Introduction

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The articles in this issue of the *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies* mostly derive from papers presented at the AVSA conference convened by Joanne Wilkes at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, over three days, 3-5 February 2015. The conference theme, "The Victorians and Memory," was a fruitful one, yielding papers with a variety of approaches and disciplinary areas, from literary and cultural studies to art, history, and museum studies. The program can be found at the AVSA 2015 webpage. For inclusion in this themed issue of *AJVS*, conference papers were reconfigured and revised, through the formal stages of submission, peer review and editing; this has taken some time as it has coincided with the Journal's move at the end of 2015 to a new home at The University of Sydney e-Scholarship, and with some changes in the editorial team – thanks to Carolyn Lake for her work on format and design, and Jocelyn Hargrave and Emily Brayshaw for their assistance with the copy-editing and proof-reading. The editorial responsibility for this issue has been shared by Joanne Wilkes and Meg Tasker and we are pleased to report that all the careful work by authors, reviewers and editors has resulted in a strong selection of essays on "The Victorians and Memory." As might be expected with such a theme, papers at the conference, and those which have found their way into the journal, ranged temporally, from Victorian treatments of Romantic tropes, to neo-Victorian fiction evoking events as recent as the 2012 centenary of Robert Falcon Scott's expedition to the Antarctic.

As this reference to the Antarctic suggests, the conference sustained a long AVSA tradition in featuring papers focusing primarily on British culture, plus others that encompassed antipodean literature and history. Such a tradition is also represented by the articles published here.

At the conference we were especially pleased to welcome as keynote speaker Professor Robert Douglas-Fairhurst (Magdalen College, Oxford), who has a recent New Zealand connection – he was one of the Booker Prize judges who in 2013 made the award to Eleanor Catton for *The Luminaries*. His own work has covered a variety of writers, and his monograph *Victorian Afterlives* (2002) – a title which resonates with the conference theme – investigated, among others, Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Edward FitzGerald. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst later went on to produce a brilliant biography, *Becoming Dickens* (2011). This study showed that, however much Dickens and others may have constructed his career retrospectively as a success story, the vicissitudes of the novelist's early life reveal how real and how frequent were the risks of failure.

Robert Douglas-Fairhurst's next book, published in the year of his visit to New Zealand, is also a biography, *The Story of Alice: Lewis Carroll and the Secret History of Wonderland* (2015). This fascinating and very well-received interweaving of the lives of the writer and his child muse, Alice Liddell, was published on the 150th anniversary of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* Carroll's book was mentioned in his keynote address, and the version of the latter published here includes an illustration of Alice falling down the rabbit-hole that evokes her quandary about falling through the earth to New Zealand or Australia.

As editors of this special issue of *AJVS,* Meg Tasker and I are grateful to Robert Douglas-Fairhurst for allowing us to publish his keynote address to the conference. His "Working with Memory and Forgetting in Victorian Literature" is a wide-ranging exploration of both

"memory's lurking tenacity and shaping power" and "its unpredictable lapses and blind spots." The essay illuminates how the complexities of memory's workings are continually evident in the details of language as deployed especially by Dickens, Tennyson and FitzGerald. Moreover, the risk of forgetting is always present, since in Tennyson, "[b]etween the lines of *In Memoriam*, an unwritten *In Oblivion* keeps trying to make its voice heard," while FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* "is concerned with how much slips through our heads as well as down our throats."

Douglas-Fairhurst also points out how FitzGerald's work drew energy from his ability to get at the 'time-travelling core' of writers like Wordsworth. The impact of this prominent Romantic writer is a major theme of Judith Johnston's "Richard Howitt, Australia and the Power of Poetic Memory." Richard Howitt, although a published poet, never found the literary fame of his brother and sister-in-law, William and Mary Howitt: examining the influence of Wordsworth and other Romantic poets on his work helps to explain why. Richard Howitt spent several years in Australia, but remained homesick. His poetry, Johnston shows, reveals not only nostalgia for the British landscape as such, but also a longing for its elements – and especially its flowers – as they are rendered in Wordsworth's verse. Howitt thus strives to memorialise, and to avoid forgetting, both a physical and a poetic past, but hardly ever engages with a possible future.

Richard Howitt remained obscure as a writer, but he did succeed in returning to England. Not all British visitors to Australia did so, and some who did not are the subject of Patrick Noonan's "'Sons of Science': Remembering John Gould's Martyred Collectors." This article examines the posthumous fate of men who worked in Australia as collectors for British naturalist John Gould, and suffered sudden deaths in the 1840-50s – John Gilbert, Frederick Strange and Johnston Drummond. Noonan demonstrates how the men's posthumous recognition did not depend straightforwardly on their own achievements, but much on the attitudes of others. In this regard, Gilbert was by far the most fortunate, as he benefited from patronage from Gould in his lifetime, and then from a commitment to champion his legacy in the mid-twentieth century, on the part of journalist and ornithologist Alec H. Chisholm and, after the acquisition of Gilbert's specimens by Liverpool Museums, Senior Curator of Vertebrate Zoology, Clemency Fisher.

