358). Australian libraries hold an estimated 127 million items, most of which are books, making libraries important sites for book distribution (Australia. Cultural Ministers Council SAG 1990: 44).

Public libraries are the libraries most accessible to the majority of the population, and most Australian public library systems offer on-site lending services as well as delivery to housebound readers, and mobile or postal services to remote or otherwise non-serviced areas. An estimated 8 million people were members of public libraries in Australia in 1994; this constitutes 45.2% of the total population (ABS 1995b: 86). A recent library use survey published as part of *Books-Who's Reading Them Now?* (ABS 1995b) found that more people borrowed books in the month prior to the survey (34.8%) than bought books (27.6%). Again, women were found to be the most active with 40.7% of women borrowing books in the preceding month, compared with only 27.1% of men (ABS 1995b: 115).

It should be noted here that the library profession in Australia, in common with much of Australian book culture, is dominated by women. The Australian Bureau of Statistics 1991 Population Census indicated that 83.4% of librarians in Australia were women (ABS 1991b).

Libraries acquire books from a number of different sources, including library suppliers, general and specialist booksellers, and directly from publishers. One of the few areas in Australia where book wholesaling takes place is in the library supply market, although wholesaling in this case involves a large range of single copies of books rather than multiple copies. There are a number of firms operating in Australia which specialise in supplying the single copies of books which libraries generally require. Libraries are not restricted by the importation provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, and may import books directly from wholesalers or publishers in any country. Evidence presented to the Prices Surveillance Authority 1989 Inquiry into Book Prices revealed that large academic and public libraries directly import the majority of books they purchase; speed and cost savings of up to 30% were cited as major reasons for direct importation (PSA 1989a: 26).

Australian books are also bought by libraries from local retail booksellers; while it is often most convenient to purchase books locally, it is also in the interests of libraries to support the local book trade which, in turn, is likely to offer discounts on library purchases.

Libraries use the same sources booksellers use for information about new publications, release dates, distribution changes, and so on. *Australian Books in Print*, *Australian Bookseller and Publisher*, *Guide to New Australian Books*, and their overseas equivalents, as well as individual publishers' lists, specialist review journals, and other related publications, are among the information sources used by library acquisition staff.

The Orchard is an example of an Australian book which has sold well to libraries; it is in the lending collections of most public libraries in Australia. The State Library of Tasmania, for instance, which operates the state-wide public library system in Tasmania, bought 11 copies of *The Orchard* for its lending collections through its central Collection Development section in Hobart. The Collection Development Librarian, Ray Bartle, was unsure of how *The Orchard* came to the attention of his section, however, he suggests that it was either through an approval copy forwarded to the library from a local retail bookseller, or through reviewing sources such as newspapers or *Australian Book Review*, or through its appearance in the monthly *Guide to New Australian Books*. As a new work by a well-known and well-established Australian writer, *The Orchard* would have been selected for purchase without preview. The 11 copies acquired by the State Library of Tasmania were purchased at Fullers Bookshop in Hobart in the period from September 1994 to July 1995; these consisted of both hardback and paperback copies (Bartle 1995).

Public libraries in Australia have traditionally been publicly funded, have provided free services, and have therefore not involved themselves in commercial activities. The dominance of economic rationalist public policy in the 1980s and 1990s has seen many public libraries enter into various fee-for-service arrangements. Most of the services which have attracted fees involve 'value-added' and electronic database services, and fees have generally not been applied to the book distribution role of libraries. It may be a concern, however, that the diversification of public library services, and the increased provision of expensive electronic facilities and services

will divert limited funds away from the acquisition, maintenance, and distribution of books.

Secondary Book Distribution

Secondary distribution, as mentioned previously, is the process through which books reach an 'unintended audience', that is, "the people to whom the publication found its way, unanticipated by the author or publisher" (Adams & Barker 1993: 25). This audience is reached through loans, gifts, unauthorised reprints or translations ('pirate' editions), the second-hand book market, quotations, and through the reprinting of sections of books in other publications. Adams and Barker include libraries in their notion of this secondary distribution system; however, I believe that libraries are too well established and accepted as distribution agencies for books to serve an 'unanticipated audience'. Certain hardback editions of books are, in fact, designed and intended specifically for library use; the existence in Australia of Public and Educational Lending Rights recognises the wide use of books in public and educational libraries, and compensates copyright holders for this legitimate use of their property.

The informal nature of secondary distribution of books makes it difficult to identify and quantify activity in this area. It is probable, however, that *The Orchard*, for instance, has been actively distributed in a secondary system, particularly through loans and gifts, major avenues of secondary distribution in Australia. Indeed, several people associated with *The Orchard* mentioned its appeal to the gift market, especially given its pre-Christmas release (Pearce 1995; Christer 1995; Gaunt 1995). The private lending of books between friends, acquaintances, and relatives is a common practice in Australia, which might result from shared cultural experiences of public lending libraries, and the consequent notion of books as objects of loan. Books are common gifts between friends and relatives, and are also often donated to institutions and libraries.

Copyright law in Australia controls and limits aspects of secondary distribution of books, and thereby protects copyright holders from the unauthorised use of their property; this applies equally to unauthorised reprints of whole works as it does to unauthorised reprinting of sections of books. It is unlikely that unauthorised reprints of the whole or parts of *The Orchard* have been made; however, such breaches of copyright are rarely made public or offered for public sale in the country of origin of the legitimate edition. Some reprinting and use of parts of books is authorised by permission being granted by a copyright holder, or is allowed under sections of the *Copyright Act 1968*; these are also forms of secondary distribution.

Second-hand bookselling is an important avenue of secondary distribution, as well as an important aspect of bookselling in Australia. The second-hand book market ranges from the expensive rare and antiquarian book trade to book exchanges and outlets specialising in paperback romance, western, and adventure fiction. Of the 410 bookshops listed in Christine Flynn's *Bookshops of Sydney* (1987), 50 are second-hand shops, 28 are book exchanges, and 19 are antiquarian booksellers; while several of these may

overlap in their functions, these figures provide a good indication of the size of the formal second-hand bookshops in relation to new book outlets.

Sales figures are difficult to ascertain for the second-hand book market; few figures are kept at an official level, and there is a large informal trade which takes place in conjunction with the sale of other second-hand goods, and at casual market stalls.

A check with several second-hand bookshops in both NSW and Tasmania revealed that *The Orchard* had not appeared in those shops at November 1995. One second-hand bookseller suggested that popular books such as *The Orchard* were often slow to come onto the second-hand market, but could be expected to appear in second-hand shops a year or more after their initial release, although some promotional or review copies might appear in second-hand shops in Melbourne or Sydney earlier (McLean 1995).

Distribution of Australian books is more successful than the distribution of overseas books in Australia; the latter has been constrained by practices and law which have done more to protect the interests of publishers than to provide consumers with a wide range of books at reasonable prices. While a number of constraints to overseas book distribution have been lifted, others have emerged which affect consumer access to local books as well as to imports. These include the policies of some large book retailers which result in homogeneity of products within shops; and the increasingly varied demands being made on limited library budgets as a result of the proliferation of entertainment, recreation, and information options.

The fact that women make up the majority of book buyers is an important factor which affects Australian book culture in a number of ways, particularly in the distribution and marketing of books. The majority of book marketing is directed to women as buyers for both themselves and for others, including children, men, other women, and library users. It appears to be through the agency of the female book buyer that many Australians gain access to books.

As an Australian book published by a large publishing company with an associated specialist distribution service, *The Orchard* has had effective national distribution. It has been placed in independent bookshops, as well as in major chain shops; it has sold well in both kinds of retail outlets. It is in a large number of public library lending collections, and is in active use in those collections. *The Orchard* must be seen as an unusual book due to its enormous commercial success, however, in terms of its distribution, it is also a typical book of its kind in that it has undergone a distribution process which is standard for many Australian books. The nature of the distribution of *The Orchard*, and of other Australian books, is instrumental in determining access to books, a factor which is fundamental to the next element in the life-cycle of the book, reception and use.

Chapter 7 RECEPTION AND USE

Introduction

The reception and use of the book follows the creative, manufacturing, and commercial processes by which the book is produced and distributed. It could be said, notwithstanding commercial considerations, that reception and use are the book's *raison d'être*, particularly from the point of view of many authors. Reception involves readers, reading, and reviewing, as well as a book's popularity, success, and influence; 'use' refers to a book's use or uses other than reading, which follow its initial reception.

The reception and use of the book in contemporary Australia is extensive; Australia is a literate nation in which large numbers of people read books for a range of purposes including education, instruction, recreation, entertainment, and inspiration. While the reception of books is largely a solitary endeavour undertaken by individual readers, there are a number of avenues for the public reception of books in Australia which include the publication of book reviews and associated discussions, literary festivals, and a variety of literary and other book awards.

This chapter examines the reception and use of books in contemporary Australia, with a particular focus on the reception and use of *The Orchard*. The chapter begins with an overview of the introduction of literate culture to Australia, and of its role in colonial and subsequent culture. This is followed by an examination of the nature of readers and reading in contemporary Australia, and of the increasing academic interest in reading as an activity. The nature and role of book reviewing is also examined, as are other indicators of a book's popularity and success, including literary awards. The notion of a book's influence is explored, along with uses for books other than reading. Throughout, features of the reception and use of *The Orchard* are presented to exemplify the general issues and conditions involved in the reception and use of books in contemporary Australia.

Reading in Australia: History

The white settlement of Australia in the late 18th century coincided with the spread of reading throughout Europe and Britain. Literacy had been on the increase since the 16th century as a result of the spread of Protestantism, a 'book religion' which emphasised the private reading of Scriptures and other religious texts. Printing technology also contributed to the spread of reading by increasing the availability of reading matter. Reading became more widespread throughout the 18th century with the extension of education and with the change in social relations brought about by the Industrial Revolution (Altick 1957).

The First Fleet brought with it to Australia the notions and accoutrements of literate culture - books, readers, a printing press, ideas about libraries, and about the moral, religious, and civilising role of books. This literate culture was imposed on the existing oral culture of indigenous Australians

which was considered uncivilised and primitive, due partly to its non-literacy: ". . . with no books, no written laws, no scriptures, the Aborigines were judged to have no civilisation, no rights to land, no religion" (Gillen 1988: 191). The book was an important tool for the British colonisers and gaolers, and was associated with the morality and authority of both church and state; it was seen as a civilising influence, and it was thought that reading could be promoted and harnessed to the purpose of creating a moral and civilised society (Askew & Hubber 1988).

Later 19th century notions of 'moral enlightenment' and self-improvement through culture further impelled the promotion of reading in Australia, and were set in opposition to the growing spirit of materialism which accompanied the success of agriculture and the discovery of gold (Nadel 1957). This mid-19th century period saw the proliferation of mechanics' institutes, art galleries, museums, and universities in Australia, established in the belief that ". . . the diffusion of culture would lead to refinement in the manners and morals of society" (White 1981: 60). Ironically perhaps, it was the wealth generated by gold which financed many of these ventures.

The further expansion of literacy and the increasing availability of a range of reading material in the 19th century saw the notion of reading as a means to self-improvement joined by a recognition that not all reading was beneficial. There was fear among members of the colonial clergy and the ruling class of the potential negative effects of certain kinds of reading material, in particular, 'works of imagination' or novels. Michael Roe wrote of this, ". . . many culturists feared lest imagination rampant might inflame those gross passions which it was one of the purposes of learning to subdue" (Roe 1965: 155).

In spite of such concerns, popular reading in Australia centred on fiction. An 1851 Committee of Enquiry into the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts found that the library had become "a mere circulating library of light fiction, since two-thirds of all issues were novels, and only one-ninth of 'a solid instructive character'" (Nadel 1957: 93). Reverend Andrew Cameron of Melbourne proposed a solution to this perceived problem with his recommendation of 1871:

The systematic colportage of Bibles, wholesome books, and periodicals, should be rigorously prosecuted, to wean the masses from the trash and immorality now eagerly read. (quoted from the *Victorian Independent* v 20 n 2 Nov 1871, in Askew & Hubber 1988: 115)

'The masses', however, continued to enjoy fiction, and reading continued to be a popular pursuit among Australians. Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa found, in their oral history of reading, *Australian Readers Remember*, that Australia, in the period 1890 to 1930, was "a reading-oriented society" with a high literacy rate (Lyons & Taksa 1992a: 8). A 1953 *Current Affairs Bulletin* report on Australian reading habits stated that "the Australian per capita book consumption of 21 shillings is among the highest in the world" ("Australian Reading Habits" 1953: 35). The report also cited figures which indicated that Australia had one bookshop for every 14,000 people, this was compared with Britain where the ratio was one to 30,000, and with the USA with a ratio of one to 160,000 ("Australian Reading Habits" 1953: 35). These

figures indicate a high level of book use and an active book culture in Australia, relative, at least to Britain and the USA.

