

Afterword: Ten Pound Poms

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John Emmerson's own account of his formation as a book-collector makes clear that, for him, the charismatic allure of historic books was their ability to recall their own historic moment to the present. As Paul Salzman writes in this collection, that books might enable a thrilling kind of time travel was revelatory. At a dinner party with the influential Oxford collector Bent Juel-Jensen in Oxford, Emmerson was shown a pamphlet newsbook that 'seemed to take me straight to the heart of the seventeenth century. I had never seen anything that gave such a vivid sense of the past'.¹ He bought his first volume of five seventeenth-century tracts a few months later via the London booksellers Quaritch, on 23 October 1968. He further recalled the example of a seventeenth-century collector, Sir Daniel Fleming of Westmorland, whose books 'were in a condition which took one straight back to the seventeenth century'.²

These acknowledgements of the bibliographic allure of time travel obscure the more literal form of travel with which this hemisphere-crossing collection is implicated. Like all book collections focussing on the early modern period, Emmerson's library includes books printed across Europe, in Venice (the highly portable Petrarch), Paris (Valturio's *De Re Militari libris XII*; Lucan), and Nuremberg (the *Biblica Latina*), as well as in London and Edinburgh, reflecting the internationalism of early modern print. As Nat Cutter's chapter on the connotations of morocco within early modern and later trading routes and relationships fascinatingly emphasises, the book trade was also part of a global market in luxury commodities. In addition, Emmerson's own biography, moving between Australia and Britain, epitomises some of ways later twentieth-century professional life inherited colonial structures of education, training, and prestige. Both collection and collector are thus situated in larger networks of knowledge, travel, and trade.

As Salzman wrote online for *The Conversation* when the State Library Victoria received this bequest in 2015, the collection's ultimate Australian location represented an upending of standard itineraries – and implicitly, hierarchies: 'We early modern scholars have become accustomed to packing our bags and taking the long trip to explore primary sources in the great libraries of the Northern Hemisphere. Australia has made a major contribution over the

¹ John Emmerson, 'The Early Education of a Book Collector', *The Book Collector* 63.3 (2014), pp. 369-82, p. 370.

² Emmerson, p. 382.

years to this kind of scholarship, punching well above its weight with distinguished editors, historians and literary scholars. It will be a great pleasure to welcome scholars from the northern hemisphere as they will certainly make their way to Melbourne to work on aspects of the Emerson collection'.³ Salzman here acknowledges two interconnected excursions - of rare books and their readers - that prompt questions and disrupt some assumptions about rare books, travel, and contested ideas of home. In this afterword to this brilliant first collection of scholarly essays drawing on the new access to the riches of the Emerson collection, I want to take the opportunity to think, from my viewpoint in the 'Northern Hemisphere', and having beaten a path to Melbourne in exactly the way Salzman anticipated, about bibliographic ideas of placement and belonging.

Stephen King's often-quoted description of books as 'portable magic' often lands its emphasis on the noun 'magic' – inevitably, since it's by Stephen King.⁴ The adjectival portability is less often highlighted as part of the definition. Transnational book collections help us to recentre this emphasis, because they make explicit use of this particular affordance of the book object: that it can be easily transported across space. After all, books that are not portable are scarcely even books. Pictures of outsized volumes such as the Klencke Atlas, a six foot square block of geographical text given to Charles II in 1660, or of the two librarians' skills required to turn the pages of Audubon's famous elephant folio *Birds of America*, operate as limit cases for the very category of book. (Indeed, nineteenth-century *Birds of America* owners often commissioned special pieces of furniture to house these outsize bibliographical trophies, since they were too big for the normal shelf or book cabinet.) Supersize books are the bibliographic equivalent of giants or other freakish curiosities, because books have always been designedly portable. One of their earliest advocates, the Roman poet Martial, advertised in the first century of the Common Era: 'You who want my little books to keep you company wherever you may be and desire their companionship on a long journey, buy these, that parchment compresses in small pages. Give book boxes to the great, one hand grasps me.'⁵ The pitch could be adapted for the twenty-first century e-reader: convenient for travel, easy to carry, single-handed operation. The first codices were avowedly at an undemanding scale, well-adapted to human proprioception. Portability was always part

³ Paul Salzman, 'Emerson's collection offers the best of the best for book scholars', <https://theconversation.com/emersons-bequest-offers-the-best-of-the-best-for-book-scholars-40305>.

