

EDITORIAL

This companion issue to the previous volume of the *Australasian Victorian Studies Journal* constitutes the pleasing culmination of more than a year's immersion in Romance by its editors. It is in effect the "happy ending" to a particularly frenetic editorial year. The ten papers included here have been carried over for publication in conjunction with the twelve included in Volume 3.1 following the plenitude of submissions received after the 1997 AVSA Conference at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch. We thank the authors for their patience in waiting for this second number to appear. The two issues on Romance identify themselves as a couple by virtue of their twin attire, and we once again thank Paul Donnelly (whose paper on Convict Love Tokens appeared in the last issue) from the Powerhouse Museum and Token collector Tim Millet for use of this intriguing illustration and the romantic resonances it continues to generate.

A wide range of subjects relating to romance are presented in the current issue, from dress and social history, to literature, letters, poetry and performance. Five of the contributors examine differing constructions of womanhood and femininity during the Victorian period: Juliet Peers's paper on the Mount Rennie Outrage in 1886 looks at the colonial press's handling of sexual violence; Leigh Summers examines the physical and figurative tailoring of the female body and the curious relation to pathology signified by Victorian corsetry; Keryn Carter undertakes a psychoanalytic reading of femininity in several enduring romantic Victorian ballet plots; Catharine Vaughan-Pow examines the delicate issue of romance in religious fiction targeted at adolescent girls; and Sharon Bickle bases her reading of the female poet-lover of Christina Rossetti's *Monna Innominata* on the notion of the text as palimpsest. Neatly balancing this summary in gender terms, the five other papers contained in the volume deal with some of the "great men" of Victorian literature and letters: Shale Preston offers a new reading of the romance between David and Agnes in Dickens's *David Copperfield*; Trevor Hogan presents a portrait of Thomas Carlyle as a pre-Victorian critic of romanticism by examining the influences on Carlyle of several prominent European literary figures; John Moore looks at the "romantic" aspects of John Ruskin's architectural credo; Ken Rowley focuses on the particular use of legal documentation as a fictional device in Benjamin Disraeli's historical romance *Sybil: or The Two Nations*; and William Baker presents the romances and scandals emerging from the project of editing the letters of Wilkie Collins.

Continuing the project of building up the Reviews Section of the *Journal*, nine reviews are presented which provide critiques of a substantial number of new books relating to Victorian studies. A review of the initial volumes of the new Penguin collected edition of Thomas Hardy's fiction, in addition to reviews of new poetry and short fiction anthologies, will hopefully aid in recommending up-to-date teaching materials in the area of literature. Two books on Victorian periodicals highlight the value of journalistic research for scholars of the period; recent works on Christina Rossetti and female emigration is examined; and three books by AVSA members are also reviewed, continuing the trend of fruitful academic dialogue between members.