Australia currently enjoys relatively high levels of literacy with the development of reading and writing skills as a fundamental aim of Australian primary and secondary education systems. Literacy is seen not only as an essential modern living skill, but also as a desirable competence which enables access to reading material of all kinds from the utilitarian to the spiritual and inspirational.

Who are Australian Readers?

It is easier to identify the buyers of books than to identify readers, since buying is generally carried out in public, and reading is a private and solitary activity in contemporary Australia. In an effort to identify readers of *The Orchard*, I asked a number of people involved in its production, distribution, sales, and reception for their opinions on the nature of its readers.

The author, Drusilla Modjeska, identified readers of *The Orchard* as "mostly women" (Modjeska 1995a). In an interview about *The Orchard*, Modjeska elaborated on her audience:

I always think . . . that I'm only read by women . . . I don't think in terms of writing for women, I think in terms of writing. But I've always just assumed somehow that I connect better to females, to women, as readers. However, a lot of men seem to have been reading this book [*The Orchard*] and have been having very interesting responses. (Modjeska on "Books & Writing", ABC Radio National 2 Oct 1994)

Pan Macmillan sales representative, Robyn Pearce also saw readers of *The Orchard* as "mostly women" (Pearce 1995), while publisher, Nikki Christer expected its readers to be "literary", like the usual readership for Picador titles. However, given the very high sales figures for *The Orchard*, Christer suggested that its readership may have gone beyond that "literary market" to the "mass market". Christer mentioned, in our interview, her surprise at having seen someone reading *The Orchard* "on the train", (Christer 1995), a reading site she obviously associates with mass market books exclusively. This is an interesting and simplistic comment from a publisher whose role includes the exercise of her experience and judgement in determining material for her company's 'elite, literary' label.

Booksellers David Gaunt and Clive Tilsley based their opinions of the book's readers on observation of sales in their bookshops; both believed that its readers were women (Gaunt 1995; Tilsley 1995). Tilsley added that he had tried to "get men to buy the book", but few had; Tilsley had read the book himself on the recommendation of his (female) partner (Tilsley 1995).

Cassandra Pybus believes that the book's readers are women between the ages of 30 and 60 who are "broadly feminist". She thinks that *The Orchard* has reached many women who she describes as "non-readers", that is, those who would only read this one book in one year; she arrived at this

opinion after observation of the book's performance in the marketplace, and through discussions with friends and colleagues (Pybus 1995).

Ronnie Pammenter, coordinator of Book Discussion Services (Tasmania) believes that *The Orchard* is "definitely a women's book", and has purchased multiple copies for the use of book discussion groups in Tasmania. An estimated 90% of the members of these groups are women, and Ronnie Pammenter believes that *The Orchard* will be a popular choice for groups (Pammenter 1995).

A number of reviewers of *The Orchard* also refer to it as a women's book, or as of particular interest to women. Delia Falconer, for instance, while identifying female hands as a central image of the book, notes that its hardback edition is "just the right size . . . to fit easily and without heftiness or strain into a pair of female hands" (Falconer 1994: Extra 9), implying a book designed for women.

Susan Martin, in her review in the literary journal, *Meanjin*, wonders what male readers "will make of a narrative which, in certain ways, confronts and excludes them" (Martin 1994: 769). David Carter, as if in reply, addresses this aspect of *The Orchard* in his review:

The book will not address male and female readers equally. It quietly manages a reversal such that the male reader listens in to an absorbing and self-absorbed conversation that takes place largely without reference to him. But the effect is less exclusion than learning to listen. (Carter 1994: Review 5)

Carter's use of the slightly pejorative "self-absorbed" to describe the conversation in the book does, however, imply exclusion, and gives his argument a contradictory edge; Carter ends his review with the hope that *The Orchard* finds male readers.

There is general agreement among those interviewed and among many of its reviewers that *The Orchard's* reading audience is made up largely of women. The book does not exclude men any more than most books written by men which present male lives and concerns exclude women; however, notwithstanding David Carter's comments above, Sara Mills, in an essay on feminism and reading, points out:

Male readers sometimes seem to be put in an uncomfortable position by texts which are written overtly for women, since they assume that the address does not include them, unlike the seemingly universal masculine address. (Mills, S. 1994: 33)

With the existence of a strong women's market for books in Australia, the predominant involvement of women in its creation, production, and marketing, and its subject matter concerning female experience, it is not surprising that *The Orchard* has attracted a majority of women readers.

Indeed, women are the predominant readers in Australia, as the results of reading studies have shown. A number of studies of reading practices have been carried out in Australia in recent years; these provide useful

information on Australian book readers, and the successive studies also allow for changes in reading practices to be noted.

The first major study, as previously mentioned, was carried out in 1978 as part of a larger investigation of book buying, borrowing, and reading practices (Brenac & Stevens 1978). Initiated and sponsored by the Australia Council in an effort to inform its literature policies and programs, it was the first in a series of research projects concerning the reading, buying, and borrowing of books in Australia.

The second study using similar methodology was carried out a decade later in 1989 (Guldborg 1990), and the third in 1994 (ABS 1995b). This third and latest study found that nearly half (48.5%) of the respondents, aged 15 and over, had read a book or books in the week preceding the survey; this compares with 54% of respondents to the 1989 survey, and 70% in the 1978 survey (it should be noted that this question differs in each survey; the 1994 survey asked if respondents had read a book in the past seven days while the 1989 survey asked if a book had been read "over the past couple of days or so". The 1978 survey listed reading among a number of other leisure activities, and noted participation rates with no reference to time). In spite of the differing survey questions, the results indicate that fewer Australians had been reading books; this finding is in line with other findings regarding book buying and borrowing practices which also show a decrease in participation rates. These findings indicate a clear decrease in the reading, buying, and borrowing of books by the general population, and suggest a diminution in the importance of book culture in Australia. The latest study, however, also highlights the large percentage of parents with children under 10 years of age, who read to their children. 80.7% of such parents read aloud to their children, and 75.9% do so at least once a week (ABS 1995b: 139-140). It appears that the majority of Australian children continue to be introduced to book culture by their parents, an encouraging factor for the future of book reading in Australia.

The latest study found that the majority of book readers (79.8%) read for pleasure, and that the most common books read are adult fiction. Like Australian readers in the mid 19th century, modern Australian readers display a preference for 'works of imagination', or novels.

Women were found to be the predominant readers in the 1994 study, with 55% of women having read a book or books in the week prior to the survey, compared with 41.7% of men (ABS 1995b: 3). The percentage of both men and women readers dropped between the 1989 and the 1994 surveys, however, the percentage of women dropped by only 2% while 6.3% less men read in 1994 (Guldborg 1990: 22; ABS 1995b: 3). The population group most likely to read books was found to be women aged 15 to 39, 58.4% of whom had been reading books prior to the survey; in all age groups women read more than men (ABS 1995b: 106).

These figures support notions such as those articulated by Dale Spender and referred to in a previous chapter, that men have abandoned books and book culture in favour of the more powerful and potentially pervasive electronic media (Spender, D. 1995). While such notions are arguable and difficult to definitively prove or disprove, it is clear from these figures that women remain the major book readers by an increased margin, and

remain the major buyers and borrowers in Australia as well. As such, women are in central positions in both the consumer events of the book life cycle, and in book culture. These central positions confer a degree of power and influence to women as consumers, and as audience - power and influence which is fed back into the book cycle, and which affects future authorship and publication.

The most recent study of book reading in Australia does not, unfortunately, provide specific information on the reading practices of people from non-English speaking backgrounds; however, the 1989 survey was clearer in its findings in this area. The 1989 study found that people from non-English speaking backgrounds bought and borrowed books less than the general community; 49% never bought books or could not remember when they last did, compared with 28% of the total population; and 41% never borrowed or could not recall when they last borrowed books, compared with 30% of the total population (Guldborg 1990: 29, 33). While the survey did not break *reading practices* down by country of birth, it can be inferred from the figures relating to these other practices that people from non-English speaking backgrounds read books less than the total population.

A 1988 study into the reading practices of communities whose first language is not English, revealed that the lack, in Australia, of books in languages other than English was a major factor affecting reading practices in these communities. The study's title *Not Enough to Read . . .* attests to that finding (Ashby & Whitehead 1988). Australia was considered by some participants in the study, as a 'book desert' for readers of languages other than English; there was found to be a general lack of availability of books in non-English languages in both bookshops and in libraries.

Book reading in Australia is mostly done by lone individuals reading silently to themselves for the purposes of education, instruction, or recreation. The practice of reading aloud is not a common one in contemporary Australia, although there are notable exceptions, such as adults reading to children, the reading of religious texts, and book-readings broadcast on radio. Audio books are becoming increasingly popular with more being made available each year.

Some reader's organisations exist, formally and informally; the National Book Council could be said to function as a 'peak body' for readers, although writers, critics, publishers, librarians, booksellers, and others involved in the book trade tend to dominate the organisation, at least on a national level. State branches of the National Book Council involve readers in their activities more than the National branch does. Some state Adult Education authorities provide infrastructure for formal book discussion groups, and other groups are organised informally among religious, social and other interest groups. Generally, however, most readers remain isolated from one another and from other events in the book cycle.

Reviews

Book reviews are one of the very few mechanisms for reader feedback and influence; in most cases, however, the reviewer is a *specialist* reader, trained or experienced as either a literary critic, academic, or as a writer, publisher, editor, or bookseller.

The review process is an important one, particularly for authors. The vast majority of their readers will be anonymous and silent, giving no indication of their reaction to an author's work. Reviews provide authors with "one of the few concrete affirmations they receive" (Rosie Scott quoted in Adelaide 1994: 14). The importance of the review to authors was highlighted in an article in the Australian Society of Author's publication *The Australian Author*:

... the moment when a book is reviewed is the culmination of a process which began way back at the manuscript stage. It is the moment when a book is finally judged in a public forum, when it is held up for discussion and open to complete scrutiny, when all its faults are laid bare for the world to see. (Adelaide & Spender 1994: 10)

The book review is also important for readers, and particularly for readers with an interest in new authors and works. Reviews inform readers of the availability of new books, and provide a more objective evaluation of the works than do publisher's blurbs and other promotional material. Reviews also provide readers with another opinion or an alternative reading of a text, a reading to place beside their own, and an opportunity to see a text through another's eyes.

The review is important for publishers, both as a promotional tool and as a source of specialist feedback on the works they produce. Publishers provide reviewers with advance copies of books as part of their promotional and marketing strategies. It is often a risky enterprise, with the possibility of an unfavourable review negatively affecting sales. There is some question, however, of whether or not reviews actually increase sales; the book buyers survey in the study *Books - Who's Reading Them Now?* revealed that only 7% of book buyers cited having seen or heard a book review as a reason for buying a particular book (ABS 1995b: 150). Book reviews, however, do bring books to the attention of readers; they indicate the availability of new editions, give an indication of a book's subject matter and approach, and they usually include the price of a book, and the name of the publisher.

The Orchard was well reviewed, both in the sense of coverage, and in the sense of receiving a generally positive critical reception. Pan Macmillan's promotions team was successful in getting the book widely and promptly reviewed. By Christmas 1994, reviews of *The Orchard* had appeared in all of the major book review sites, including daily and weekend newspapers such as, the *Canberra Times*, the *Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian*, *The Weekend Australian*, and in magazines and review journals such as *Australian Book Review*, *Adelaide Review*, *Australian Women's Book Review*, *Meanjin*, and the National Library of Australia's *Voices*. Later reviews appeared in *Overland* and *Westerly*, and several brief review-

announcements appeared in June 1995, at the time of the release of the paperback edition of *The Orchard*. Some of the reviews were accompanied by, or followed by interviews with Drusilla Modjeska about *The Orchard* and the process of its creation; interviews were also broadcast on the ABC Radio National program, "Books and Writing" and on ABC television's Sunday afternoon arts program.

Probably the most accessible book review sources in Australia for the general public are the literary or book pages of the daily newspapers. Most capital city newspapers, as well as the national paper, *The Australian*, feature book reviews and literary feature articles in their weekend editions in special arts and leisure-related supplements with titles such as 'Weekend Review' and 'Saturday Extra'. The association of books with weekend, or non-work time attests to the general view of reading as leisure activity in Australia; this is particularly true of fiction reading which is featured heavily in newspapers in peak holiday periods.