⁴ Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* (Scribner: New York, 2000), p. 104.

⁵ Martial, *Epigrams* Book 1:2, Loeb Classical Library 94, transl D.R. Shackleton.

of the spec of this new reading technology: all books, in this sense, are part of a vast travelling library.

Libraries and portability, however, do not always see eye to eye, practically and conceptually. Books' portability creates a tension where they are understood as static objects in fixed library locations. Historic book collections are often inertial. That's to say, the history of the library as a private collection or public institution is one of collection, retention and preservation. Deaccessioning, whilst it is an inevitable part of the life cycle of any collection, comes, in this model, to be experienced as neglectful, traumatic, disruptive. Much modern scholarship has been productively interested in the reassembling of long-dispersed historic libraries. Such books are identified with bookplates or other marks of belonging, often explicitly related to the place where they will be kept. Using book-sellers' materials, increasingly digitised international collections, and the copy-specific notes in library catalogues, posthoc and restorative academic work identifies now-scattered collections – including provincial readers such as the Tamworth gentlewoman and book-collector Frances Wolfreston, or Thomas and Isabella Hervey of Ickworth House in Suffolk, or famous literary figures such as John Donne or Ben Jonson – with their original owners.⁶ Such provenance work often employs wiki- style publication to present as ongoing the project to reestablish the unity and completeness of long-disbanded collections. It's a methodology of repair that, by reassembling a library at a specific historical moment under a specific historic owner, implicitly deprioritises other aspects in the life of a specific volume, including its time in the hands of later or earlier owners. Other owners, who may have left a name or bookplate of their own, become merely transitional caretakers of a book whose implied velocity is either towards, or (regrettably) away from, a particular reader or location. This impulse draws on an idealised fantasy of the library as a permanent repository, even as it draws its detective energies from the recognition that book collections are in constant flux. Books come in and out of any collection as it moves, collectively and individually, through history; book history has tended to focus much of its investigative energy on books' destinations rather than their itinerancy.

⁶ Sarah Lindebaum's ongoing recovery of Frances Wolfrestoun's library is at <https://franceswolfrestonhorbous.com>; I wrote about the library of the Herveys in 'Marital Marginalia: The Seventeenth-Century Library of Thomas and Isabella Hervey', *Early Modern English Marginalia* ed Katherine Acheson (Routledge: London, 2019); on John Donne and Ben Jonson (and many other book-owners), see David Pearson's *Book Owners Online* <https://bookowners.online>.

If this major establishing trope of the library is fixity, the opposite is also discursively omnipresent: fragility and loss. Ever since the myths which abound around the destruction of the library of Alexandria, the condition of the library is perceived as one of fragility and loss.⁷ This biblio-pessimism understands books as constantly prey to a range of depredations: they can be misplaced, damaged, sold off, stolen, destroyed, vandalised, stripped of, or furnished with, illustrations. Sometimes these anxieties are expressed in the over-zealous guarding of books within certain collections, where the constantly-negotiated compromise between access and conservation emphasises preserving the books over their use. The spectre of biblioclasm, willed or accidental, is the obverse of the vision of the library as a place of preservation and safety, and it can serve to confirm that portability is a threat to, rather than a feature of, the book as object. Stories of rogue librarians or scholars selling parchment leaves from the collection, or the suite of rare books handling courses for new readers both bespeak the barely-suppressed and deep-rooted institutional panic about expropriation and loss. To be portable is to be forever subject to, or even actively to engage in, unregulated and dangerous movement within or away from the home collection. Books, it seems, are free spirits, ill-suited to libraries.