If the Australian colony could be a catalyst for various kinds of memory and forgetting, so too could a country with a longer history of colonialism – Ireland – provide scope for the literary evocation of both. Rose Lovell-Smith's "'I shall never forget it to him': Personal and Public Memory in Somerville and Ross's *Irish R. M.* Stories" investigates how these stories grapple with the different kinds of memorialising and forgetting characteristic of the two sorts of society they represent – one "oral, local, and customary," the other "more literate and bureaucratic, more socially connected to a wider world." These contrasts are focalised through the Resident Magistrate of the title and the chameleon-like Irishman Flurry Knox, such that the developing connection between the two men suggests ways in which "progress towards a more cohesive and peaceable Ireland" might be achieved on a personal level.

Whether it be the premature loss of Tennyson's friend Arthur Hallam, or the unexpected demise of collectors on exploring expeditions, death was omnipresent in Victorian experience: hence mourning was an especially popular subject of pictorial art as well as of writing. Its treatment in painting, too, implicitly raises the topic of memory. Pamela Gerrish Nunn's essay, "Gone but not Forgotten," considers the handling of mourning in Victorian painting of the mid-century and after. She examines in particular two paintings by Emily Mary Osborn,

For the Last Time (1864) and *God's Acre* (1866), both of which evoke pairs of bereft sisters mourning a parent. Nunn draws out the extent to which the works' details follow or break with convention. While acknowledging the recent discussion of Osborn's work in a feminist context, Nunn emphasises the sheer popularity at this period of paintings focusing on mourning, and thus highlights how Osborn's art would have catered to a known market.

Another manifestation of contemporary feminism is the tendency of recent neo-Victorian fiction to recuperate female voices from the past that have been occluded by male ones. Thus, just as Charles Dickens contributed much to the account of his rise to fame that has featured in biographies, his writings largely constructed the versions of his marriage that have come down to us. Here Kathryne Ford, in "Rehabilitating Catherine Dickens: Memory and Authorial Agency in Gaynor Arnold's Neo-Victorian Biofiction *Girl in a Blue Dress*," examines this contemporary novelist's attempt to give a voice to Catherine Dickens. Her argument deals with the critically contested issue as to how truly empowering is the decision of Dorothea Gibson (Arnold's version of Catherine Dickens) to embark on authorship by completing her husband Alfred's unfinished novel. Vital to this question, Ford contends, is the novel's treatment of Dorothea's access to her memories. By investigating her own recollections of the marriage, in contradistinction to the version of it that Alfred has promulgated, Dorothea is able to find the confidence to move into the future as an author in her own right.

While recuperation of lost female voices is now sometimes a focus of critical accounts of neo-Victorian fiction, this has not always been the case. Ashley Orr, in "Bodily Fluids: Female Corporeality as Neo-Victorian Agency in Graham Swift's *Waterland*," deals with a novel of 1983 which was one of the first to be discussed as a neo-Victorian text. She argues that critics' predominant concern has been with Tom Crick's narrative as an exemplar of "postmodern historiography or historiographic metafiction," such that this approach has led to the neglect or misrepresentation of the novel's significant female figures, Mary Crick and her Victorian counterpart, Sarah Atkinson. Memory is important here, but for Orr, it is not "memory-as-story" – Tom's version of events – but "memory-as-body," in that the women characters' "embodied memories" disclose their agency, and thus their successful interventions in a discourse that threatens to overcome them.

If *Waterland* was one of the earliest texts to be construed as neo-Victorian, one of the most recent is Rebecca Hunt's *Everland* from 2014, published in the wake of the Scott centenary in 2012. Jessica Hewenn's paper, "The Legacies and Frozen Time of Antarctica: Robert Falcon Scott, Peter Pan and Rebecca Hunt's *Everland*," is one of the first scholarly articles – possibly *the* first scholarly article – to be published on this intriguing novel. Hewenn shows how, through its parallel narratives of two Antarctic expeditions a century apart, the novel challenges cultural memories of significant events in the past. It questions our ability to decipher that past, while also demonstrating the dangers of misremembering it. Moreover, although the contemporary expedition, unlike the earlier one, includes women, this new novel – unlike many in the genre – does not attribute much significance to gender.

In a passage Hewenn quotes from *Everland*, a member of the twenty-first century expedition to Antarctica struggles to feel the presence of her predecessors:

> But the past was a different world. It remained unknowable and evasive, even when you were holding solid proof of it in your hand. (Hunt 56)

We hope that the papers in this issue of *AVJS* bear witness to the varieties and complexities of the ways memory and forgetting manifest themselves, both in the culture of the Victorian

period, and in later texts written about it. The papers might also bring home to us Victorianists how, as Robert Douglas-Fairhurst remarks, these powers of memory and forgetting "lie at the heart of our activities as a community of scholars."