Most 'book pages', as they are popularly known, are edited and managed by a literary editor whose work involves selecting books for review, matching books with reviewers, and editing and arranging the contents of the pages. The types of books reviewed include new hardback fiction by local and overseas authors, non-academic non-fiction works such as biographies, autobiographies, history, cultural studies, and popular science, poetry, and paperback fiction in first editions. Some paperback and 'genre' fiction, such as crime and science fiction will occasionally be reviewed. It is difficult to get an accurate estimate of the percentage of books published which are reviewed. *The Weekend Australian's* literary editor, Barry Oakley was quoted as saying that in one week, he received 70 books (Barker, V. 1993: 22); if this is taken as an average and put against an estimated average number of books reviewed in that paper each weekend, roughly 80% of books received are not reviewed.

One feature of book reviews in the major Australian newspapers is the fact that many of the same books are reviewed in each paper; this is partially the result of the effectiveness of the promotion departments of the major publishers, and of the influence that those publishers have on literary editors. It is also the case that a number of the newspapers are in competition with one another for readership, and choose to feature reviews of the more highly promoted books, or books by well-known authors, which are likely to be most popular. Since book reviews are a major source of information for consumers on the availability of books, the homogeneity of book reviews in newspapers serves to perpetuate the homogeneity of book market, with particular authors and publishers receiving privileged publicity through reviews. *The Orchard* is a case in point, the success of *The Orchard's* review coverage was due both to the skill and influence of Pan Macmillan promotions staff, and to the critical success of Drusilla Modjeska's previous book, *Poppy*, which established Modjeska as a significant figure in Australian literature. The unusual and ground-breaking nature of *Poppy* as a fictionalised biography raised expectations concerning Modjeska's subsequent works; literary editors and critics were obviously eager to read, appraise, and feature reviews of *The Orchard*, as much for the entertainment of readers as for their information.

Dale Spender suggests that the function, and therefore the nature of book reviews is changing; she believes that reviews previously functioned as a mechanism to inform, evaluate and advertise books. Reviews now, she maintains, are used to sell the newspapers and magazines in which they appear. The nature of the review has changed accordingly, and aims to entertain, provoke debate and response, and to attract readers to the paper. In an article entitled "Reviews as Infotainment", Spender suggests "... that there are those who put the 'good story' a long way ahead of the fair and informative appraisal of the book" (Spender, D. 1994a: 23). Anna Maria Dell'oso, a critic and journalist agrees:

I believe it's naive to think the critic writes in order to praise, discuss or dismember an artist's work. No. A critic's first and most important task if he or she works in the mass media is to entertain and increasingly, to infotain ... (Dell'oso 1994: 28)

The implication of this change for authors and for readers is that they cannot consider reviews as fair, balanced, and disinterested evaluations of books; sensational or contentious aspects of books will be highlighted at the expense of other, possibly more relevant or interesting aspects, and books without an entertaining 'angle' to promote may not be reviewed.

A feature of Australian book reviewing is the many reviewers who are themselves writers, often working in the same or similar area as the material they review. In a 1994 edition of *Australian Book Review*, 14 of the 25 reviews of Australian books were written by people identified in the biographical notes as 'writers'; 10 were identified as 'reviewers' or academics, and one did not have an occupation listed (*Australian Book Review* 1994). This reveals a high level of 'peer review', a situation which may result in less rigorous or less disinterested reviews than those that could be expected from professional critics. Writers as reviewers may not only review the work of friends but may also be conscious that the authors they review may later review their own work. Anna Maria Dell'oso, comments on this incestuous feature of Australian book reviewing:

... writers of books and poetry ... are in the unusual position of having a high number of practitioners also working (or moonlighting) as critics and reviewers. The politics of judgement by peers in a small population where the state is the major patron of the literary arts is an interesting ... complication ... to the drama between media, the critic and the artist. (Dell'oso 1994: 30)

Of the published reviews of *The Orchard*, about half were written by authors who also worked as reviewers, the other half were written by critics, journalists, or academics. Drusilla Modjeska herself is an active reviewer for some of the same publications which published reviews of *The Orchard*. I could not find any reviews by Modjeska of works by any reviewers of *The Orchard*, however, it is likely that she knows many of the reviewers personally, and may, eventually, be called upon to review their works. Such is the insular nature of book reviewing in contemporary Australia.

Book reviews, whatever their purpose, and in spite of their limitations, remain the major avenue for feedback to authors. The critical appraisal of

The Orchard in the majority of reviews was extremely positive. Most focused on the book's "idiosyncratic mix of genres" (Metherill 1994: C11), that is, the combination of essay, history, autobiography, and fiction found in the book. Peter Craven wrote of *The Orchard*:

This is a profoundly satisfying book that carries much of the punch of fiction on the one hand and autobiography on the other, but it is also speculative and intellectually adventurous in a way that disrupts expectations. (Craven 1994: 35)

Reviewer and novelist Margaret Jones notes that "the intertwining of the real and the imagined, the mythical and the contemporaneous, means some readers may approach the book warily". This caution is overcome, "after a time", Jones believes, "by the grace and style of Modjeska's writing" (Jones, M. 1994: 11A).

Liam Davidson, also both a novelist and a reviewer, is perhaps the most clear on the cross-genre nature of *The Orchard* in his review published in the *Australian Book Review*:

... this is a book that resists easy classification. It's the sort of book that may infuriate those who like their ideas served up in separate self-contained portions: fiction, history, biography, criticism. It's also likely to confound librarians and booksellers, faced with the problem of where to shelve it. Modjeska's ideas are not answerable to the Dewey Decimal System. (Davidson 1994: 11)

Another prominent feature of the book which is highlighted in a number of reviews is its design; reviews comment on the appropriateness and beauty of the design, and the sensuousness of the book as a physical object. David Carter, for instance, writes:

With its beautiful and intelligent dust jacket, its unusual page size, its selection of print and paper, the book is a work of art, an object of contemplation, in its own right. (Carter 1994: Review 5)

Susan Martin writes less lyrically: "This plump little book, with its exquisite cover, looks good enough to eat" (Martin 1994: 768).

A number of reviews identify *The Orchard* as a women's book, and many recognise the feminist perspective and intent of the author with comments on the feminist themes and sensibilities apparent in the text (for instance, Falconer 1994; Jones, M. 1994; Craven 1994; Carter 1994; Fraser, M. 1994).

The critical success of *The Orchard* is evidenced by the fact that the majority of its reviews were positive, in fact, only one of the thirteen reviews examined could be considered negative in a critical sense, and only one other contains a single criticism. Cath Kenneally's review in the *Adelaide Review* was the most negative; she found the book overly sweet and lacking in punch: "the tone is . . . too sweet, the wisdoms offered too politely". She goes on to suggest that the writing "lulls rather than provokes", and that "the prose has a somewhat evangelical ring"; in a similar vein, Kenneally finds the central image of the garden "a little too considered, too gentlewomanly" (Kenneally 1994: 28). Delia Falconer also

identifies a "too sweet" element in *The Orchard*, in an otherwise very positive review, Falconer writes: "If I have a criticism, it is that it is sometimes too beautiful - occasionally I found the scent of wisteria a little too heavy" (Falconer 1994: Extra 9).

It could be said that *The Orchard* received an enthusiastic reception from critics and reviewers and, therefore, effective promotion. The extensive coverage, an indication of the privileged status of this author in Australian literary culture, was effective in bringing the book to the attention of the reading public. The generally laudatory nature of the reviews not only sparked interest in it, but also further promoted the book as a desirable purchase. The reviews provided feedback to both author and publisher; promotional copy was also provided in the form of excerpts from selected reviews which were subsequently printed on the back cover of the paperback edition of the book.

Popularity and Success

A book's popularity is another factor in its reception. Popularity usually also means commercial success, since popularity is often reflected in sales. However, a book may be a critical success, that is, it may be 'well-received' by critics and reviewers, and considered a successful work on criteria other than commercial. Critical success does not always equate with commercial success, and nor does commercial success guarantee that a book is considered to be of high quality. It is clear that *The Orchard* is both critically and commercially successful, with its critical success contributing, at least to some extent, to its commercial success. Popularity is also a factor which can determine the fate of a book after its initial reception, that is, its subsequent uses, preservation, or disposal.

The most simple measure of a book's popularity in modern Australian book culture is its sales figures; however, these are often treated by publishers as commercial, or trade secrets, and are not always made public. Exceptions are made in cases of particularly high selling books; *The Orchard* has been one of these, with the unexpectedly high sales figures of over 30,000 in its first year of publication.

Bestseller lists are another indication of a book's popularity, and are published regularly in a number of Australian newspapers, and in both trade and popular magazines. Such lists, compiled from information received from selected retail outlets, usually only include the top ten selling books in various categories (such as hardback fiction, non-fiction, and children's books), making it difficult to gauge the popularity of books which are not among those top selling ten. Such lists do give some indication of how well these top selling books have sold in relation to one another. It is possible, however, that bestseller lists are self-perpetuating in that they not only list popular books, but also create popularity and an illusion of success. This leaves bestseller lists open to such manipulation as occurred in the United States in 1995 when two authors spent \$US250,000 buying copies of their book in bulk from booksellers who contributed sales figures to the New York Times bestseller lists; this propelled the book onto that bestseller list which, in turn greatly increased sales of the book as well as the authors' standing with their publisher (Wyndham 1995: 8).

The Orchard featured on various bestseller lists for much of 1995. In January 1995, it entered the *Australian Bookseller and Publisher* 'Bestseller' lists in the 'New Fiction' category; it remained on that list of the ten bestsellers until August 1995. The paperback edition entered the 'Mass Market Paperback' category of the lists in June 1995, the month of its first release in paperback; it continues to feature on that list in November 1995 (*Australian Bookseller & Publisher*).

The Orchard also made repeated appearances on the *Weekend Australian* 'Best Sellers' list which is compiled from information supplied by Gleebooks in Sydney, and by Readings in Melbourne. While *The Orchard* has not appeared each week, it has disappeared from, and reappeared on, the list several times. According to the bestseller list from Gleebooks alone, published monthly in the *Australian Book Review*, since April 1995, *The Orchard* appeared each month and, in the November 1995 issue, was the number two bestseller at Gleebooks (*Australian Book Review*).

The Australian Book Publishers Association (ABPA) compiles an annual 'ABPA Bestsellers Survey' in March each year from information provided by publishers of their highest selling books. The survey lists "trade sales figures only", that is, those "domestic (not export) sales to the book trade on book trade recognised terms" (ABPA 1995). *The Orchard* is listed, in the 1995 survey, as fiction in the 'Adult Hardbacks' category; its sales are listed as between 5,000 and 10,000 at 31 March, 1995, that is, in its first six months of publication (ABPA 1995: 3).

Library acquisitions and borrowing figures also provide indications of a book's popularity. The presence of a book in public libraries in particular, the movement of a book from the shelves to borrowers, as well as reservations placed on a book, give evidence of its popularity. Public libraries may buy multiple copies of books which are likely to be popular among borrowers. *The Orchard* has been widely purchased for use in public lending libraries. The State Library of Tasmania, for instance, holds 11 copies in its lending collection; there are six copies in Hobart libraries, two in Launceston, two in Devonport, and one in Burnie, although all are available for loan throughout the state-wide system. In September 1995, all of the copies of *The Orchard* were on loan, and 22 reservations were recorded for the books on the library's on-line public access catalogue and reservation system (State Library of Tasmania 1995). Since the first copies were purchased for the lending service in September 1994, all copies have been continuously out on loan, a clear indication of its popularity among public library users in Tasmania (Bartle 1995). It is likely that *The Orchard* is equally popular in other Australian public library collections.

As previously mentioned, multiple copies of *The Orchard* have been purchased for use by Book Discussion Services (Tasmania), a joint Adult Education and State Library of Tasmania program which services approximately 105 groups across Tasmania with a total of over 1,000 members. *The Orchard* was selected as a result of a number of recommendations from group members; it was also assessed as meeting the selection criteria of 'readability', interesting content, and topicality. The 15 paperback copies were purchased from a local book retailer who offered

an attractive discount on the purchase of multiple copies (Pammenter 1995).

Other indications of a book's success are the sale of its publishing rights to overseas markets, sale of translation rights, and other rights such as film, audio, and merchandising rights. In the case of *The Orchard*, audio rights and an option on the film rights have been sold, and British publishing rights were being negotiated in September 1995. It was recorded as an audio book at the Royal Blind Society's Audio Production Unit by professional actor, Jane Harders (Royal Blind Society 1995), and a feature film based on the book is planned for production in 1996. The appearance of *The Orchard* in other formats attests to its popularity and success.