I have wanted to emphasise the ambivalence of conventional book history around the idea of book movement, to stress something obvious but more widely challenging about the Emmerson collection: its location. Part of the delight of Emmerson's collection is that it acknowledges and resituates books from prior collections: the bookplates and provenance narratives intrinsic to the collection acknowledge the movement that is intrinsic to book collecting. The particular circumstances of the collection mean that, unusually, here it is the modern destination library – Emmerson's – that is the privileged site of bibliographic and historic enquiry, rather than those previous historic libraries represented within it. Further, in taking his books back to Australia, John Emmerson obliquely participates in larger geo-social and cultural structures. We might take a cue from his own account of his early book-collecting method in the late 1960s and early 1970s:

I was working in experimental science at the time and as an experimental scientist I thought that the convenient place to start was to make a pilot study. I would choose an author and see how satisfactory a collection of early editions of his works I could

⁷ See Gill Partington and Adam Smyth (eds), *Book Destruction from the Medieval to the Contemporary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Brian Cummings, *Bibliophobia: The End and the Beginning of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), chapter .

make in a reasonable time at a reasonable price. I set the reasonable time as about a year and the reasonable price at £10 per book, which was then roughly the price of a new nuclear physics textbook. This may seem an odd choice, but it was a sum that I was used to spending on books'.⁸

Emmerson's own price-comparison point is of that of a textbook in the rapidly changing cold-war technological field. But his self-imposed limit of £10 chimes, unexpectedly but deliciously, with an apparently completely different contemporaneous movement from Britain to Australia. The British migrants who accepted assisted passage relocation to Australia in the period after the second world war were commonly known by their subsidised travel costs, earning the nickname of 'ten pound poms'. Emmerson's book collection, much of it purchased in the UK but ultimately heading for Melbourne, could be read as another version of a similar migratory energy. The 5000-plus items that he gathered and which are now in the State Library Victoria are the bibliographic equivalent of those ten pound poms, collected from dusty booksellers in the grey old country and off to a new life in the custom-built bookshelves of Emmerson's home in sunny South Yarra. To speak of a diaspora of books is, perhaps, to stray close to the sentimental anthropomorphism that has often accompanied bibliophilia. But as Emmerson and his book collection track between the northern and the southern hemisphere, their migratory patterns evoke larger cultural movements of people, capital, and resource in the modern period. Descriptions of the collection continue to describe it as 'English' or 'British': the analogy with human emigrants makes these national epithets resonate differently. Are books defined by their origins or their destinations?

This question perhaps helps us to integrate one missing piece of John Emmerson's library. As many contributors to this issue of *Parergon* acknowledge, the Emmerson collection in the State Library Victoria is remarkably complete. Unlike many such collections it was not broken up or cherry-picked on the death of its compiler. But there is one exception, usually added in parenthesis after the statement of unusual completeness: '(except the travelling library of Prince Charles, gifted to the Bodleian Library Oxford)'. It isn't a kind of perverse triumphalism to claim this wonderful donation – the piece of Emmerson's collection most accessible to me, living far from Melbourne – as somehow a key to the whole. Not because it is more significant or valuable than other items in the collection – clearly not so – and nor out

⁸ Emmerson, p.374.

of some misguided sense that it has returned to its rightful home – it's precisely such a recalibration of belonging that books as portable objects demand. Rather, the travelling library is significant because Charles' books were designed and collected precisely for movement, and because they have continued that peripatetic life, through sale and transport including to and from a country, Australia, unthinkable to a Scottish-born prince living at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This designed restlessness encapsulates something of the interchange and movement that is as much part of the life of the book as its destiny in careful clamshell case or accession order on a shelf or temperature-controlled store. As we have seen, both libraries and studies of libraries often seek to minimise such histories of movement, or to deprioritise prior itineraries as somehow irrelevant meanderings before the book found its collector. But Charles' travelling library was always meant to move: its peripatetic identity was not a stage prior to settled ownership, but a consequence of it. It therefore helps to refocus our attention on a collection as movement rather than fixity.

It is also a lovely object, or miniature collection of objects. Prince Charles' travelling library comprises a portable set of small-format books, uniformly bound in red leather. Numbering sixty volumes containing fifty-five editions, they represent an alternative microcosm or epitome of the larger Emmerson collection: about one percent of the total in the SLV. Like the collection as a whole, the individual volumes come from a variety of printers, representing work from presses in Venice, Geneva, Heidelberg, Douai, Antwerp, Paris, and Bologna, but the Plantin Press of Leiden supplied by far the largest component of the library, making up just over half of the total volumes. Unlike the larger collection, the travelling library has no ephemera, news books or other explicitly political material, and nothing in the English language.

