

INTRODUCTION

AVSJ came into being in 1995 following the decision of the Australasian Victorian Studies Association to upgrade the Proceedings of its annual conference to a fully fledged, peer-reviewed academic publication with the long-term aim of no longer restricting submissions to conference topic or association membership. In other words the Association decided to spread its literary wings. Over the past four years while not exactly flying high the editors have concentrated on establishing the journal as a worthy and attractive addition, both in content and presentation, to other publications dealing with nineteenth-century studies. As our regular readers are no doubt aware the journal's metamorphosis has been an evolving process but one that with this issue we feel has been realised. Here we present twelve articles carefully vetted by an advisory panel whose members are experts in their respective fields. We also present another edition of our extensive review section featuring a lively forum in which the author is given a chance to have her say in response to the critics. To cap it off, we introduce our new and distinctive generic cover which celebrates both the Australasian colonial experience and one of the most significant movements of the nineteenth-century: migration and the fascination with the horizon, the subject of Kate Flint's exhilarating article. Our thanks to Dr Vivian Balmer and the Vaughan Evan Library at the National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour, Sydney, for assistance with our choice of image.

Nine of the articles in this edition grew out of papers presented at the 1998 AVSA conference; they were inspired by the conference theme: "Endings." The diversity of the papers grouped together under this heading gives some idea of the variety of clever ways in which delegates tackled the topic. Herbert Tucker brilliantly splices what he calls the "split ends" of a great variety of Victorian writings—Brontë, Ruskin, Carlyle, Browning, Darwin, Arnold, Tennyson and many more—into a seamless meditation on the felicity and necessity of choice. Kate Flint exhorts us to lift our gaze and journey with her towards many a literary and painterly Victorian skyline to discover the interpretive possibilities inherent in the horizon, imaginative possibilities *without* end. "End-time" is the subject of Carmel O'Brien's exploration of Apocalyptic influence in Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem "Patience, hard thing" in which the poet both fears and joyfully anticipates the final fiery battle between good and evil.

The end of the race captures Johanna Smith's interest as she examines nineteenth-century theories of race-degeneration and eugenics in an Australian context. Rowena Mohr focuses on the end of the century and cultural anxieties of a different kind, namely sexual phobias played out in the *fin-de-siècle* novels *Dracula* and *The Penance of Portia James* where gender power-play dooms women to a living death. Shale Preston also has death on her mind when she ponders on Charles Dickens's compulsion to push himself to the limit of endurance with his exhausting enactments of Nancy's murder in *Oliver Twist*. Was Dickens actually planning to end it all? Francis Adams, the subject of Meg Tasker's biography, certainly was when he shot himself with some help from his wife. Meg wonders what a biographer should do if her subject is more famous for his death than for his life. Is it acceptable to begin a lifestory with its ending, or will this kill off readers' interest?

Meanwhile on the lighter side, Judith Johnston has us rolling up our trouser legs in typically English style for a trip to the antipodean seaside with Louisa Anne Meredith who isn't quite sure which end is up as she struggles to reconcile her English perceptions with her new homeland, downunder Tasmania. The spectre of social control conjured up by Simon Burke's paper on the end of community dovetails very neatly with the rise of Jingoism and its attendant manipulation of nationalism in Dan Gorman's study of the role of "character" in the British imperial enterprise. Dan's article was unsolicited as was Peter Rawlings's which also makes character its primary focus: the conflict between Henry James's theorising on the technique of character presentation and his realisation of his character Isabel Archer in *Portrait of a Lady*. Last but not least we have John Moore's article on Ruskin and the romantic aspects of architecture. This should have been published in the *The Victorians and Romance* issue of the journal and we apologise to John for not including it there.

Finally we would like to put in a plug for the *AVSJ* and AVSA websites which provide a very handy interface between AVSA members, the association, the journal and the wider "virtual" world of Victorian studies. Whatever information you need regarding the Journal or the Association can be found on our web pages, including contact numbers (both phone and email for all current members), AGM minutes, conference details, tables of content for previous issues, how to subscribe, how to submit, how to join the association, and much more. If you can't find just exactly what you want you can contact us directly from the site by email. Make <http://www.uq.net.au/avsa> your regular AVSA reference point.