The number and extent of reprints, and the demand for, and provision of, subsequent editions are also indicators of popularity and success. However, short print runs might also indicate poor planning on the part of the publisher. This was the case in the production of *The Orchard*; with three print runs in the last four months of 1994, the book was clearly more popular than its publisher anticipated. There was a need for additional print runs in 1995, as *The Orchard* continued to sell, and as its sales continued to be under-estimated by Pan Macmillan.

A major indication of a book's popularity is whether or not it remains 'in print', that is, copies remaining available from its publisher or distributor. It is difficult to predict how long a book like *The Orchard* will remain in print, however, like most books, it is likely to remain in print as long as there is a consumer demand for it.

It would be misleading to equate popularity with publicity; a book which receives widespread publicity may not prove to be a popular book, but may simply have an effective marketing and publicity campaign supporting it. Publicity can obviously spark interest in a book, but publicity may not, in itself, be an indicator of the success or popularity of a book. It is sometimes difficult to separate a publisher's marketing efforts from the genuine interest a book sparks; this is particularly true in the era of cross-media ownership where owners of a publishing company may also own other media in which book publicity appears.

Awards

Another indicator of a book's success is its performance in literary and other competitions for which prizes are awarded. A notable feature of Australian book culture is the large number of awards, prizes, and competitions which exist. Each Australian state, with the exception of Tasmania, offers a range of annual or biennial, government-supported literary and book awards. In addition, there is a constellation of awards sponsored by a wide range of organisations: awards exist for writing in particular genres, and for particular types of writers, such as young writers, unpublished writers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers, and women writers.

While the British Booker Prize for fiction, and the American Pulitzer Prize are probably considered, in Australia, as the most prestigious international

literary awards, there are a number of Australian awards which are becoming increasingly important and prestigious. These include the \$20,000 Miles Franklin Award for a novel or play which depicts Australian life, the National Book Council 'Banjo' awards for fiction and non-fiction, the NSW and Victorian Premiers' Literary Awards, and the Children's Book Council of Australia Children's Book of the Year Awards. There are also annual awards for book design administered by the Australian Book Publishers Association.

Cassandra Pybus, a judge for the 1995 NBC 'Banjo' Awards, and herself a writer, believes that literary awards offer a necessary and "very pleasant" windfall for authors who are generally poorly remunerated in Australia. She believes that awards can also "privilege certain types of writing and writers", and that that is particularly a problem when judging panels remain static, as is the case with the Miles Franklin Award. Judging panels should change regularly, and be made up of peers who also write in the genre being judged, according to Pybus (Pybus 1995).

Awards reflect a particular kind of the critical success for some books and, while they might not provide a passport to commercial success, they are likely to increase the sales figures of winning, or short-listed books. The prestige attached to major awards is encouraged and sustained by participants in Australian book culture, many of whom benefit directly from awards. Writers' reputations, incomes, and chances of future success in the literary world are enhanced by winning or being selected for the short-list of a major award. Publishers obviously benefit from increased sales of short-listed and winning books, as do booksellers. Many booksellers take advantage of the status of awards by mounting special displays of books short-listed for a particular award; this is an especially common practice with the Children's Book Council's Book of the Year Awards. Publishers are often quick to attach a sticker to a book's cover which proclaims its status as a short-listed or winning book. It is difficult not to see literary awards as marketing tools which create interest in books, and which single out particular books for commercial success.

The Orchard has been a particularly successful book in terms of awards; in the 12 months since its initial release, *The Orchard* has won, or has been short-listed for, most of Australia's major literary awards.

The Orchard won the recently established Nita B. Kibble Award for Women Writers in 1995 with prize money of \$12,000. This award was first given in 1994, and is "an award to women writers of a published book of fiction or non-fiction classifiable as 'life writing'" (Nita B. Kibble Literary Award for Women Writers 1995), and is intended to encourage and promote women writers. It was established by the estate of Nita May Dobbie in honour of her aunt, Nita Kibble who was the first woman librarian to be appointed to the State Library of NSW in 1899. While this award is relatively new, the announcement of *The Orchard* as winner was heavily publicised with articles in most daily newspapers as well as with an interview with the author on national radio. The Nita B. Kibble Award seems to have already achieved a degree of prestige in Australian book culture, due probably to effective promotion and to the relatively large prize purse.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, *The Orchard* also won the '1995 Australian Booksellers Association (ABA) Australian Book of the Year Award'. This award has been described by one publisher as "a reflection of the over-all publishing of the book - literary quality, production and marketing - so it's as much an award for us [publishers] as it is for the author" (Andrew Wilkins quoted in "Booksellers' favourites" 1995: 12). This award is also only in its second year in 1995 and, interestingly, has been won in both years by Pan Macmillan books (the 1994 winner was Sara Henderson's *From Strength to Strength*).

The Orchard was entered in those awards which differentiate between fiction and non-fiction, as a non-fiction book, in spite of its clear fictional nature, and in spite of its publisher categorising it as fiction in other circumstances (for instance, for the 1995 ABPA Bestseller Survey). Pan Macmillan editor, Nikki Christer, justified this action by suggesting that the book "leaned strongly to non-fiction and is not straight fiction"; she also stated that she thought that *The Orchard* stood a better chance of being successful in the non-fiction awards since Pan Macmillan "had a very strong fiction list" (Christer 1995). Indeed, *The Orchard* was successful in awards as non-fiction, and won the 1995 NSW Premier's Literary Award, Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-fiction with its \$20,000 prize money. The judges saw *The Orchard* as "an extraordinary book which stood out from a crowded field" (quoted in "NSW Premier's Literary Awards 1995" 1995: 11). Drusilla Modjeska's previous work, *Poppy*, a fictionalised biography, shared this award in 1991.

The Orchard was short-listed for, but did not win, both the 1995 National Book Council (NBC) 'Banjo' Award for Non-fiction, and the 1995 Victorian Premier's Award, Nettie Palmer Prize for Non-fiction. Cassandra Pybus, a judge for the 1995 NBC 'Banjo' Award for Non-fiction, said that both judges of that award considered that *The Orchard* was not eligible to win because it was a work of fiction rather than non-fiction. The judges did, however, short-list *The Orchard* in order to avoid controversy as well as to indicate that they thought it was "a fine book" (Pybus 1995). Cassandra Pybus felt that its entry as non-fiction was "definitely inappropriate", and that its entry beside substantial and thoroughly researched histories, biographies, and other works of non-fiction denigrated those other works, and was unfair. She saw its entry into the award as non-fiction as a cynical exercise on the part of the publisher "and perhaps the author" (Pybus 1995).

Other awards for which *The Orchard* was short-listed in its first year of publication included the 1994 Australian Book Publishers Association Book Design Award, and the 3M Talking Book Award. The latter award was won by Drusilla Modjeska's *Poppy* in 1991.

Pan Macmillan, publisher of *The Orchard*, had a successful year in 1995 in respect of literary and other awards; its books and authors won a number of major prizes and were short-listed for many as well, this included Tim Winton's *The Riders* being short-listed for Britain's prestigious Booker Prize. As previously mentioned, the company itself won the 'Australian Bookseller and Publisher 1995 Publisher of the Year' title. The promotions department at Pan Macmillan Australia is obviously efficient and effective in promoting the company's books through literary awards.

A variety of promotional activities can be employed to maximise a book's chances of winning an award, for instance, books likely to be strong award contenders can be released at times which maximise their exposure to prospective judges, reviewers, and the reading public; attractive and unusual cover design can also play a role in setting a book apart from others and drawing attention to it. It could be said that both of these factors were at play in the case of *The Orchard*. In addition, *The Orchard's* author had won previous awards with *Poppy*, a factor which might also positively influence award judges.

Influence

A less concrete aspect of a book's reception is the influence it has; Adams and Barker raise the issue of influence:

Popularity is but one, and in some sense the least important aspect of response. There is the larger question of influence: that is the a recognizable and measurable difference in what happened after publication. (Adams & Barker 1993: 29)

Influence is difficult to measure and to identify in many cases; it is easier to identify a book's influence in retrospect, and there are many examples of books which have profoundly influenced the books and thought which followed. It is more difficult to gauge the influence of a contemporary book.

Influence may be evident in the public interest a book generates; it is common in modern Australia for books to feature as news, to include revelations concerning public figures or past events, or to provide re-interpretations of history which change the way people and events are seen. Such books could be said to be influential in their provision of new information or new ways of seeing, although, while such influence may be discernible, it is also be difficult to measure.

The influence of a book can often be gauged by the frequency and nature of references to it, or citations in other works; this is particularly the case in educational and academic publishing.

A book can act as a catalyst for debate but may or may not be instrumental in changing attitudes or perceptions. Change may occur as a result of the debate rather than the book, and it may be a moot point as to whether or not such change could be considered as a book's influence.

It is inevitable that books influence subsequent books, whether it be in the development of a new genre or a change in existing genres, or through the establishment of a fashion or trend in style, subject matter or approach, or through the development of ideas, or simply through imitation. Influence of one book on others may or may not be discernible or even identifiable, however, as Darnton pointed out, writers are also readers whose reading contributes to their subsequent writing (Darnton 1983: 5). Ideas may be picked up and used, or integrated into other books

with or without acknowledgment to the original book or author (Adams & Barker 1993: 30), and often without the adopting author's awareness.

It could be said that *The Orchard* developed directly from, and was influenced by, Drusilla Modjeska's previous work, *Poppy*. Both books are considered ground-breaking in their use of a variety of genres, and particularly for their fictionalising of the traditional non-fiction genres of biography, in the case of *Poppy*, and of essay, in *The Orchard*. Within contemporary Australian literature, these two books have been hailed as unique cross-genre works, and their sales figures and critical acclaim attest to their success and popularity; it seems likely, therefore, that similar writing which challenges (or disregards) traditional genre boundaries, will follow. If this is the case, then it might be suggested that *The Orchard* was influential as a model for such works.

The challenging of genres in writing is also an element of a more general post-modernist questioning of the notion of binary systems. In a somewhat ironic tone, Drusilla Modjeska herself said of the genre mix in *The Orchard*: "... we live in a post-modern age which is supposed to be fragmented and multi-voiced and so on and so forth, so why not enjoy it?" (Modjeska on "*Books & Writing*" 1994). *The Orchard* could be seen as part of such a post-modernist movement and, as such, it could well influence subsequent writing and notions of genre.

It can be said with more certainty that the format and design of *The Orchard* have influenced a number of subsequent book designs. In late 1995, several Australian books were produced in the same format as the hardback edition of *The Orchard*, that is, in the small-sized hardback format with a matt laminate dust jacket. Ironically, one of these is titled *The Orchard Thieves*; it was written by Elizabeth Jolley and published in October 1995 by Viking, an imprint of Penguin. Another is *The Grass Sister*, written by Gillian Mears, and published by Knopf. The physical format of the hardback edition of *The Orchard* was very striking and unusual, it also proved to be popular with book buyers; it is no wonder then that the format is imitated by other publishers, and it is interesting that the works produced in this format are works of fiction by women authors.

It is difficult to discern, and even more difficult to measure a book's influence, particularly in the short term. Books influence individuals in very different ways, and also influence social, political, and religious groups and movements. It is through subsequent writing and analysis, and in hindsight, that a book's influence is most likely to be identified. As Adams and Barker point out in the above quote, the influence of a book is a 'larger question' than its popularity, yet influence is substantially more difficult to recognise and to demonstrate. The importance of influence should not be under-estimated: it is the influence of books on one another, through the agency of authorship and publication which contributes to the dynamism of the book life-cycle.

Other Uses

It is interesting to consider the variety of uses, other than those associated with reading, to which books are put. Books are used, for instance, for

ceremonial and religious purposes; the Bible is widely used in Australia for the swearing of oaths in legal and other official proceedings. Many religions, including most Christian denominations, focus on the reading of 'holy books' for religious and sacred guidance and authority, such books also function as potent symbols of faith. Mao Tse-Tung's 'Little Red Book' functioned as an emblem, and also provided political guidance and inspiration during the years following the Chinese revolution.

Not all uses of books are as foundational and as historically significant as the above. German writer, Gerhardt Schmidtchen is quoted as saying:

One of the most important, and until now, unrecognised functions of the book is plainly and simply its presence. Of course there is close correlation between book reading and buying but this correlation is not total. (quoted in Mann & Burgoyne 1969: 27)

Associated as they are with education, erudition and the intellect, books are often seen as status symbols, and used as items of personal or interior decoration. In some circles, to be seen buying, carrying or owning particular books projects a desirable image. Australian domestic fashion and interior design advertising often features model living areas with books, either strewn casually around as if in use, or neatly shelved. Some such photography suggests that leather-bound books may be purchased by the metre rather than by the title. Books as interior or personal decoration aim to convey messages to observers, for instance, that the owner is a well-read person, has particular interests, or has read particular books. Allan Luke cites a study carried out by the *New York Times* in the late 1980s which examined books which were bought but never read. It was suggested that books were bought for their 'cultural capital' or image, rather than to be read; Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* was found to top the list of such books at the time of the study (Luke 1992: 119).