Charles and his older brother, Prince Henry, both had similar sets, in as far as that can currently be ascertained. Henry's is currently disbanded and around thirty titles, in institutional libraries from the Houghton to the Bodleian, as well as in private collections, have so far been identified.⁹ Tell-tale signs are the small format, the series binding in a greenish-blue goatskin, and sometimes the royal monogram. Charles' set, by contrast, has apparently remained intact, and lives now in two 1970s leather bookshelf-styled cases. We do not know how the travelling collections were originally housed and transported: they do not

⁹ See Francesca Galligan, 'Small-Format Books and Portable Sets: The Context of the Travelling Library of Charles I', in *Seventeenth Century Libraries: Problems and Perspectives* ed. Robyn Adams and Jacqueline Glonski (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2023), pp. 177-214.

bear fore-edge titles and nor is there any surviving handlist to identify the identical volumes for their reader. A couple of books in Charles' set show some wear to the top edge of the spine, which may suggest they were picked out by pulling on this part of the volume, but it is difficult to be confident about the haptic environment of the travelling library. Barrister, MP and bibliophile William Hakewill's adjacent, slightly later Jacobean sets of forty-three or forty-four small format volumes were gifted to their recipients in a book-shaped box with a handlist. The library given to a member of the Madden family, for example, is now in the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds, in a case designed to resemble a folio volume when closed, and with a painted vellum contents list on the inside cover of the box. Francesca Galligan reminds us that since we do not know who commissioned the royal princes' libraries, Hakewill ought to be given consideration as patron: if Charles' (or indeed, Henry's) set came with similar paratexts to Hakewill's other travelling library gifts, these have been lost along the way.

Charles' collection appears to have been assembled in the first decade of the seventeenth century. One suggestion is that both princes received their libraries in 1609, when Charles would have been only 9 years old: the diminutive format of the volumes thus could resonate with a child-sized, as well as a portable, library.¹⁰ The selection of books for the travelling library raises similar questions about the scope of collecting as the Emerson collection does at a larger scale, and that Emerson himself reflects on in his account of his introduction to collecting in *The Book Collector* shortly before his death: which editions, and of which texts, were to be favoured?

As a microcosm of the larger collection, the travelling library is central to Emerson's collecting practices. Its royal provenance also clearly chimes with his wider interests, with his acknowledged sympathies for the royalists in the English Civil War, the multiple copies of *Eikon Basilike*, and the metaphor Sarah Ross brilliantly constructs for the entire library as a 'monumentum regale', in her chapter in this volume on royalist elegy. Whatever its provenance, the travelling library is also lovely, tactile object that any collector would be delighted to own – as a star turn displayed in Oxford in an exhibition called *Sensational Books* in 2022, its pocket-sized volumes introduced an entire narrative drawing on books and related materials to explore how books impact our senses beyond reading. It seems a pity that

¹⁰ See Howard M. Nixon and William A. Jackson, 'English Seventeenth-Century Travelling Libraries', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 7 (1979), pp. 294-321.

the book is not with the rest of the collection. Should we, therefore, see this object that is so rooted in the collection as now regrettably alienated from it, albeit clearly at John Emmerson's own specific wish? My sense is that this sense of loss is not the way to understand either Charles' travelling library, or the Emmerson Collection at State Library Victoria, or, indeed, book collections more generally. Even as it has found its permanent and public-facing billet at SLV, Emmerson's collection nevertheless emphasises books' intrinsic portability, both before and during his ownership of them. That part of the collection is thousands of miles away in another library – and that that item itself should be so committed to travelling books – perfectly underlines the connective journeys that are crucial to the life of the book as it moves through space and time. Charles' travelling library is the perfect pendant to the Melbourne collection, because it both is, and is not, a part of it. Or, to put it another way, we shouldn't lose the wonder of portability, as we enjoy the magic of possession. Some of those human ten pound poms are now proud Australians, some continue to consider themselves British-Australians, some have returned to the UK.¹¹ Books, like people, are designed for movement, for relocation, for migration, and also for welcome far from the places they might once have called home.

¹¹ See James A. Hammerton and Alistair Thomas, *Ten Pound Poms: Australia's Invisible Migrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), for an extensive oral history of arrival, settlement and sometimes return.