From the Editors

This issue is dedicated to the reception or ‘re-conception’ of the ancient world in different periods, genres and mediums. The theme arose from a conference held at The University of Melbourne in 2011, *Straddling the Divide//Receptions Studies Today*, which brought together Australian postgraduates and academics from a variety of scholarly backgrounds. The accessible and interdisciplinary nature of the field of reception studies, demonstrated by the conference, was an idea the editorial collective wished to embrace for the first ‘Amphora Issue’ of the *Melbourne Historical Journal* (MHJ). As a new addition to MHJ’s annual publications, ‘The Amphora Issue’ is concerned with all disciplines within Ancient World Studies, and the theme was chosen as one way to encourage engagement with the notion of reception from all fields that study the ancient world. It was also chosen because reception studies reminds us of the continuing relevance of the ancient world to modern society both within and beyond academia.

Our two feature articles by Rhiannon Evans and Marguerite Johnson examine the way in which the classical past impacted upon nineteenth- and twentieth-century experiences of place. Both authors note the remarkable affect that the physical experience of the remains of antiquity have had upon individuals. In ‘“The ghost of old Rome”: Charles Dickens and the Nineteenth-Century Experience of Antiquity’, Evans discusses the nineteenth-century British reception of the ruins of Rome through the literary works of Charles Dickens. She asserts that the physical experience of antiquity through its monumental remains enabled Dickens and his literary characters to make necessary connections between past and present. For Dickens, it was through this experience of ancient Rome that an understanding of self and the possibility for future development could be gained.

Johnson’s article ‘What to Look for in a Mayor; or Classical Reception in the Coalopolis’ focusses on the influence of the ancient world upon Australian architecture, specifically in Newcastle, during the early twentieth century. The public building program initiated by Alderman Morris Light, the mayor of Newcastle from 1924 to 1925, sought to connect Newcastle with the British empire through the expression of shared cultural values perceived to have been found in the architecture Greco-Roman period as well as Egypt. The presence of Doric columns, neo-classical sculptures and allusions to ancient monuments were inspired by Light’s personal
experience of antiquity. These architectural elements stood at odds with the commonly held perception of Newcastle as an industrial centre and, as Johnson argues, represented Newcastle’s desire to be re-conceptualised as a cultural centre within Australia and internationally.

Miriam Riverlea’s article “‘Icarus is seventeen, like me’: Reworking Myth in Young Adult Fiction’, is based upon the paper that she presented at the *Straddling the Divide // Reception Studies Today* conference. Riverlea won the prize for best postgraduate paper which ‘The Amphora Issue’ of MHJ offered to publish. Riverlea explores the reception of the myth of Icarus within modern Australian and American young adult fiction. Through an examination of the language used by the writers Nadia Wheatley and Paul Zindel, Riverlea reveals that each unique re-telling of the myth is conscious of its predecessors and potential future re-conceptions. She shows that these texts engage with this aspect of myth to discuss broader social and cultural issues.

Riverlea’s article, like the articles by Evans and Johnson, exposes the importance of the ancient world to a modern society. These three articles emphasise the interconnection between past and present through the reception of the ancient world and the influence this has upon a number of societies comprising of different generations, different social and/or cultural backgrounds and identities. Through its reception, the ancient world becomes a shared cultural experience that can be reshaped and reconceived by individuals and communities.

‘The Amphora Issue’, however, does not only publish articles on that issue’s theme, and other articles in this issue challenge us to re-assess a variety of ancient sources. Through an interpretation of the ‘Restituta inscription’, Jennifer Irving’s article, ‘Restituta: The Training of the Female Physician’, sheds new light on the position of women in medical practice in Rome during the first century CE. Through her reassessment of sources, Irving asserts that at this time within the Roman empire the medical profession was not an exclusive male occupation, as previously conceived by modern scholars, but that it also consisted of women with equal skill and training to their male counterparts.

Damjan Krsmanovic and William Anderson similarly re-examine the physical fragments from Roman-period Pessinus to offer insight into the use and re-use of materials and space in funerary practices. In ‘Paths of the Dead—Interpreting Funerary Practice at Roman-Period Pessinus, Central Anatolia’, they look at how this space enables a connection between past and present through experience similar to that discussed by Evans in relation to a nineteenth-century context. Krsmanovic and Anderson also emphasise the importance the cemeteries as places for the display and re-negotiation of identity. Like Light’s building program for Newcastle, the choice
of materials and iconography found at Pessinus is central to the formation of identity: creating a bond and/or establishing difference between present society and the past.

In ‘The Aegis and the Armour of Achilleus’, Annabel Orchard examines literary representations of heroic armour within ancient texts, particularly Homer’s *Iliad*. The physical remains of the armour described in the *Iliad* no longer exist, but Orchard shows how depictions in myth have the potential to reveal as much about ancient perceptions of armour as physical remains. Read alongside Riverlea’s article, we are reminded that oral traditions are constantly in flux and open to re-interpretation: as the armour of Achilleus is represented in multiple ways so too are Icarus’ wings. The textual variations and conflation of descriptions of the aegis and Achilleus’ armour reveal the fluid nature of myth and suggest a process of re-conception during antiquity.

As the articles within this issue demonstrate the reception or re-conception of the ancient world is not restricted to any one medium. Hiroyasu Tsuri’s artwork, *To Whom That Gong Tolls*, on the cover of this issue is also full of allusions to the classical world. The depicted figure has the lower body and torso of a man, yet its horse-like head creates allusions to a creature from Greek myth, the Minataur. A monstrous creature that devoured young men and women, the Minataur, like other hybrid creatures in myth, denotes a potential threat to civilisation. The muscular physique of this figure, which is progressively stripped down to bone and sinew, draws connections to Classical Greek sculpture. In particular, the pose of the figure is reminiscent of the boxer of Quirinal (c. 330 BCE). The figure as a whole appears to be in a state of transformation from human to animal, from living to a state of decomposition; yet while this dramatic metamorphosis takes place, the figure sits in a contemplation and stillness. Tsuri’s artwork is connected to antiquity through allusions to ancient myth but is itself a constructed from modern materials and techniques and can be experienced in the present.

This inaugural issue of ‘The Amphora Issue’ of MHJ aims to celebrate the vitality of ancient world studies through our exploration of the theme of re-conception of the classical world in a range of disciplines and approaches. We hope that this publication marks the beginning of a successful and supportive new endeavour for MHJ.

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head editors of the Amphora Issue editorial collective