Bookcases are standard items of domestic and office furniture, and are readily available in retail furniture outlets in Australia.

The obvious presence of books in an office or domestic setting can be a source of comfort. The qualitative research carried out by Burns and Tredinnick revealed that:

Books are things people like to have around. They keep them to re-read and refer to. They also keep them because they are objects of cultural and emotional importance. They may not even read them. People like them as furnishings, as cultural artefacts, the visible furniture of the mind, experiences they have had or aspire to, and statements of things they value. (Burns & Tredinnick 1994: 93)

It is likely that *The Orchard* is used in this way, as a source of comfort or, as bookseller David Gaunt suggested, as a "precious object" (Gaunt 1995) used for the continuing enjoyment of its owner. Gaunt believes that the book was popular at Gleebooks equally as a gift, and as a keepsake (Gaunt 1995).

Books, of course, are very common as gifts, the choice of which may or may not convey particular meanings to the giver or recipient. Peter Mann, in

his 1971 British study, *Books: Buyers and Borrowers* makes a connection between books as gifts and as status symbols:

The book as a gift is an interesting phenomenon, since it is acknowledged that ownership of books confers status, and, therefore, to give books is also a status-conferring action. (Mann 1971: 53)

Certainly much book marketing, and some book production, is directed at the gift market; many bookshops, particularly the large chains, produce catalogues and run sales specifically for gift-giving occasions such as Mothers' and Fathers' Days and Christmas. Publishers also time the release of certain books to coincide with the major gift-giving occasions, and have, in fact, created such an occasion with their inaugural Book Day held on July 30 1995.

Probably the major use of *The Orchard* other than for reading, is as a gift, particularly its hardback edition. Its elegant and unusual format and design, and its low price, relative to other hardback books, made it an attractive choice as a gift. Its release date, several months prior to Christmas 1994, maximised its potential for that market, and it has continued to sell throughout the following year.

Books are commonly awarded as prizes to reward effort or success in schools and church organisations. Books are presented to libraries and other institutions as remembrances of deceased friends or relatives, often with a memorial bookplate.

Books are also used as the subjects of study in educational institutions, and while this use obviously involves reading, it involves a type of focused and extractive reading which has the objective of developing analyses of particular texts. In such uses of the book, analysis is the major activity, rather than reading. It is likely that, in coming years, *The Orchard* will be used in education as a text to study. The quality of the writing and its cross-genre nature may be of sufficient interest for *The Orchard* to be set as a text in either upper secondary or in tertiary education.

Books have important symbolic and other functions in contemporary Australia, functions which involve status, the enduring quality of printed books, and meanings which may be intensely personal or universal.

Reading is obviously the central activity in the reception and use of books, and there are a multitude of purposes to which book reading is applied in contemporary Australian society. Reading in Australia is generally a private activity, and the reception of books enters the public domain through the publication of book reviews, through discussions around books, reading, and authors, and through publicity surrounding literary awards.

The Orchard, while privately enjoyed by its readers, received more public attention than most Australian books through reviews, printed and

broadcast interviews with its author, and through publicity associated with the literary prizes it won, and for which it was short-listed. *The Orchard* is a commercial and critical success, as well as a popular, and possibly, influential, book. For these reasons, it could be said that *The Orchard* has realised much of the potential open to Australian books, in terms of their reception and use.

The reader, as the major player in the reception and use of books, has an curious role in the book cycle. Readers play some part in determining whether or not books are ultimately preserved; books which readers value are more likely to be preserved than those which are not valued. The commercial nature of book culture, however, ensures that readers have less influence on preservation and the continuation of the book cycle than do book buyers and borrowers (who influence library acquisitions). A critical gap in the book's life-cycle is the absence of an established means of feedback from readers to producers except through readers' economic influence as buyers and, to a lesser extent, as borrowers. This leaves publishers to exercise their experience and judgement in determining the needs and tastes of the reading public - not always successfully.

Reception and use are important processes which determine the fate of books. Books are read, reviewed, discussed, praised, awarded, vilified, passed on, displayed, re-read, treasured, given as prizes or gifts. Books influence and are influenced. Books which are valued in any way - for their content, physical appearance, uniqueness, rarity, or for a variety of uses - move on from reception and use to preservation. That is, valued books are preserved in some way or other, and thereby continue to be used and received; others disappear.

It is the *influence* aspect of the reception of books which leads back to the beginning of the cycle, to authorship or to publication. It is the influence of one book on others through the agency of the author or publisher, and the influence of each book on the social, intellectual, political, and economic context through the agency of the reader that keeps the book cycle moving and changing.

Chapter 8 PRESERVATION

Introduction

Preservation is the final event in the life-cycle of the book, and while it follows 'reception and use' in the cycle and many books move from this event to preservation, books can also be preserved without having first been received or used. The preservation of books is, for the most part, a haphazard event, and involves both deliberate and accidental acts which can range from the simple placing of a book on a shelf, to the conscious selection, collection, and care of rare, antiquarian, or otherwise valued books.

Libraries play an important role in preservation since this is a major objective of many, but not all, libraries. Book collecting, both formal and informal, is also an important aspect of preservation, as are issues of paper conservation and storage. Preservation of books can lead back to their publication in the very common case of existing books being re-published in a new edition. In order to be re-published, books must be preserved in some form; an increasingly common form of preservation of text is the electronic form employing digital technology. When a text is preserved in this way, or in other formats such as microform, it ceases to be a book in the sense used in this study; however, electronic preservation of texts is a significant factor in the area of preservation.

This chapter examines the preservation of books in contemporary Australia, and the preservation of *The Orchard* in particular. It begins by looking at issues affecting preservation, and continues with an examination of the central role of libraries in preservation; private book collecting is also examined. The conservation and storage of books is considered, as is the phenomenon of preservation using electronic formats. Preservation measures as applied to *The Orchard* are also considered where relevant.

Preservation Issues

Books are relatively ephemeral objects, made as they are of perishable materials; they are also many and varied, and serve a wide range of purposes in contemporary Australian society. Australian governments have intervened in the preservation of books with legislation which requires the legal deposit and preservation in libraries, of every book published in Australia and covered by copyright. The rationale behind such legislation involves the preservation of books as historical and cultural records, the value of which is considered axiomatic.

The material impermanence of books, however, renders such preservation efforts relatively temporary, and raises the issue of the difference between the book as a physical object and artefact, and the content of the book. It is the *content* of books which is preserved through re-publication, not the book as an object. Preservation of books (and their content) can lead back to publication, however, re-publication cannot be considered an act of preservation. Preservation of books as physical objects is necessarily a short term exercise.

While the majority of books published in Australia are subject to legislated preservation in libraries, other forms of preservation are more random and are often dependent on the nature of particular books. *The Orchard*, for instance, as a recent Australian publication, has been subject to a number of preservation efforts which are common to books published in Australia and these will be examined in this chapter. However, the popularity, format, and appearance of *The Orchard* all contribute to the likelihood of its being preserved for a longer period than less popular, durable, or attractive books. Often such attributes, which also involve matters of taste, can determine the effectiveness and longevity of a book's preservation. It is unlikely, for instance, that Pan Macmillan would allow *The Orchard* to go out of print for many years to come, given its critical and commercial success. In addition, the release of the proposed feature film based on the book will, no doubt, rekindle interest in *The Orchard*, prompt additional sales, prolong its lifespan, and increase its value as both a text and as an artefact. It is likely that *The Orchard* as a book, will be preserved in both public and private collections for many years to come, although it is impossible to estimate how many.

Libraries

Many Australian libraries are actively involved in the preservation of books while others focus their activities on facilitating the use of books; most, however, seek to strike a balance between preservation and use.

The State libraries and the National Library of Australia, along with several other large institutional libraries, are the major libraries involved in book preservation in Australia. The preservation role of these libraries is guaranteed by legislation which provides for the legal deposit of published books and other materials in libraries. Legal deposit provisions were designed to ensure the preservation of books published in Australia which are covered by copyright, including those products of commercial publishers as well as those of individuals, clubs, churches, and other organisations. While such legislation remains in place, there are few enforcement mechanisms and, for the most part, it appears that the actuality of legal deposit is dependent on the voluntary compliance of publishers.

Pan Macmillan, as publisher of *The Orchard*, a book published in NSW, was subject to the legal deposit requirements of both the Commonwealth *Copyright Act 1968* which requires the deposit of one copy of the book in the National Library of Australia, and of the *NSW Copyright Act 1879* which requires the deposit of a single copy of the book in each of the following libraries: the State Library of NSW, the Library of the University of Sydney, and the Parliamentary Library of NSW. *The Orchard* is therefore legally required to be present in the collections of these libraries, and be preserved as part of the record of book publication in Australia and in NSW.

Other libraries maintain collection policies which also ensure the preservation of certain types of books; such libraries include university and other research libraries. 'Rare books' are also often housed in such libraries, usually in areas to which access is restricted or supervised. Special libraries such as law libraries, corporate and some government libraries, also play a role in the preservation of books which pertain to their particular areas of interest.

It is likely that *The Orchard* was deliberately collected by a number of State, university, and other libraries as a function of policies which promote the collection of Australian literature. The University of Tasmania Library, for instance, maintains a policy to acquire copies of all fiction published in Australia; *The Orchard* would have entered the University of Tasmania Library's collection under that policy. The State Library of Tasmania also implements a policy to collect fiction published in Australia, and a copy of *The Orchard* is in the State Library of Tasmania's Australian Literature Collection which is housed in a closed stack area; books in that Collection are available for use within the Library, but are not available for loan.

Public lending libraries are less likely than others to be concerned with the long term preservation of books, and focus their activities on providing for the active use of books. As mentioned earlier, the State Library of Tasmania holds 11 copies of *The Orchard* for use by its lending service. Obviously public lending libraries attempt to maximise the usefulness of their collections by caring for and maintaining their books in good condition, however, their primary function is to provide books for use, an activity often antithetical to preservation.

The National Library of Australia (NLA) established a National Preservation Office in 1992 with a brief to assist "in the development of a national preservation strategy for that portion of the country's documentary heritage held primarily in libraries" (National Library of Australia n.d.), and to offer information, publications, and venues for the discussion of issues related to preservation. The Office was established as a result of the recognition that many library materials, including books, are at risk of deteriorating physically unless action is taken and preservation policies and practices are put in place. The National Preservation Office recognises a range of preservation issues including the need for rationalisation of collection and retention policies, storage, conservation practices, and the need for the promotion of the use of permanent paper (National Library of Australia n.d.).

The National Library of Australia is considering the establishment of a National Centre for the Book along similar lines to the American Library of Congress Center for the Book (Templeman 1994). Such a centre would involve itself in the preservation, promotion, and study of the book as a format in Australia, and might incorporate the infrastructure for such ventures as the History of the Book in Australia project.

A number of the larger libraries in Australia maintain specialist conservation departments within them which undertake the physical maintenance and repair of books and other library materials; smaller libraries may do running repairs, but contract out major repairs. Such activities are instrumental in the preservation of books in Australian libraries.

Private Book Collecting

Private book collecting is a major avenue through which books are preserved outside of institutional library environments, although it is a particularly haphazard activity. The collecting of books ranges from

the very informal placing of books on a shelf or in a pile after their use, to the careful and deliberate act of collecting specific rare, first edition, antiquarian, or other valued books. Book collections may be active, that is, in use and changing, or may be dormant and static.

It is likely that most Australian households possess at least a small collection of books, whether they are children's books, cookery books, paperback novels, text books, reference or religious books, or a combination of these and other types of books. Little research has been carried out on book ownership in Australia, although a 1975 ABS survey found a relatively high level of ownership of substantial collections of books: just over half of households were found to have collections of 50 or more books (ABS 1975).

Informal collections tend to be developed through a variety of conscious and unconscious acts such as purchasing, borrowing and not returning, retaining gifts and prizes, and inheritance. All collections, including small and informal collections, contribute to the preservation of books.

The Orchard is present in a large number of private book collections in Australia. The durability of the hardback edition, its attractive format and design, and the appealing nature of the book's content renders this edition of *The Orchard* a desirable book for casual and informal collectors. As David Gaunt suggested, the overall effect of this book as a 'precious' object contributes to its popularity as a keepsake among people who have purchased it, or been given it as a gift (Gaunt 1995). Its very popularity is another factor which is likely to increase its desirability as a collectors' item. A less attractive, popular, or appealing book might not be so valued and kept.

It is difficult to estimate the number of people involved in serious book collecting in Australia, although it is a large enough number to support a monthly newsletter *The Australian Book Collector* and, since 1944, the Book Collectors' Society of Australia with its journal *Bibliionews and Australian notes and quotes*. Directories of booksellers serving the collectors' market include the range of second-hand booksellers from those who deal in popular paperback fiction to those dealing in rare and antiquarian books; one 1993 directory included entries for 336 booksellers operating in Australia and New Zealand (Howes 1993). Books of a collectable nature are also often sold at auction.

The 'collectability' of books, that is, their appeal to collectors, is usually dependent on their economic value, and their ability to retain that value. This factor subjects book collecting, as a method of preservation, to the vagaries of market forces, and renders it speculative and unreliable.

It is unlikely that *The Orchard* would have a monetary value above its cover price among book collectors while its first edition is still available in retail shops, and while there are no outstanding features about either its author or its physical appearance. Collectors generally put value on the unusual and the scarce, neither of which usually apply to recently published books. An exception is the first edition of *The Hand That Signed the Paper*, the author of which was found to have used the pseudonym 'Helen Demidenko', and to have portrayed a false identity in associated publicity. Copies of the first edition of the book which feature the author as 'Helen Demidenko' and which are signed by the

author in that name, are presently worth \$150, and are likely to rise in value in the future. (*Biblionews and Australian notes and quotes* 1995: 92).

There is a danger of book collections being dispersed, and books lost with the death of collectors. It is not uncommon, however, for private collectors in Australia, to bequeath their collections to public institutions. A number of large private book collections which have been bequeathed or donated to libraries have formed the bases of the collections of several large Australian libraries. What became the National Library of Australia, for instance, was the recipient of an Australiana collection of some 10,000 books and 6,500 other items from collector E. A. Petherick in the early 20th century; this collection formed the nucleus of the National Library's local collection (Jones, D. 1985: 257). The State Library of NSW was the beneficiary, in 1907, of D. S. Mitchell's collection of 61,000 volumes; this collection became the basis of the large Mitchell Library collection (Jones, D. 1985: 224-225). Private book collectors in Australia have made important contributions to the preservation of books, both in the public domain and privately, by selecting, storing, maintaining, and caring for large numbers of books.

Conservation and Storage

A major issue involved in preservation is the maintenance of the physical condition of books for the maximisation of their preservation. This has been recognised as an issue for several decades in Australia, and is partially the result of the widespread use of acidic paper in book production. Prior to about 1850, paper was manufactured from rags and was, consequently, of high quality and lasted long and well. The subsequent use of wood pulp for the provision of the necessary cellulose fibre in paper production, has also meant the use of acid-producing chemicals which eventually cause paper to become brittle and to crumble. While acid-free paper is now available, it is not widely used in Australian book production. The NLA's National Preservation Office and the Australian Council of Libraries and Information Services (ACLIS) are actively involved in promoting the use of "permanent paper" for "all documents and publications of enduring value" (ACLIS 1992), and in developing standards for application to the permanency of paper. The question of defining 'enduring value' is a vexed one, of course, and will be subject to variations over time, as well as to influence from various competing interests.

The hardback edition of *The Orchard* appears to be a relatively durable production and, although it is unclear whether or not it was printed on permanent paper, that edition is likely to have a longer lifespan than its paperback counterpart. The paper used in the paperback edition (with the exception of that used in its second printing of 1995), is of inferior quality to that used in the hardback edition, and is likely not to last as long or as well.

In common with most contemporary Australian books, the type of paper used is not specified anywhere on *The Orchard*, in spite of a heightened general awareness of the relative longevity and superiority of permanent paper for use in book production. It appears that the value of permanent paper, while recognised and promoted by librarians and conservators, has not been accepted by publishers operating in

Australia. Perhaps it will require the book buying public to demand its use before publishers use it widely and advertise the fact.

Storage is another factor which affects the physical condition of books, and which is a particularly significant factor in certain areas of Australia where high temperatures and humidity combine to produce poor conditions for book storage. Most libraries which maintain collections for the purposes of preservation are climate controlled to some degree in order to provide a suitable environment for the preservation and conservation of books. Private collections are stored in a wide range of conditions, although most serious collectors would be aware of the conditions required to contribute to the longevity of their collections. Again, the National Preservation Office and ACLIS are involved in promoting the storage of books in appropriate conditions.

Electronic Formats

An increasingly common method of preservation of text, but not of the book as a physical object, is electronic digital preservation whereby a text is either typed or scanned into a computer and stored, either on sites in the public domain or on privately accessible sites. Developments in hardware, software, and networking technology have provided the necessary infrastructure for projects aimed at preserving out-of-copyright texts in the public domain, a site which makes texts freely available to anyone with access to the requisite equipment.

Since 'electronic texts', as they are known, do away with the physical book and preserve only the content of books, it could be argued that this activity does not contribute to the preservation of books as such. It is, however, a common phenomenon which provides access to text traditionally located in printed and bound books, and the products of which are often called 'electronic books'; this phenomenon, therefore, needs to be considered in any discussion of the contemporary book.

There are a number of Internet sites which allow access to full electronic texts of books; the most well-known and long-standing of which is the American, Project Gutenberg. This Project was conceived in 1971, and offers 'Public Domain Editions' of, mostly, book length literary works which are out of copyright and, therefore freely available. The stated aim of Project Gutenberg is "to provide a collection of 10,000 of the most used books by the year 2001" (Project Gutenberg 1995). The Project relies on volunteer labour for the keying in and scanning of texts; the texts produced are not systematically selected but rely on individual choice and out of copyright status. A major problem with texts on Project Gutenberg arises from the voluntary and non-professional nature of the Project, that is, lack of accuracy. Texts appear not to have been proof-read or proficiently transcribed or edited, resulting in a large number of typographical, syntactical, and other errors in the texts. The inaccuracy of the texts on Project Gutenberg limits their use to recreational reading; the texts have been described, by one academic as "promiscuous and unchecked, unmarked" (Graham 1994).

While Project Gutenberg and other electronic text projects provide electronic access to, and preservation of texts which first appeared as books, they have been described as "solutions in search of a problem" (Dembart 1994), in that there appears to be little reason to transfer such

random collections of works to electronic media when the majority of the works are readily and cheaply available in book form. In fact, the transfer of texts to electronic formats renders them less accessible than their printed and bound versions, since appropriate hardware, software, communications technology, and the skills to manipulate these are prerequisites to access.

Electronic technology may become a more important factor in the preservation of texts, particularly with books which are both out of print and out of copyright; for instance, texts and appropriate formatting could be saved electronically to be printed and bound as books when required by systems such as the Xerox Docutech System, described previously. Such use would require a tighter and more professional infrastructure than currently exists in certain electronic text projects, as well as an agency of authority, such as a publisher or editor, to ensure and maintain standards of accuracy and presentation.

Preservation is an important element in the book's life cycle, and is instrumental in propelling the cycle back to publication. As illustrated in this chapter, preservation of books takes a number of forms, and involves anyone who consciously or unconsciously possesses a book or a collection of books.

The preservation of books in Australia, however, is a haphazard event: the apparently systematic and legislatively enshrined role of libraries in preservation, in the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms, is dependent on the voluntary cooperation of book producers; private book collecting is idiosyncratic and often subject to the vagaries of the marketplace.

Because books are essentially perishable, conscious preservation efforts are aimed at maximising a book's longevity. The use of electronic and digital methods of text storage and preservation, while operating outside of the book's life-cycle, may ensure that the *content* of books survives; this may, in turn, lead to re-publication and the re-entry of such texts into the book's life-cycle.

The Orchard, a year after its first publication, is in the very early stages of its life as a book. While it has been collected by a number of libraries with preservation roles, and has found its way into many private collections, its future is uncertain. It is likely, however, to be preserved longer than many of its contemporaries due to its unique and attractive design and format, its critical and commercial success, and to the durability of its hardback first edition; just how long it is preserved in its present form is impossible to predict.

Chapter 9 CONCLUSION

This study of the life-cycle of the book in contemporary Australia, and of the particular life-cycle of *The Orchard* reveals a complex interplay of events, processes, relationships, and influences which ultimately determine the nature of the book. While specific details of this interplay vary from book to book, the general pattern of the cycle remains the same for the majority of commercially produced books in contemporary Australia. The cycle which is common to most books consists of the processes and events examined in the latter chapters of this study, as well as the societal and contextual influences on these. It is these influences and their effect on the processes and people involved, which largely determine the general nature of books at a particular point of time, and the specific features of book content, design, publication, marketing, reception, use, and preservation.

In addition, the book, once produced, distributed, and received, becomes part of the context in which these events occur, and may thereby influence the conditions which produced it. The book is therefore at once an outcome of, and an influence on, the book culture and the commercial, social, cultural, intellectual, and political contexts of its time.

What follows is a review and discussion of the major influences on the contemporary Australian book which have emerged from this study. These are the primary influences which determine the character and nature of the contemporary Australian book in general, and of *The Orchard* in particular. The effect of these influences on the conditions under which the book is created, produced, distributed, and received ensure that the book reflects these conditions and is, indeed, a product of its time.

The review and discussion of major influences on the book is followed by the identification of the limitations of this research and of directions for future research, and some final comments.

Commercial Influences

The most significant influences on the contemporary Australian book are those associated with commerce and commercial imperatives. The majority of processes and events in the life-cycle of the book are largely concerned with making profits.

Contemporary books are, most often, designed, produced, and marketed to maximise profits. Markets are identified at the earliest stages in a book's life-cycle, certainly before a manuscript becomes a book, and often before a manuscript is created. Most processes which follow are motivated and directed by the need for a book to appeal to a market and to attract buyers. Production and distribution costs are kept at a level which allows for profits to be made by various participants in these processes.

Book publishing, printing, distribution, and retailing, in common with other commercial enterprises in contemporary Australia, function within a broad commercial environment, and are subject to laws and

regulations concerning taxation, company operations, consumer protection, and industrial matters. They are also subject to factors within the general economic environment such as variations in inflation and interest rates. The setting in which they operate is also competitive: their products and prices compete with those of other local and, in some cases, overseas publishers, printers, distributors, and retailers. It is in this commercially dominated environment that the contemporary Australian book is produced and sold; commercial factors, therefore play a central role in determining the nature of the book.

Publishing is clearly the central process in the life-cycle of the book, and like all commercial enterprises, profit-making is the major motivating factor in most book publishing. The publisher controls and facilitates the production of books, employing authors, editors, designers, typesetters, printers, and others in the activities which comprise book production and distribution. All of these activities are carried out on a commercial basis.

In the case of *The Orchard*, Pan Macmillan Australia published the book in order to make a profit for the company. It is most likely that it contracted Drusilla Modjeska to produce the manuscript in a royalty agreement which set out the author's share of retail sales of the book. Pan Macmillan also provided editorial assistance and support to the author in her creation of the manuscript; such assistance could be seen as an investment by the company in a potentially profitable manuscript. A freelance copy-editor, designer, and a typesetting company were employed and paid for their work on the book. The book's printers, McPherson's Limited, were also engaged and paid by Pan Macmillan. The distribution was carried out by a specialist company under the same ownership as the publisher, and the book was distributed to retailers who received a trade discount which allowed them to realise a profit on their sales.

Despite the number of profit-making activities involved in the production, distribution, and sales of *The Orchard*, it is certain that Pan Macmillan made, and continues to make considerable profits on this book. Obviously not all books produced by the company make such profits; it is likely that profits from successful books effectively cross-subsidise less successful books, thereby allowing the company to have some commercial 'failures'.

Like most contemporary Australian books, *The Orchard* was intended and designed to appeal to a market and to sell. It would not have been published at all if publishing staff at Pan Macmillan had not considered it to be at least potentially profitable. In this sense, *The Orchard*, and most other books, owe their existence to their potential profitability in a commercial market.

While most commercial book publishers are motivated by profit, some have other interests and motives; these include nationalism, the promotion of beliefs or of the interests of minority groups, experimentation, art, and cultural development. Such motives are usually associated with small, locally-owned publishing companies which, as a consequence, involve themselves in commercial risk-taking, and are often reliant on government assistance to subsidise their activities. The large, multi-national companies which dominate publishing in Australia, on the other hand, are generally driven solely by profit.

The book publishing industry, like many other industries, has undergone changes in ownership patterns in recent decades, resulting in increased concentration of ownership, often within conglomerate, multi-national corporations. When this pattern of ownership became obvious and dominant in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s, it was feared that Australian content would diminish with the control of a large portion of book publishing in Australia in foreign hands. These fears were not realised, however the effects of foreign ownership were felt in other ways. Firstly, the large corporations were able to provide the capital necessary to establish successful local publishing ventures. Secondly, the large multi-nationals have been able to maintain local publishing units which remain sensitive to local market conditions, employ successful Australian publishing personnel, and produce books which are profitable within the local market and, occasionally, in overseas markets. Because such companies are motivated solely by profit, the local publishing units within them must maintain their overall profitability or risk being shut down in favour of more profitable enterprises within the same company structure.

Fortunately for the health of Australian cultural life, there *is* a profitable market for locally written and published books, with about half of all books bought in the early years of the 1990s being Australian books. It is an irony of contemporary Australian book culture that remote ownership and the involvement of multi-national conglomerates has resulted in an increase in localism in publishing in Australia.

The Orchard is a product of a foreign-owned publishing company operating in Australia, a company which established its Australian operations as a distributor of its books produced in Britain. The Macmillan Company is an example of a British company which has employed experienced and successful Australian publishers to run its local operations. Pan Macmillan Australia now operates as a profitable local publishing unit which is relatively autonomous within the larger company structure, now centred in Germany. The future of Pan Macmillan Australia within the Holtzbrinck parent company is likely to be dependent on its continued commercial success.

The primacy of commercial concerns does not negate the fact that book publishing is also a cultural activity, and that its products are significant cultural artefacts. Cultural influences on the book are examined later in this chapter, however it should be noted that the conflict between commercial and cultural imperatives is a source of tension within publishing companies where the role of editorial staff in particular, is to ensure both the profitability *and* the quality of books published. These aims are not always compatible, and it is often the case that successful publishing formulae are replicated in order to maintain profits, and that relatively few publishing risks are taken. This results in generally conservative publishing intended to appeal to large markets.

Government intervention in the form of Literature Board grants to publishers ensures the publication of a number of culturally significant books which are unlikely to also be profitable. This, though relatively small in financial terms, is an important intervention which ameliorates, to some extent, the otherwise overarching profit motive in the majority of publishing in Australia.

Other processes and people involved in the book life-cycle are also concerned with commerce and profit-making. Authors, for instance may also be motivated by commercial interests; indeed those who seek to make a living from book authorship *must* consider the commercial potential of their work. This can influence how and what authors write, and has resulted, in some cases, in writing by formula. Authors also replicate popular and successful styles, and fashions in subject matter in order to maximise their chances of making a profit. While commercial motivation is certainly a factor for many, authors are also motivated by other interests, these include the desire to create, self-express, or to communicate. Once again government intervenes with grants which allow a small number of authors a degree of financial independence at the creative stage of authorship, it does not, however, remove the necessity for authors to enter the world of commerce in order to have their works published.

In the case of *The Orchard*, while its author's early career was assisted by Literature Board grants, Modjeska is now a commercially successful author. Prior to the publication and success of *The Orchard*, Modjeska was already a proven author in the commercial sense: she had written two books which had been profitable, particularly her last book, *Poppy*, and she was well-known in literary circles as an author, reviewer, and occasional feminist commentator. Nonetheless, *The Orchard* was considered by its publishers as something of a commercial risk with its unusual and difficult to categorise content, and its production in the relatively expensive small hardback format with matt laminate cover. However, any element of risk was tempered by the previous successes of both the author, Modjeska, and editor, Hilary McPhee, by the distribution coverage and promotional power of Pan Macmillan, and by the proven strength of the women's book market in Australia. The 'risk' paid off handsomely: *The Orchard* was one of Pan Macmillan's most successful books of 1995.

Book printing is also driven by commercial considerations, in fact printing is the one event in the life-cycle of the book which could be considered as solely a commercial enterprise. Printers are generally unconcerned with the content of the printing undertaken, and are connected to the book cycle only through the agency of the publisher. Most book printing operations in Australia are combined with general printing works and, in the case of *The Orchard*'s printer, McPherson's Limited, with other unrelated manufacturing enterprises. The commercial printing of books is simply that, with related cultural factors, such as book design, typography, and binding being determined by publishers. It should be noted that a small number of books in Australia are printed by specialist printers who produce 'fine' printing, and are concerned with printing as art. Such enterprises are rarely motivated solely by profit.

Book distribution and retailing in Australia are also largely commercial enterprises. Book distributors operate either as part of publishing companies or on their behalf, for profit. Booksellers are involved in a commercial trade, but may also be concerned with cultural issues associated with books. Relatively good and potentially profitable conditions are offered to retail booksellers by publishers in return for the display and promotion of publishers' books. The standard 40% trade discount offered to booksellers, while not exceptionally high in retail terms, is attractive when combined with sale-or-return conditions

common in the retail book sales industry. Most Australian booksellers, in common with most publishers and distributors, are motivated primarily by the desire to generate profit from their businesses. The book is therefore a commodity which is traded much like any other, and its nature, including its content and physical appearance, must appeal to buyers.

Aspects of both the reception and use of books, and their preservation are also strongly influenced by commercial factors. Book reviewing, for instance, can be seen as a commercial activity in several senses; firstly in the sense of reviewing being a major promotional activity orchestrated and facilitated by publishers. Secondly, book reviews are often designed and employed to sell the publications in which they appear. Formal book collecting as an avenue of book preservation is often largely motivated by profit, with the commercial value of books being of paramount importance. This results in the preservation of books by certain collectors being dependent on a book's commercial value: commercially valuable books are preserved in this way, others are not.

The distribution of books by public libraries is one of the activities within the life-cycle of the book which, along with a number of aspects of the reception and use of books, is not motivated by commercial interests. Public libraries in Australia exist within the western democratic tradition of free, publicly-funded library provision, as such they are considered to be axiomatically an important feature of Australian cultural life and are generally not dependent on commercial considerations for their existence. Public libraries are not, however, uninvolved in commercial aspects of publishing and bookselling, since libraries are major book buyers and therefore targets of advertising and promotion.

Another activity within book culture which is largely divorced from commercial considerations is reading. While certain activities of readers, such as receiving information about books and getting access to books, often involve commercial exchange, the reading of books is not a commercial activity. It is interesting and perhaps not surprising, given the prominence of commercial considerations, that there are few mechanisms within the life-cycle of the book for input from readers back into the formal process of publication. The reader is strangely unconnected to the cycle, although this estrangement may be explained by the reader's lack of involvement in the commercial aspects of book culture.

Historical Influences

The book and book culture in contemporary Australia is strongly influenced and indeed, shaped by what has gone before. The major influence on many aspects of Australian culture in general, and book culture in particular, is British influence. Publishing traditions and practices were transported to Australia with British books and publishing companies, and these traditions and practices continue to shape contemporary Australian publishing.

Australia, for instance, inherited from Britain the European tradition of the publisher as the single central figure in book production and in the decision-making process. Unlike many other industries which produce

goods for retail markets, book publishers do little formal market research to determine the nature of book markets, and the needs and desires of those markets. Instead, it is the role of the publisher to exercise his or her experience, putative knowledge of the market, and judgement in making publishing decisions. This results in the publisher, alone, but subject to numerous contextual influences, determining the nature of books published in Australia. Publishers in contemporary Australia, driven by the necessity to make profitable decisions, determine what will be published, how the author will be paid, what the final product will look like, what kinds of people will make up the likely market, when the book will be released, what price will be asked, where it will be distributed, and how it will be promoted. These decisions are based, not on any objective information collected about book markets, but on the experience and judgement of individual editors and publishers, or of teams within publishing companies.

It is ironic that in the highly technical, centralised, and globally controlled publishing environment, decisions continue to be made based largely on the application of judgement and experience by publishing personnel, rather than on market testing and research. This may, however, account for the success and growth of local publishing by foreign-owned companies operating in Australia.

This centrality of the publisher highlights a major gap in the life-cycle of the commercially produced book, that is the lack of connection between publisher and consumer. Book buyers have influence through their purchasing decisions, and borrowers, to a lesser extent through their borrowing practices, however, readers are voiceless and have no avenue for input into the book production process. Readers are more than passively involved in book culture, and influence other readers: as well as reading books, they read reviews, discuss books, buy, borrow, and lend books. The lack of connection between publisher and consumer is a curious phenomenon in an industry so dependent on consumer approval and the consequent market success of its products.

The nature of the book itself is also inherited from Britain and from other European traditions; this is demonstrated by common features such as general book design, pagination, typography, style, and placement of bibliographic information. The notion of the dual nature of books is also inherited from Britain; books were considered as both time-wasting and trivial, in the case of 'imaginative' works or fiction, and as 'improving' in the case of non-fiction and 'educational' works. This dichotomy, in a less extreme form, is still an accepted belief in contemporary Australia, and informs book publishing and marketing practices. An example of this is the differences in status, design, and marketing strategies between books classified as 'mass market' paperbacks on one hand, and 'literary fiction' or serious non-fiction, on the other. Such a notion also informs assistance policies of the Literature Board, which specifically exclude assistance to books and authors of particular genres such as detective fiction and science fiction.

That Britain controlled much of Australian book culture, including publishing and book retailing, almost exclusively until the mid 20th century, is a critical factor influencing the nature of the contemporary Australian book. The British booktrade largely controlled imports and, for many years did not appear to differentiate Australian tastes from British; Australians were exposed to books from other cultures only

through the filter of the British booktrade which controlled copyright in Australia for overseas publications through the 'Traditional Market Agreement'. While the direct control and influence of Britain on Australian book culture has diminished in recent decades, early influences are ingrained, and contemporary book culture in Australia has been shaped by the many years of British control.

Intellectual and Cultural Influences

The book, as a major medium for language, imagery, ideas, and the intellect, is a significant cultural artefact, and reflects the cultural and intellectual conditions of its time. This is apparent in both the content and design of the book, reflecting contemporary cultural and intellectual interests, tastes, movements, and fashions. Such influences are not completely unrelated to commercial interests since authors and publishers seek to appeal to book buyers by producing books which are topical, fashionable, and which reflect current interests.

It should be noted also that books, once received, become part of the contemporary cultural and intellectual landscape, and may thereby influence subsequent books.

As a consequence of intellectual and cultural influences, books reflect a broad range of interests, fashions, and tastes. *The Orchard*, for instance, reflects, among other things, the current interest in challenging the boundaries of traditional literary genres; it is neither strictly fiction nor non-fiction, but is a blending of a number of genres within both traditional fiction and non-fiction forms. This interest can be seen as part of a broader intellectual movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s in Australia (and other western countries). This movement questions binary systems of western thought which see only exclusive and opposing dualities such as fiction and non-fiction in this case, and in the case of human sexuality, heterosexuality and homosexuality.

The Orchard also reflects other intellectual and cultural factors, including the background of its author: her education, influences on her of mentors and others, personal experiences, beliefs, politics, her previous books, and the influence of her reading. *The Orchard* can be seen, for instance, as a direct development from Drusilla Modjeska's previous book, *Poppy*. It is also a book with a strongly feminist perspective and themes, this is a reflection of Modjeska's politics and world view. That much of *The Orchard* is autobiographical obviously reflects the direct experiences of its author. All books, at least to some extent, are necessarily products of their authors' experience or training, and of their intellectual and cultural backgrounds.

Books also reflect the influence of other books and authors, and such influence contributes to the development of styles, genres, and topics which can often be identified with the historical time in which books are produced. Darnton suggested that "notions of genre and style and a general sense of literary enterprise" emerge from authors being readers themselves and from associating with other readers and writers (Darnton 1983: 5). Certainly in contemporary Australia there are opportunities for authors to meet and to associate with one another at literary festivals, within writers' organisations, and at various literary functions and forums, and to exchange ideas and opinions in literary and other journals. Such events and publications, however, do not

generally offer equal opportunities for readers to provide feedback, in any significant way, to authors.

Book design also reflects intellectual and cultural interests and fashions which can, in most cases, be identified with a particular time. While the general form of the printed book has changed little over the centuries, specific aspects of book design have emerged in different periods in response to intellectual and cultural fashions, as well as to commercial imperatives. Australian book design of the 1990s, for instance, is characterised by a number of features including the use of matt laminate covers on paperback books and dust-jackets, and a return to book design of previous decades. Both features are exemplified by *The Orchard*: the design of its hardback edition was based on a style common in the 1940s, and *The Orchard* was one of the first Australian books in a trend which saw the proliferation of this small hardback format. Both the dust-jacket on the hardback edition, and the cover of the paperback edition of *The Orchard* feature the use of matt laminate paper.

Both of these design features are contemporary fashions, and part of a trend which involves book producers seeking to highlight the unique qualities of the printed and bound book in a changing media environment. Both features involve a conscious highlighting of the sense of touch and the physical feel of the book in the hand of the reader. The physical intimacy offered by the book, and emphasised by these design features cannot be matched or replicated by electronic or other media, and is therefore the unique province of the book. The return of the small hardback format to contemporary book design could also be seen as highlighting the solid and enduring quality of the book in contrast to the immediacy and ephemeral quality of television and digital media. In reviving a hardback book design, publishers might also be seeking to revive, to some extent, 'bookish' values associated with the intellect, education, and erudition, and to make these appealing in the generally entertainment-related world of television and electronic media.

Government Influences

Book producers and retailers operate in a market which is regulated to some extent by government. As well as being subject to laws and regulations related to their business and consumer operations, publishers and booksellers are subject to laws which both protect their rights and which limit their activities; these include copyright and defamation laws, and those which relate to censorship and classification of printed materials. Such laws have an obvious influence the nature of books produced in Australia.

As a signatory to UNESCO's 'Florence Agreement', the Australian government officially recognises the special status and role of books in the conveyance of educational, scientific, and cultural information and ideas. In so doing, it allows the tariff-free entry of the majority of books into Australia. While the Book Bounty is the only direct assistance measure resulting from this agreement, this notion of the book and the importance of its unimpeded distribution must, to some extent, inform government book industry and arts-related assistance policies.

The provision of financial assistance is an avenue through which government may influence the nature of the book; the book publishing industry, however, receives little government assistance. Some assistance is provided through grants from the Literature Board of the Australia Council to publishers for the publication of particular Australian books; it could be argued, however, that the aim of such grants is to assist the development of Australian culture through the agency of the publisher, rather than to assist publishers *per se*. Such Literature Board grants have some influence on Australian books in that the grants facilitate the publication of books which would not otherwise be published for commercial reasons.

The Literature Board's provision of assistance to authors also influences the nature of Australian books. While not all work by authors who are assisted by Literature Board grants results in publication in book form, a significant amount does. Grants allow authors to free themselves, at least temporarily, from the necessity to be concerned with financial factors. It is most often later that authors encounter the commercially-dominated world of publishing in their attempt to sell their work in a competitive market. The Literature Board also promotes Australian books and literature as cultural products both overseas and at home and, while this function does not influence the nature of books, it does ensure that Australian books are more widely distributed and available, a factor which may lead to the future influence of books on subsequent books and their authors.

The role of the Federal government's Literature Board as a major funding body for authors and for assistance with the publication of certain Australian books, is one which, while it might ameliorate some negative effects of commercial imperatives in writing and publishing, also has the potential to place an undesirable level of influence in the hands of the government of the day. Successive Federal governments have sought to minimise such direct influence by appointing writers and critics to the Literature Board, and by establishing a system of grant allocation by 'peer assessment'. Such a system mitigates the *direct* political influence of government, however, government is still responsible for the appointment of Board members, and can thereby influence the general nature, culture, and, perhaps, political complexion of the Literature Board.

Women in Book Culture

The prominence of women in various aspects of contemporary Australian book culture is a notable feature, and a significant influence on the nature of that book culture, and on its products. Women make up the majority of book buyers and book readers, and the proportion of women readers is increasing in relation to a diminishing total number of Australian readers. More women than men are employed in Australian publishing, although fewer women occupy positions at the highest managerial and administrative levels. Women make up the majority of authors in Australia, and the majority of librarians. Figures are not available for the gender breakdown of booksellers in the retail trade, however, from observation of articles and columns in trade journals, it appears that women are well-represented both in ownership roles and as employees.

Women are identified as a distinct market, or number of markets, in Australian book culture, as both buyer-readers and buyers for others (including children, young adults, men, and other women). A significant number of books are marketed directly to women; *The Orchard*, for instance, was clearly identified as a 'women's book' by its author, publisher, sales representative, reviewers, and by a number of booksellers. Not only was *The Orchard* written, edited, and designed by women, but its content, format, and design were considered to be appealing to women almost exclusively. Its sales success is evidence of the strength of the women's market in Australia.

The influence of several decades of feminism as a significant social, political, and intellectual movement in Australia has had an impact on Australian book culture, not only in the creation of new markets and genres, such as those for women's studies, feminist theory, and gender studies, but also in its influence on Australian women who have become more active in public life and whose interests have expanded accordingly.

It could be said that Australian book culture has become 'feminised' with the increasing participation and influence of women in almost all its aspects. This is a significant factor, and one which also influences the nature of the contemporary Australian book.

Limitations, Directions for Future Research, and Some Final Comments

This study has examined Australian book culture and the factors which influence its nature and conditions; it has illustrated and illuminated those factors through the detailed examination of a single book, *The Orchard*. The examination of each life-cycle event of *The Orchard*, and of the relevant context in which each occurred, has highlighted the actual conditions, mechanisms, processes, practices, people, and relationships which make up book culture. In so doing it has revealed *The Orchard* as distinctly a product of its time, influenced primarily by its publisher's interest in maximising its commercial potential as a consumer product; this ensured that the book reflected the (then) current interests and tastes of its intended audience. In common with other books, *The Orchard* also reflects a number of other influences, including its author's background and experience, current intellectual interests and design fashions, and the importance of women in contemporary Australian book culture.

In presenting a holistic view of the life-cycle of the book in contemporary Australia, it has been necessary to examine each event in that life-cycle, as well as the contexts in which each event occurs. This has resulted in the examination of a number of separate but inter-related events, processes, and influences, as well as the linking together of these to provide a coherent view of the life-cycle with all its complexities. The presentation of an historical overview of aspects of each event was necessary in order to situate each in its context. The result is a broad and integrated view of contemporary Australian book culture, illustrated by an examination of a specific book and its passage through the events of a model book life-cycle.

The focus on a single book and the application of the life-cycle model to it is valuable for the example it provides of the actual operation of the

book's life-cycle and influences on it, and for the light that throws on the nature and conditions of contemporary Australian book culture in general. It is clearly more valuable, as Darnton suggests, than making "hazy statements about books in general" (Darnton 1979: 4). This focus does, however, necessarily limit the investigation to the conditions, factors, and influences effecting that single book. It should be stressed that, while all books pass through the same events, specific conditions and influences effecting each book vary. Notwithstanding, it is likely that an investigation of any contemporary Australian book would reveal similar *general* conditions and influences.

Although the broad scope of this study has resulted in a comprehensive overview of nature and conditions of contemporary book culture in Australia, it has also functioned to limit the *depth* of the research. While complex relationships, practices, and influences have been identified in relation to the book's life-cycle events, these have not been investigated here as thoroughly as they might were the scope of this research narrowed. Such an overview as this, although comprehensive, can only identify and discuss the major, most obvious and relevant events and influences in relation to the book, and raise issues, questions, and identify avenues for further research.

A number of questions and issues for further research have emerged from this study, in fact as each element of the book's life-cycle was examined, further questions surfaced, particularly those associated with relationships between people involved in book culture. The author-publisher relationship is one which is central, and of particular interest both for its centrality and for the shifting elements of power and interdependency within the relationship. The nature of the publisher-reader relationship is another area of interest and one which remains largely unexplored. In fact the question of the reader's role in the book-cycle is an interesting one, and worthy of further research; this study highlighted the absence of a role for the reader, and of established mechanisms for reader feedback or input into the book's life-cycle, a curious situation given the apparent importance of the reader as recipient, and the interconnectedness of other elements within the cycle.

The effect on the book of emerging new technologies, including CD-ROM, video disk, and computerised communications capabilities, is also a question which might be considered in further research. This is particularly significant and topical given the dominance of the issue of technology at the Second National Book Summit held in 1995, and the interest it generated there among people involved in contemporary Australian book culture.

The apparent 'feminisation' of Australian book culture is another issue which might be further examined in research; changes in women's participation in all areas of book culture could be charted more comprehensively, and reasons for the changes might be further explored. Women's involvement as authors, publishers, booksellers, librarians, teachers, book buyers, readers aloud to children, and as private readers could be examined, as well as the impact of women's involvement on the nature of Australian book culture and the Australian book. Related questions which could also be examined are the actual degree of influence, and role in decision-making, that women have within Australian publishing companies; this might also reveal more about the critical decision-making processes in publishing,

those processes which determine the nature of the book, its content and design.

The contemporary Australian book is the product of a complex cycle of events, processes, relationships, and influences which exist within Australian society. As a vehicle for ideas and information conveyed by language and images, and one which is created in a commercial environment, the book reflects the range of cultural, intellectual, spiritual, political, economic, social, and other interests of Australian readers and book users. The book is an enduring yet responsive medium and, while its use is diminishing in Australian society, it remains a significant medium of entertainment, education, information, ideas, and inspiration, and one which reflects the particular conditions of its time.

Works by Drusilla Modjeska

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AUSTRALIA'S TOP TWENTY PUBLISHERS (1992)

COMPANY	OWNER (BASE)	ESTIMATED TURNOVER	IMPRINTS (excluding 3rd party agencies)
Reed	Reed International Books (UK)	\$115 million	ALIA/Thorpe, Mitchell Beazley, RR Bowker, Bowker-Saur, Budget, Butterworths, Butterworth- Heinemann, Conran Octopus, Hamlyn, William Heinemann, Heinemann Educational, Mammoth, Mandarin, Martindale-Hubbell, Marquis, Methuen, Minerva, George Philip, Reed, Rigby, KG Saur, Secker & Warburg, Sinclair-Stevenson, Text (50%), DW Thorpe, Treasure Press, Hans Zell
HarperCollins	News Limited (USA/Aust)	\$106 million	Angus & Robertson, Bartholomew, Baslo Books, Bay Books, Collins, Collins Dove, Fontana, HarperCollins, HarperEducational, Grafton, Paladin, Scott Foresman, Shakespeare Head, Thorsons, Zondervan
Pearson	Pearson (UK)	\$ 95 million	Addison-Wesley, Benjamin- Cummings, Churchill Livingstone, Chronicle, Dial, Dutton, Elm Tree, Greenhouse, Ladybird, Hamish Hamilton, Allen Lane, Longman, Longman-Cheshire, McPhee Gribble, Michael Joseph, New American Library, Pelham, Penguin, Pitman, Signet Viking, Viking O'Neil, Frederick Wame
CCH	CCH (USA)	\$65 million	CCH
Thomson	International Thomson (Canada)	\$55 million	Carswell, Law Book Company, Thomas Nelson, South Western, Sweet & Maxwell, Van Nostrand Reinhold, Wadsworth
Reader's Digest	Reader's Digest (USA)	\$50 million	Reader's Digest
Pan Macmillan	Macmillan (UK) [sold in 1995 to Holtzbrinck (Germany)]	\$45 million	Macmillan Educational, Papermac, Pan, Picador, Piper, Sidgwick & Jackson, St Martin's Press, Sun
Weldon	Weldon International (Australia)	\$40 million	Macquarie Library, Mimosa, Kevin Weldon, Weldon International, Weldon Owen, Weldon Russell

Random Century	Random House (USA)	\$25 million	Arrow, Ballantine, Bodley Head, Business Books, Jonathan Cape, Century, Chatto & Windus, Ebury Press, Fawcett, Fodor Travel, Hogarth, Hutchison, Julia McRae, Knopf, Pimlico, Random, Random House, Vintage
Hodder & Stoughton	Hodder & Stoughton (UK)	\$25 million	Hodder & Stoughton, Edward Arnold, New English Library, Coronet, Futura
Jacaranda Wiley	Wiley (USA)	\$25 million	Jacaranda Press, Jacaranda-Wiley, John Wiley, Macquarie School
Simon & Schuster	Gulf & Western (USA)	\$22 million	Allyn & Bacon, Appleton & Lange, Harvester/Wheatsheaf, Prentice Hall, Simon & Schuster
Transworld	Bertelsmann (Germany)	\$20 million	Bantam, Black Swan, Corgi, Delacorte, Dell, Doubleday, Transworld
Universal Press	Universal Books (Australia)	\$20 million	Broadbents, Gregory's, Gregory's Scientific, Robinson's, UBD, Universal Press
McGraw Hill	McGraw Hill (USA)	\$19 million	McGraw Hill
HBJ	Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (USA)	\$17 million	Academio Press, Dryden, Holt Reinhart Winston, Psychological Corporation, WB Saunders
Ashton Scholastic	Scholastic (USA)	\$15 million*	Ashton Scholastic, Scholastic, Omnibus
Allen & Unwin	Allen & Unwin (Australia)	\$16 million	Allen & Unwin, Little Ark
OUP	Oxford University Press (UK)	\$13 million	Oxford University Press
Mills & Boon	Mills & Boon (Canada)	\$10 million	Harlequin, Mills & Boon, Silhouette

* Excludes book club sales

Adapted in 1995 from *Australian Bookseller & Publisher* 1992, reproduced in *Curtain* 1993a: 115-116.

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